



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Vocational education in schools

THURSDAY, 14 AUGUST 2003

CANBERRA

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Thursday, 14 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, Mr Farmer, Ms Gambaro, Mr Pearce, Ms Plibersek, 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

BRADLEY, Mr Michael, ACT President, Australian College of Educators..... 1115
BULKELEY, Mr Peter, Project Manager, Australian College of Educators..... 1115
GONCZI, Professor Andrew, Council Member, Australian College of Educators 1115

Committee met at 9.06 a.m.

BRADLEY, Mr Michael, ACT President, Australian College of Educators

BULKELEY, Mr Peter, Project Manager, Australian College of Educators

GONCZI, Professor Andrew, Council Member, Australian College of Educators

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into vocational education in schools. I welcome representatives of the Australian College of Educators. Thank you for joining us this morning.

Mr Bulkeley—I would like to say thank you very much for the opportunity for the Australian College of Educators to contribute to this inquiry. I am appearing on behalf of Jim Cumming, who unfortunately could not make it today. He is the executive director. He is actually in Thailand talking about standards at a UNESCO meeting.

CHAIR—As a formality, I need to remind you that proceedings here today are considered proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. We prefer that all evidence be put on the public record. If at any time there is anything you would like to be considered in camera, please let us know and we will consider that. Could you provide some introductory comments and then we will proceed to questioning.

Mr Bulkeley—Thank you. We have sent to the inquiry a short statement about issues and a little about the college. I want to mention that the Australian College of Educators is a national professional association of educators. It has been around for a while. It is nearly 45 years old. It was founded in 1959. Its prime purpose is to advance the education profession nationally. It is an independent organisation. It is a not-for-profit organisation and has about 5,500 members and represents all sectors of education, from early childhood through primary, secondary, TAFE and higher education. Its membership, out of that 5,500 members, is mainly in the school sector. As I mentioned, it is also from those other sectors. We have teachers from government, independent and Catholic schools. We see ourselves as a genuinely national organisation representing all sectors of education. We have a small national office here in Canberra and a branch structure, with state and territory branches and 35 regional groups.

From the short paper we sent in, you can see that the goals of the college are to provide a strong national voice for the profession, to promote professional standards to a high order, to encourage excellence in professional practice, to foster the professional development of educators and to enhance the status of the profession. As far as vocational education is concerned, the college has in recent years been involved in a number of activities specifically related to vocational education, mainly in the area of dissemination of publications. One of our major activities is to produce teaching resources, and publications is one of our major contributions in that area. I suppose the latest example of our work in this area was this suite of research projects we conducted for the Enterprise Career and Education Foundation, or ECEF, culminating in this report which we have sent to you. We have some extra copies here today. It is called *Learning in a knowledge society: the vocational dimension*. This report came about as a result of 12 months of research by the college in which we looked at vocational learning, attitudes and practice at training institutions in recent teacher graduates and practitioners of VET

and vocational learning in schools. We also had a national forum here in Canberra in August last year, where we brought together a lot of stakeholders. This report really sums that up. The concluding chapter that we have mentioned in the short document you have is the position paper *Building the profession to support professional learning*. It is the final chapter.

The paper we sent in raises five areas that we thought the committee may be interested in: this concept of new professionalism; expanding professional recognition; supporting teacher educators; strengthening community partnerships; best practice; and simplifying governance and quality control measures. I certainly do not pretend to be an expert in all these areas. That is why Andrew and Michael are here today. I think I will leave it there for my introductory remarks.

CHAIR—Andrew or Michael, would you like to make some introductory comments as well?

Prof. Gonczi—I think this is an interesting but very difficult area. It is one of the most complex areas in the education system.

CHAIR—I am glad you feel that as well.

Prof. Gonczi—I do. Without wanting to give a lecture on this, one of the reasons for this is that there is a very long history of dichotomies, I guess, in thinking in the Western world anyway. Usually they are dichotomies between academic and vocational and manual and mental and so on which are unfortunately still part of the system today. So I think we are all struggling against these dichotomies. It is not very easy to eradicate 2,500 years of thinking. In some ways, that is what I think those people involved in VET today are trying to do. Certainly as part of the college we are attempting to bring together various parts of the educational sectors in some sort of holistic way of looking at all of this, but it is not easy.

CHAIR—Indeed.

Mr SAWFORD—We are in trouble too, as you will find with some of the questions we will ask.

Mr Bradley—From the practitioners' point of view—we were discussing this outside, as you would appreciate—as Peter says, the college represents both the government and non-government sectors. There is uniformity of opinion across those two sectors. The origin of VET in schools is basically because many practitioners felt what was being provided in the schooling system was not meeting the needs of all the students coming through—the growing retention rates and so on—and therefore there was a need to address it. It is one of the grassroots types of issues of trying to bring in new organisational structures and new ways of teaching. I think it is quite true to say that from the school sector's point of view, and this is confirmed by other research around the place, schools are very keen to ensure that they are delivering the best quality. They are very keen to ensure that they are meeting the changing needs of students. But they feel terribly under pressure that they are being criticised quite a bit for what they are doing and that the governance and the quality control being imposed upon them is additional to what they are supposed to be doing already, not complementary. Fundamentally, a lot of people are saying, 'Well, the quality control of the government, does it actually make a difference in what I deliver?' Invariably, the answer coming back is no. It does not make any difference to the

delivery. It may satisfy the accountability aspects, but the delivery is not being effected. I am happy to expand upon those points.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr SAWFORD—We will pursue the area that Michael mentioned about governance. In your view, does it have any great implications for the way in which TAFE is governed? A number of people in the TAFE system would say that one of the great problems is the governance. They do not have independence like the universities.

Mr Bradley—I think the issue from the schools sector is slightly different. I will give you an example.

In the schools sector, each state and territory from the government perspective will have a quality control mechanism, such as school audits, checking the quality of normal day to day operations. For example, here in the ACT we will probably be going to a self-audit on a yearly basis quite soon. So that is occurring. Coming down the same line or parallel is vocational education and training. If you are an RTO, there are audits and checking. For example, I have brought in today evidence to show you what is expected of teachers. The thing is that it is in addition to what they have normally been doing. It is in addition to what they are currently expected to do and it is not complementary.

If you look at page 24 of that document—this is what my deputy puts out to teachers—you will see these responsibilities are in addition to the general responsibilities. There is a document called *Organisational best practice for delivery of VET in schools* by the Allen Consulting Group. In it they talk about governance and the administration. Teachers are basically saying, ‘Why do I have to do two lots of quality control?’ One recommendation that comes through from the schools sector increasingly is, ‘Can we not have a nesting of the quality controls?’ They are not against the quality control, but why should there be two sets?

CHAIR—The view that has been put to us is that there is roughly a 25 per cent load in terms of time to teach VET vis-à-vis other subjects. Would you basically agree with that sort of estimate?

Mr Bradley—I agree that it is a considerable increase. It depends where you are coming from and where you are in the exercise. But there is a considerable increase in what is expected of the VET teacher. As I emphasised before, it is different from what has been expected before. You rarely find teachers who do nothing but VET in schools. They will do a combination of VET and other subjects, which is fine, but it means they have two masters, as it were.

CHAIR—I want to ask a couple of questions about teacher education. In your position paper, you say that teacher education programs need to embrace vocational learning to ensure that teachers are equipped to support students. That is a theme that has been echoed through the inquiry. Is it your view that it ought to be compulsory that all teacher education programs should include it? If so, how would it be included? Would it be part of the general teacher education courses? Would they be stand-alone courses? I suppose, also, how would the teacher training institutions and the universities respond to a requirement that that be involved in every teacher education course?

Prof. Gonczi—The college's view—indeed, it is one echoed in that Allen report and, if you want to go further, in the OECD reports probably over the last five years—is that vocational education ought to be part of the overall school curriculum which everyone undertakes. If that were the case, I think it follows logically that everyone who undertakes or wants to become a teacher will need to understand the whole notion of what vocational education is and how people can learn from the sorts of experiences a vocational education can give you. So I think it has to be part of the whole process.

It is complicated as to how you would go about doing that because I do not think there is expertise in every university faculty in this area. In fact, I know there is not. If you look at the research and so on that has been done in this area, there are probably four or five universities which have anyone in the area and actually only one or two which have any expertise in the area. Probably to be honest, there is one, and that is UTS, as it happens, for historical reasons. So it would be very, very difficult to actually put something like that into practice. I think it is something we ought to aim for. But teacher education depends on a prior decision about where vocational education training fits in schools. Currently, of course, it is not something which is provided for every student.

CHAIR—But given that it is increasing rapidly and there is a growing acceptance of its place within the overall school curriculum, there will be an increasing demand for teachers of VET. Even those teachers who do not intend to be teaching VET in schools, while they are training, often end up teaching it and often end up in careers where they will.

Mr Bulkeley—I think there is a growing acceptance, but there is still a fairly strong rearguard action out there as well. I think, as Andrew said, in practice, there are probably not very many universities—maybe only one—that are addressing this. Our research confirmed this. We sought out the universities at the beginning of last year. There were not very many teacher education faculties that were really addressing vocational learning or vocational education seriously.

CHAIR—So how do we move towards that end? Obviously, if we are going to have VET teachers who can adequately teach VET, something needs to happen on the training side. What practical steps could we as a committee be recommending, even to government, to try to address that particular issue?

Mr Bradley—One recommendation could be that the teacher education institutions should reflect more carefully and more closely what is being expected and practised out there. Currently, the training is very much falling on the shoulders of schools in the state systems. For example, we have difficulty in recruiting because you have industry saying, 'We want these qualifications. Do it.' Industry is not paying for it. State systems are not putting in the money—I am sure you all know that—that they probably could be because of all sorts of Treasury and budgetary situations. Schools have a certain amount of money, but at the same time we have demands from the students. At the moment, the ongoing thrust is really very much on the school sector to train. So, for example, in the recommendation we have in the paper, we emphasise that we would encourage the committee to encourage the states and territories to acknowledge this ongoing need for training. Industry are not just interested in people coming out from the universities who have a VET qualification. They want to see it ongoing. But that has to be built into budgets.

CHAIR—So you are really saying, Michael, that it is almost impossible to address it at the pre-service stage of teacher training. Therefore, it needs to be—

Mr Bradley—No. I am not saying that. I am saying it should be addressed in both. This is what Andrew is saying. But I am saying that we must not forget that there is a timing issue.

CHAIR—The development of it is another part of it, sure. What can we do at the pre-service level?

Prof. Gonczi—Let me put this into a context which is slightly depressing in a way. I was on a working committee in 1997 in New South Wales for the Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Quality of Teaching. It is a group that has been going for a number of years. We produced a report which actually looked at this very issue and made certain recommendations, which are not terribly startling recommendations. We actually did a proper costing of it all. It came in 1997 to \$1 million that the state government would have to put in which would have enabled a whole range of things to happen in the pre-service area as well as setting up some networks and employing people who had industry experience in the schools and so on.

I was reflecting on this when I was preparing for this hearing. Basically, nothing has happened. The reason it did not happen was that the \$1 million was not forthcoming from the state. That is out of a budget of \$5 billion, which always seemed to me to be rather strange. But it has not been given a high enough priority for people to feel that they were going to spend an utterly miniscule amount of money on it. So I think we know what we need to do. But to be honest, it just requires a bit of funding in order to prepare. For example, all it would require would be for every university faculty to employ one or two people in this area. That would not be such a hard thing to do.

CHAIR—So they would be people with industry experience?

Prof. Gonczi—Yes.

CHAIR—And employed in the education faculties in universities?

Prof. Gonczi—Precisely, yes.

Mr Bulkeley—I think there is a growing receptiveness in universities in spite of what I said earlier. At the beginning of our project at the beginning of last year when we surveyed faculties of education, there was almost an attitude of, ‘Well, this is not really our responsibility, vocational learning.’

But throughout the course of the project and then following the production or publication of this document, we went back to universities right at the end of last year and did a survey of a number of them. We showed them this document and the results of this research that we had done. There was a shift. The attitude then was not so much that it was not our baby but rather, ‘Okay. This is important. What can we do and what should we do?’ So there is probably an increasing awareness of the need to get into vocational learning on a much larger scale.

Mr SAWFORD—I want to follow on the same point. When we went around—we have to go to Tasmania and Melbourne again—the distinct impression in terms of the people involved in VET is that they are highly committed. They are almost exclusively all in their 50s, the ones who came forward. There is a brick wall ahead in that if something is not done in teacher training in a very short period of time, it does not matter whether you are in Junee, Wagga, Perth or Mandurah—it does not matter where you go—or Willunga in South Australia, these people will burn out. You mention in your documentation the burnout factor. It is almost getting to a crisis. We need a bit more than just a ‘maybe’ from peak service organisations. They have to do something pretty quickly.

Mr Bradley—The burnout factor is interesting because there is anecdotal information to show that a number of people go into teaching VET and really like doing it. However, they find it is such a heavy workload et cetera that they opt out. I think the previous director in the ACT was of the opinion that there was a sufficiently trained number of people within the system but they were not all teaching VET because many were opting out. The demands become too much, so you opt out. Why wouldn’t they?

Mr PEARCE—I have two questions. The first is to Professor Gonczi. Going back to your earlier point, I agree that this is a very complex area. Having said that, it seems to me that you can distil it down into a couple of key dynamics. One of the things that has bothered me—I am interested in your comment on this—is essentially a lot of the problems and issues that have eventuated with VET have largely come about as a result of the lack of focus and priority that educators, academics and governments have given to this area. Would you agree? Fundamentally, at the end of the day, it has not been a priority. It is such an important area which continually on a daily basis demonstrates its usefulness to students. Why hasn’t it been given priority?

Prof. Gonczi—I really think that it is just part of the thinking, as I say, which emerged from 500 BC or 400 BC. It is as fundamental as that; it really is. There has been in Western thinking a sort of dichotomy between doing and thinking. It has always been there. I mean, 20 years ago, if you had suggested that anything should be done in schools which would prepare people for the work force or the economy more generally, you would have been regarded as a leper within the educational community. It is only in the last 15 years that people have actually begun to rethink this. I do not think on the other hand that they have actually begun to rethink their fundamental assumptions. Peter and Michael have given some indication that that is beginning to happen, but many people are actually accepting that there is something to be done here but without altering their assumptions, which does not lead you very far. They are prepared to tolerate it and accept that others do it but not themselves become involved in it. How you change thinking on a scale of this kind I do not know. I think you just keep chipping away at it and gradually things occur.

Mr SAWFORD—Have you written anything on this?

Prof. Gonczi—Yes, I have.

Mr SAWFORD—What is it?

Prof. Gonczi—I have written, a few years ago now, an article in the *Australia-New Zealand Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, which is—

Ms PLIBERSEK—A specialist publication.

Prof. Gonczi—Yes, it is a specialist publication, exactly.

Mr SAWFORD—Not something for the coffee table.

Prof. Gonczi—No. It is not something that people discuss before they go to the football. But it is a serious thing. However, there have been a couple of things that have changed in the last 15 years to make people think about this in a far more serious way. One clearly has been globalisation and the change in the Australian economy, which has actually forced people to realise something, which is that we need more skilled people and we need them to be skilled to a higher level. It is no longer possible to allow people to leave school at year 10 as we have throughout our history until the 1970s. I think there are some forces which are moving us in the right direction, if I can put it that way.

Mr Bradley—I have not been involved in the area since it started, but at a grassroots starting point, teachers in individual schools around the country in particular suburbs saw kids not succeeding and not getting what they wanted. They started to work with industry and local companies and they saw the fruits of that. It started to work. That started to snowball through with a growing number of people. As it snowballed through, the bureaucracy started to say, 'Let's control what's going through.' As it is going through, it is not being funded at the level that it probably should be. All the controls are coming in at the same time. Now you have the grassroots people getting tired and worn out. I think that is the origin of that sort of thing.

Mr PEARCE—Having recognised that it is a complex area—and it seems to me that whilst there has been a lot of progress, there is still a lot to do in this area—one of the things that concerns me is that committees like us will potentially come up with a list as long as your arm with recommendations about what should happen, and essentially nothing might change as a result of that. At the end of the day, what are the most substantive two or three things that could happen to significantly advance the progress of VET in schools? There must be one, two or three things above everything else. Over all the other things they have, there must be two or three fundamental things. Mr Bradley, from a practitioner's point of view, what are the two or three things that a government could do that would make the most substantive difference rather than having recommendations that think around the edges?

Mr Bulkeley—Can I come in and suggest that probably one of these is around this notion of new professionalism, which we mentioned in that paper. Basically, new professionalism is about a renewed commitment to improving outcomes for students. It is about increasing the capacity of teachers and teacher educators to equip the students to face the challenges of this new knowledge society. One of the cornerstones we are suggesting is professional development or professional standards. Professional standards really, we would suggest, clarify what teachers should know and what they should do in the light of research and best practice. I think professional standards really are a key to helping bring about this cultural shift that needs to take place in schools and in teacher training institutions so that vocational learning can be more mainstream.

Mr PEARCE—Are you suggesting that one of the most substantive things that could happen is some mandating of professional standards across the country?

Mr Bulkeley—There is a lot of work right now about professional standards. In fact, at a national forum here in Canberra only in May we managed to get a group of professional associations for the first time to come together and produce this statement on teacher standards, quality and professionalism. I would not go so far as to agree that that needs to be mandated, but I think we are moving towards a greater role for teacher standards.

Mr PEARCE—This is one of the areas that concerns me. There is always lots of talk and debate about what could and could not happen. At the end of the day, what we run the risk of—when I say ‘we’, I mean governments and people who are interested in education—is sitting here in 10 years time talking about vocational education and training and what needs to be done. I guess I am very interested in what you believe the pragmatic things are that need to be done.

Mr Bradley—There is a lot of frustration out in TAFE and the universities and the schools that over the last few years there has been a swathe of VET inquiries at state, local and federal levels. Practitioners are saying, ‘Well, we keep telling them the same things but nothing really changes.’

CHAIR—So what has to change?

Ms PLIBERSEK—I think more money is at the top of the list.

Mr Bradley—Money is, as I think you would expect, always important. We mentioned earlier the fundamental issue of what education is all about. Vocational education and training is not an add-on. It is a fundamental change in direction as to how you teach and what you are doing in your schools. That debate has not been had in the country. If you look at the states’ and territories’ curriculum around the place, it has changed somewhat but not significantly. Vocational learning embedded into the curriculum has been pushed in a number of locations, but it has not actually come to fruition.

I know there has been mention about changes across the nation. I refer to your point about how you can input into changes. There has been a discussion by MCEETYA about national approaches. I would suggest that this committee could fundamentally input to that national approach of asking what the role of VET is in our school system. Should we have a national approach? Should we have some national study? What is the impact of VET across the curriculum so that you have vocational learning?

It has also been mentioned recently that there will be established in Canberra a national institute which will be for teachers and principals. The details have not been announced. That is another opportunity; the committee could input into the formulation of that national institute. The national institute should have a look at vocational education and training. They are two practical examples if the committee is supportive of what has been worked out, for example, in the New South Wales research investigation and with the state and territories in these types of investigations. After a point of time, there is a certain volume of evidence and of opinion that something must be changed. You would expect that that will carry some weight at MCEETYA. MCEETYA will have to carry through some of the decisions.

Prof. Gonczi—I know that academics are not noted for the practical propositions they put forward. Perhaps what I am about to say is not necessarily practical. In order to answer a

question like this, it is always useful to turn to the evidence of what exists. There is not a lot of evidence, actually, in this area because there has not been very much research, really, even internationally, into this area. What evidence we have largely comes from OECD studies over the last five or 10 years. I think they show at least one or two things. There are some countries which have played with these ideas a bit more than we have, particularly the Scandinavian countries. There are two things that come out of this—that is, the countries which have been most successful in enabling school children to make the transition successfully into work or further study have all been countries where there is a combination of general and vocational education for all students. It has become a mainstream part of the curriculum. How practical that is in Australia I do not know. But, as Michael said, we have not really had a debate about that. So that is the first thing that comes from the evidence.

The second thing that comes through is that there is an enormous amount to be learnt through learning in the workplace that cannot be learnt in formal educational institutions. Again, how practical that is is questionable because it depends on industry being prepared to provide places and, indeed, not just work placements but perhaps even great numbers of school type apprenticeships and so on. But there is an enormous amount to be learnt there that cannot be learnt elsewhere.

The third point—and the evidence is much wider for this—is that for this to work, the quality of teachers needs to be high and the quality, therefore, of training and professional development needs to be high. That is something which applies in the general education sector as well as in this sector. If we were able to have a debate and start to do something on those three levels, I think we could start to do it. But that is a fundamental root and branch debate about what it is that we are trying to do for young people. Frankly, the way that VET has become part of the curriculum in a sense has bypassed all that debate, as Michael also said. So I would like to see those things happen, but in terms of how we make them happen, I guess politicians are better at doing that.

CHAIR—But we are here to ask you how to make that happen.

Prof. Gonczi—One reason I am a member of the council of the college is that that is what we try and do—to get debate going at a national level about these issues at a fundamental level. It is not very easy to do because it is a federal system and in each system we have different sorts of things going on and different sorts of imperatives and different bureaucracies, some much more rigid than others. We are trying. But a professional association likes ours needs to work in association with politicians, MCEETYA and the federal minister to try to get some of these things really penetrating at the grassroots level.

Mr SAWFORD—I have one question which goes back to Andrew's opening comments about the dichotomies in this very complex area. It refers to a lot of the propaganda that is out there. It is full of contradictions. The majority of the propaganda reflects this integrated and, in my view, one-dimensional approach to VET, which I think is very dangerous. In my own experience, even on this inquiry, the best places that are doing VET do not integrate at all. They are discrete. They are actually separate. They allow both channels. They allow academic progress through their school and excellence and they allow the VET through their school. They fund the VET quite significantly differently.

In this integration context, in some ways, the dichotomies are easier to deal with if they are discrete. Sometimes there is confusion with the integrated approach. I could ask a lot more questions, but that is basically the guts of the thing. I would like to hear your response to that and maybe in terms of the paper that you wrote. Did you address that issue in the paper you wrote three or four years ago?

Prof. Gonczi—What do you mean exactly by the integrated approach?

Mr SAWFORD—This comes up in learning in a knowledge society. I will refer to some quotes:

In the 21st century school, integrated learning will become the thread.

You get this thing all the way through. Another is collaborative learning. None of us want to use the word ‘competition’. The analysis is no analysis; it is synthesis. It is bits and pieces all added together to make a whole. When people talk about holistic approaches, they are not talking about holistic approaches with regard to analysis, where you take the whole idea and find its constituent parts. They are not saying that at all. In fact, they are synthesising everything and hoping it will make a whole. That is a different approach. To me, this explains the contradictions and why this area is so complex. But the very successful people at VET in schools do not think that way. They separate out.

Mr Bulkeley—But how successful is it when it is separated out like that? I think when we are taking about integrated—

Mr SAWFORD—These are the most successful VET in schools places in Australia, and they are recognised as such.

Mr Bulkeley—But for how many students? That is the thing.

Mr SAWFORD—As a benchmark, 70 per cent of their kids will have access to accredited VET. There will be a benchmark. All of those schools I am talking about have that benchmark, every one of them. They do it deliberately.

Mr Bulkeley—I wonder what preparation they did. VET is usually associated with the senior years of secondary school, right?

Mr SAWFORD—Year 11 and year 12.

Mr Bulkeley—I am wondering to what extent those schools addressed vocational learning in an integrated way across the curriculum in, say, years 9 and 10. Perhaps it was a natural pathway for some of the students in those successful schools to move from years 9 to 10 into a VET course. That is one aspect of this integrated learning approach. This is why I would suggest it is so important that vocational learning be embedded in the culture across the school almost right back to school.

Mr SAWFORD—That is what the propaganda is saying. I accept that. I am saying that maybe we would be better off doing it the other way.

Prof. Gonczi—Are you suggesting completely different streams or even different schools?

Ms PLIBERSEK—Or specialist schools.

Mr SAWFORD—Or specialist schools.

Prof. Gonczi—More specialists?

Mr Bradley—It is doubtful that anyone is actually doing vocational learning. Vocational education and training is not necessarily the vocational learning which is being proposed in the documentation. As you are saying, we do not have separate strands as such but we have students who are doing vocational education and training units and straightforward academic units with a very good success rate.

Mr SAWFORD—In both areas?

Mr Bradley—In both areas. We offer them to both. We look at the individual student and what is appropriate for that individual student. A number of students would do aspects of both. But I think the concept of vocational learning does not actually exist anywhere. It is something that has not been tried in Australia but it has been tried overseas. I think that is the debate that has to occur. Vocational learning has an impact on the academic subjects and how we teach them. So the general curriculum itself is in need of renewal. It is how we address that general curriculum. Vocational learning will have an impact on how you produce that. But you are dead right: you will find currently that those people who say we integrate the vocational into everything do not do vocational learning, to be quite honest. It is different. Everywhere in the ACT will have people doing vocational courses, doing academic courses, doing registered courses and doing a mixture as they progress. That model at the moment is the preferred model because the model of vocational learning does not exist, I do not think.

Mr SAWFORD—I asked the question of Andrew and now he cannot get a word in!

Prof. Gonczi—There is a very long history of specialisation in vocational education and training in schools internationally. Look at Germany. All of the central European countries have done that. There is some evidence that that produces a higher standard amongst those people who are doing vocational education and training. But it also does tend to put them into a certain stream which, unless there are pathways from that stream to the more academic or more different academic streams, if you like, does not work. There has been a history in Australia in various states, of course, of having technical high schools and so on. However, they were not specialist schools really. They were schools for the people who were not seen to be academically capable. I think that is always the danger with the current sort of dichotomous thinking we have. I think it would be dangerous to set up separate schemes like that and separate schools.

I think it would be highly desirable to do that at the higher education level so that we had polytechnics of the kind that people tried in the past but which had not done terribly well. But I would not like to see that at schools. I think really at school you have to—

Mr SAWFORD—What about at years 11 and 12?

Prof. Gonczi—Well, that might be a possibility. That is what they do in Germany and Finland and a number of other countries. Once people have identified that they want to move into an engineering or technical stream, they do put them into that sort of thing. But they are highly academic courses.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, they are.

Prof. Gonczi—They are just vocationally oriented. I think it would be possible to do that.

Mr FARMER—There are a couple of things that I would like to discuss with you. Given the fact that the whole purpose of education is to allow people to move on into an employment situation or at least to better their quality of life so that they can add to the community, with that in mind, I believe there has been a strong shift in the way that students have been taught in recent years. There has been more emphasis placed on VET in schools for that reason. The whole purpose of this inquiry is to find how we are not getting VET in schools right and to put forward the necessary recommendations to take us on with this new millennium idea well and truly into the future.

Sometimes we have listened to people on the other side of this table tell us that it is about dollar signs; it is a matter of dollars and cents. There are a couple of things I want to put to you. I want your honest opinion along these lines. Do you believe that the teachers in our schools are receiving an adequate salary to justify what governments, parents and the general population expect of them in return? That is one question. I need a strong, firm answer to that. All of this is leading somewhere. Michael, in particular, mentioned funding. Everybody says we need to throw funding at this. Can I suggest to you that there is no problem whatsoever with any government coming up with any amount of funding that will improve this situation and come up with the necessary answers. However, I have not heard anybody on the other side of this table come up with a clearly defined list of exactly what we would get for a particular sum of money and how that would need to be spent. It is very easy to say we need to spend more money on the system, but the whole nature of this inquiry is to find exactly which avenues that needs to be spent on and where we need to go with it.

Another thing that has come out of this inquiry is that the school teachers will tell you VET works well in schools because the teachers have the experience directly with the students to be able to know and understand the students very well. They understand the way they have learnt through the years because a lot of students have been involved with the same school for a number of years. So they nurture them in that environment. Then we speak with the TAFE teachers, who say, 'We have the industry experience to be able to teach these students well and to be able to give them the necessary education to be able to go on into full-time employment.' So we have this dilemma. TAFE teachers believe they are making it work extremely well. The high school teachers say they can nurture the students very well and nurture their learning process well.

We have this integrated approach at the moment which is not working particularly well. The whole idea of this committee is to come up with real answers for the future. If these two things are not working particularly well, do we need, as Rod alluded to earlier, a specialised school, a specialised TAFE situation for VET in particular? Do we need to go back to the drawing board

and teach teachers in schools to be able to be specific right from an early age? I am talking about from year 7 up instead of just years 10 to 12.

Mr Bulkeley—I appreciate your requirement for some specifics. I talked earlier about professional development. Maybe I will come back to teachers' salaries. I think that professional development is a key specifically to do with some of the things you just mentioned about the view of TAFE and about their role. TAFE teachers have the skills whereas VET in school staff do not. I suggest we need professional development to increase the school and industry experience of VET in schools staff so that it matches that of TAFE staff.

I think we need professional development and professional learning to improve the consistency in curriculum, assessment and reporting with TAFE. I think we probably need professional development for TAFE staff to better understand the needs of school students. TAFE is an adult education environment. From my limited understanding, there are many TAFE staff who have great difficulty dealing with some of the younger school aged kids. You have kids from year 10.

Mr FARMER—They are 14 years old.

Mr Bulkeley—It could be a different kettle of fish to someone who is 18, 19 or 20. As a father of a year 10 child, I subscribe to that substantially. So for TAFE staff we need professional development and for school staff to better understand the need for a focus on vocational learning. This comes back to my point, and I think yours, that this goes right back perhaps to year 7, the beginning of high school, so that vocational learning can be made mainstream. It could well be that there is a need for joint professional development between TAFE and VET in school staff together.

Mr Bradley—I think it is important to point out that whilst there may have been in some jurisdictions some conflict between TAFE and schools, generally speaking, that conflict is probably over-exaggerated and there is more coordination and cooperation that leads to best practice. The recommendations we have made in the paper before you draws attention to the fact that we would encourage you to encourage states and territory employees to ensure that VET in school teachers are provided with ongoing access to workplace development and industry experience. As a college, we believe that is very important. What is coming back from the practitioners in the schools is that they understand the need for that, they would like to do that but there are organisational realities in running an institution. How do you release a person to go and have experience in industry on a block release basis? There is the expense associated with that because you have to replace that. There are considerable numbers of people who actually go out into work experience from being teachers.

Mr FARMER—I think where some of the conflict arises from the question I asked is that we are hearing that a lot of the high schools want to deck out the school with the latest catering equipment or whatever and they want to dedicate a particular teacher in a particular room specifically for that. They do it extremely well. When you talk to the people at TAFE, they say, 'Hang on a minute. The government has thrown big dollars into that school. We already have these facilities here plus we have expertise to be able to teach it. Maybe it would be better done over here.' It is a matter of money, but our recommendations need to state where that should go.

Mr Bradley—There has to be a maximisation of resource allocation and collaboration. There are a number of examples. I can give you an example from the NT in a comprehensive school. We linked with the local TAFE. We had government schools and non-government schools, Catholics and independents. Together there were a number of students available. One facility was used. So you can do that. This report shows you a number of examples where there is collaboration and cooperation. There are a lot of examples. That is the trend. Teachers are more than happy to do that. In my college at the moment here in Canberra, we are doing an e-learning business in cooperation with CIT. So there is a linkage across. I think there are more of those coming on stream than what is probably given credit for at times.

Prof. Gonczi—You have asked a very important question. I completely agree with Michael. At the moment, school teachers do not really understand TAFE teachers and TAFE teachers do not really understand school teachers. They both have things to offer which no-one in the other group can offer. You are absolutely right: school teachers do understand more about adolescents and so on, and the TAFE teachers understand much more about industry. But there have to be ways of people working together. It seems to me—I have absolutely no vested interest in this—absurd to reproduce the kind of facilities that already exist in a TAFE college within a school. But of course that means there needs to be cooperation regarding different timetables and different levels of understanding and so on. That would be No. 1 for me—much better cooperation.

The second thing, as I said before, is quality of teachers. The quality of teachers is ultimately what makes a difference in this area. That means professional development. Unfortunately, of course, it does not necessarily mean new money. It means possibly taking some of the money that is already there from somewhere else and moving it into this area.

Ms GAMBARO—The issue of earlier integration, particularly in year 7, has been covered. It is something I was going to ask you about. There is a lot of focus on the professional development of teachers. Is there something we can do as a committee in terms of the workplace and employers? You mentioned the block scheme and how difficult it is to release teachers. Are there many cases where the employer comes into the school system, or is that totally impractical because of the work environment? What can we do to encourage it from that end? There seem to be some structural problems there as well.

Mr Bradley—I think you are right. I think it has been easier for teachers to go out into the workplace as distinct from the people in the workplace coming in to schools and colleges because of all sorts of industrial issues and duty of care and those types of things. They have to be addressed. As we have been saying this morning, it is about breaking down the barriers. We need to get across that we are all involved in the same thing, which is trying to get the best things for the kids. It is true that there are bigger barriers to coming in.

I can give you an example. Currently at my place, I have a person from the CIT who comes in and delivers in association with a teacher. It is an experiment; it is a pilot. One thing we have put down in the recommendations is that this committee could see itself encouraging pilots and projects and publicising good practice, because there is a lot of good practice. When people see good practice and they can be reassured that it works, then they are more likely to have a go themselves. I think the committee could—this is what we have put in the submission—

encourage that sort of dissemination of good practice. This report from Allen Consulting gives a lot of good examples of organisational best practice, but it has not been disseminated.

Ms GAMBARO—Thanks for that.

Mr Bradley—We would encourage that.

Ms PLIBERSEK—I want to ask you about the idea that you would introduce vocational learning from a very early age. Do you think what you are trying to do is replace the sort of skills that kids used to pick up because they lived in bigger families and had to contribute to the household income from a much earlier age? Thus, you are really moving the responsibility that used to be borne by the family on to the teachers? It is one more life skill that teachers have to teach instead of kids picking it up in the normal course of growing up in a big, rambunctious family where they all have a paper round and they all have to look after the younger kids.

Mr Bulkeley—I think it is an emphasis. It is a new emphasis. In the project we did, we used the MCEETYA definition of vocational learning, which is at the end of this booklet. Vocational learning is general learning. It is the sort of generic thing that has a vocational perspective. It includes things such as general employability skills, enterprise education, career education, community and work based learning, which perhaps pick up some of the things you are thinking of.

Ms PLIBERSEK—Particularly when you are talking about employability skills, things like turning up on time?

Mr Bulkeley—Exactly. And communication skills, working in a team, this sort of thing. There is a role for this sort of thing right through from the earliest years of high school. VET tends to have the connotations of specific competencies. It has the connotations clearly of being the senior end of secondary school. For some people, I would suggest, in schools it is still regarded as an add-on, and certainly perhaps for some parents. Some parents would see it as—

Ms PLIBERSEK—I wonder whether it is an unreasonable expectation that the things kids used to pick up in the whole course of their lives are instead going to be taught by a teacher.

Mr Bradley—I think it is true to say in response to the question you started off with that teachers currently believe they are being asked to do everything for everybody and receive very poor salaries for what they are being expected to do. This additionality is always an issue. I would suggest that the debate has to occur about vocational learning's impact on how we teach, ie, the pedagogical aspects. It is more than what a lot of people would be saying. There has been no debate and discussion about the impact on learning in general, about how we teach students and how we get kids to be active learners and so on.

There is a lot to be learned from vocational learning. But it is quite true: if some of the committee said, 'We expect all teachers from grade 5 upwards to have an interest in careers education and vocational learning and so on,' there would be huge resistance because people would say, 'We are already doing enough. We are fully occupied. What more does government want us to do?' particularly at years 11 and 12. At years 11 and 12, one issue that is coming through more strongly now than probably in the past is, given the retention rates, the importance

of the pastoral student welfare issues at years 11 and 12. Often in the past, years 11 and 12 student welfare has not been significant because, frankly, most of the issues associated with student welfare have left by years 11 and 12. They are now there in the system. In South Australia, they increased the school leaving age, so students were forced to stay. Elsewhere students are staying because they believe they should stay. These student welfare issues have to be addressed. Lots of year 11 and 12 teachers have no idea what to do with student welfare type issues. However, they are now having to deal with them.

Ms PLIBERSEK—Because kids have wanted to go to university?

Mr Bradley—Exactly. That additional load is being placed on them.

Ms PLIBERSEK—One of the issues that comes up periodically—it relates to teacher pay—is whether principals should have the ability to reward teachers who do something extra or are particularly good at their job. If you have someone who is teaching computers and they can earn a starting salary of \$60,000 or \$80,000 in the private sector, why would they want, beyond personal satisfaction, to teach when there is a substantial drop in pay?

Mr Bradley—We often ask the same question.

Ms PLIBERSEK—Do you think there should be the ability to pay people with extra skills more or take to a higher level people who have particularly good success rates with kids? I am talking about people who are able to take kids with low skills and problems, the sort of kids you are identifying who are now staying at school that might have left previously. Should we be able to reward those people more?

Mr FARMER—On an incentive basis?

Ms PLIBERSEK—I am curious, because there is a lot of resistance from many teachers to this idea.

Mr Bradley—There is resistance because it has always been seen as a very simple, quick-fix solution when in actual fact there is no evidence to show that it actually does that.

Ms PLIBERSEK—Isn't there a lot of evidence to show that teaching quality is the single most important factor in improving—

Mr Bradley—That is quite true, but there is also evidence to show that once you get to a certain salary rate, teachers are not in it for the money alone. There are all the altruistic, intrinsic reasons.

CHAIR—That is true, but a financial reward is a disincentive, is it?

Prof. Gonczi—It does actually happen already in the private schools.

Ms PLIBERSEK—I am saying that is a bit unfair as well. The best thing would be to have the best teachers in the hardest schools. There are incentives in New South Wales. I am sure this is the same in many other places around the country. Once you have had 10 years experience or

15 years experience, it is much easier to get an easy school with easy kids. Wouldn't it be terrific if you could pay those people twice as much to go into the schools working with kids with really special needs? I mean special needs not only in an institutional sense but identifiable needs. Experienced teachers would be much better at dealing with them than the poor bastards who come straight out of teachers college and are sent to the toughest schools. I do not know how you would manage that without having some flexibility with pay.

Prof. Gonczy—The difficulty is that it is basically stopped by the unions. You are on that side of politics.

Ms PLIBERSEK—The teachers federation is not affiliated with the Labor Party, incidentally. You would know that in New South Wales there is always conflict between teacher unions and education bureaucracies, no matter who is in government. That is probably the same in other states.

Mr Bradley—I think it is important to bear in mind that workplaces have tried system wide to bring that up. I worked in Texas for a while. We brought in a pay system like that. It made no difference overall.

Ms PLIBERSEK—Why not?

Mr Bradley—Part of it was that it just became another part of the game. It was just another part of the system. When you target money to assist teachers in doing their work, that has been shown to be pretty good. For example, sending the best teachers to the most under-resourced school, where there are these huge problems such as big classes and so on, without any additional support will not make that much difference.

Ms PLIBERSEK—Texas might be different because it might be local government that runs schools, like in many American states; I do not know.

Mr Bradley—I worked for the state. You are right: each local area does. But they have to fit in with the state.

Ms PLIBERSEK—So class sizes, for example, are pretty standard across the state. There are differences between the public and private school sectors and independent schools and whatever, but they are pretty standard across the state or even the city, if you use that as an example. In the public system, the big difference is the parents' ability to raise additional money in schools, isn't it?

Mr Bradley—Money?

Ms PLIBERSEK—For extra resources.

Mr Bradley—Yes. No government schools have no money. I think it is an issue of providing sufficient base-level salaries for the teachers. That is the crucial one, first of all. Currently around the nation, teachers will tell you without reservation that the baseline salary is just insufficient. That is the bottom line irrespective of what their job is, irrespective of where they are. Until that fundamental issue is addressed, I do not think talk about performance pay and

incentive pay et cetera will get anywhere because the baseline is insufficient. Once you go across that baseline so that everybody is rewarded adequately, then you can start to address other needs.

Ms PLIBERSEK—It is almost impossible to imagine what would be adequate pay for a teacher, though. If you consider the importance of the job, you could easily pay effective teachers twice as much as they earn and that would be a reasonable pay. But it is difficult to imagine that that is going to happen in any system because of the enormous expense that would involve.

Mr Bradley—I think the way to address that is that teachers would say, ‘Let’s look at people who come out of universities with an equal amount of training and experience. What will they be achieving?’ My daughter left Adelaide university with a degree. Within one year, she was earning more than the majority of my teachers. She is not a doctor; she is in the health field in laboratory type work. That is the sort of comparison that teachers will make. With police officers in New South Wales after training—no-one is saying they should not get paid well—a teacher will say, ‘Well, that person has so much training. I have so much training. Look at the differential.’ That is the baseline stuff. At the moment, the baseline is too low.

Mr Bulkeley—I do not think there are too many teachers that teach for the money, quite clearly.

Ms PLIBERSEK—I am not suggesting that at all.

Mr Bulkeley—Part of any standards framework that might eventually be implemented would include this recognition of highly accomplished teachers. This is basically what the standards document is about; it is about the highly accomplished teachers. Maybe remuneration is a factor, but there are other possibilities for rewarding that highly accomplished teacher through sabbaticals, time release, time allowances, that sort of thing, for various things, such as research, mentoring or whatever. It is a very difficult thing—salaries for teachers.

I am currently involved in a project about career change entrance into teaching. This connects with this recommendation at the end of No. 3 about the committee supporting the provision of additional support for teacher educators to conduct further research and development into attracting and retaining professionals with rich industry experience. In the vocational area, it is a terrific resource to get people from other professions to come in. The research that we have done over the last six months clearly shows that the reason why people change careers to become teachers is mainly altruism. People take massive pay cuts. It is about altruism, family arrangements or being with their children and that sort of thing.

CHAIR—I guess where the rubber hits the road on that issue for VET, it would seem to me, rather than on the salary issue directly, is the release from face to face teaching to cover the extra workload that VET involves. Peter, I will take up the point you mentioned about bringing people with industry experience into teaching. Obviously, there is the disincentive of a low salary but there are other disincentives that have been put to us as well in terms of the difficulty of retraining, the requirements for a Dip. Ed or some sort of an education diploma.

Ms PLIBERSEK—And not being paid.

CHAIR—And not being paid when you do it. How do we tackle that issue?

Mr Bulkeley—There are a number of options that we are uncovering in our surveys. For example, you might do your graduate diploma in education part time over a couple of years so that you are still able to work.

CHAIR—But there is still a cost involved in that. You are trying to do that as well as work. You are paying—

Prof. Gonczi—Ideally, what should happen is what currently happens with TAFE in New South Wales. Any new teacher is employed as a full-time teacher from their first year but they do a teacher training course concurrently with their employment.

CHAIR—Is there any reason that cannot apply in the school system as well? Take someone who is a tradesman, builder or IT specialist. They receive full salary while they train to do their education course. They could do a couple of days a week in the classroom.

Prof. Gonczi—There is absolutely no reason apart from money for not doing it. It would be highly desirable.

Mr FARMER—In the marketplace they would be paid a lot more money than they would be—

CHAIR—We need to wrap up. We do not have a quorum any longer.

Mr Bradley—People do not have a problem with those sort of ideas. It comes back to the school paying for the training or the system paying for it. There is no leeway, as it were—

CHAIR—Should the way ahead be for education departments to provide a means of bringing non-teachers into training and pay them full time? Would that be a reasonable recommendation?

Mr Bulkeley—Like everything across Australia, there is this massive variation when it comes to education.

CHAIR—That was going to be my next question. How do we get uniformity across the country in this regard?

Mr Bradley—With the state and territory systems regarding training, if I put a state or territory hat on for the education department, I would be saying, ‘We are not the trainers.’ That would be the response of most. We are not funded to train teachers. We are not teacher training institutions. We provide ongoing professional development but state education departments are not teacher training institutions as such.

CHAIR—But they are still the employers, though. What would need to happen is that the industry person would need to be employed by the department.

Prof. Gonczi—They are already doing it in TAFE so there is no reason why it could not be done in school. However, historically in New South Wales, just to use that as an example, there

used to be 600 teachers trained every year in that way. Currently there are 40 or 50 or 60. The reason for that is that the TAFE area of education has not got enough money to do it, so they just employ part-time people. So it is a system that used to be funded. It used to be the only way in which one could become a VET teacher in TAFE and qualify. But now that has broken down, tragically, in my humble opinion.

Mr Bulkeley—There are cases in Australia where departments have a scholarship model, where they will pay the HECS or give a scholarship while that person trains. The quid pro quo is that when that person finishes their training, they go to a Western Sydney school or a remote rural place, perhaps in Western Australia if it is the WA system. So there is that linkage.

CHAIR—The scholarship system is attractive, but it does not make up for the loss of pay?

Mr Bulkeley—No. We surveyed over 200 of these career change entrants to teaching. I am a career change entrant to teaching myself. You do not do it purely for the money. There is no financial incentive.

CHAIR—I did not mean a loss of pay in terms of the different pay scale. I mean the loss of pay while you are training. So that still needs to be addressed. The year that are you training—

Prof. Gonczi—It is very hard for a man or woman in their 40s to be able to do that for a whole year and earn nothing. It is all very well for HECS to be paid. I have raised this on many occasions with the New South Wales department. They have said to me, ‘Well, the evidence, though, is that we are getting sufficient numbers not in the VET area but in science, maths and so on, in order to just offer the HECS scholarship.’ That is enough to attract people.

CHAIR—They would not argue, though, that they are getting sufficient in the VET area, would they?

Prof. Gonczi—No, they would not. They certainly would not do that.

CHAIR—So there is a real issue, isn’t there?

Mr Bulkeley—As the teacher supply situation becomes even more critical, it becomes an area that should be perhaps explored much more seriously.

CHAIR—Do you think as educators—sorry, Pat.

Mr FARMER—No. I am agreeing with you. I think this is a road we need to go down.

CHAIR—Do you think there is a capacity, perhaps, to reduce the formal education requirements of these people in VET? Can that be done without threatening the quality and professional standards of teaching? I think some schools in the private sector do it.

Mr Bulkeley—This certainly is an area that we have looked at. There are all sorts of industrial ramifications here. The overseas experience, especially in the United States, is that there are lots of models where you have compressed, fast-track training for people coming into teaching from other areas. But it is a pathway in Australia that would need a lot of consultation with unions.

CHAIR—Is much happening in Australia?

Mr Bulkeley—Not in that area.

Mr Bradley—As I mentioned at the start, with VET in schools, the teacher will be expected not just to teach VET. Therefore, you cannot just target your training to VET. If you do that, then we have a problem. We have to be able to use those people. Until we review the curriculum totally, we have two systems in operation. The person employed at my place must be able to teach not just one single strand of education. They have to teach more than that. Therefore, when we are recruiting, yes, we want VET, that is an added qualification that assists us, but we want them to be able to teach other things as well. All experience and evidence shows that they do not want to teach just one narrow area, too. They want to teach across. They do not want to be seen as a small section within the school and labelled as just being in the VET area. They want to be a teacher in that school or college. The training has to take that into account. The training must ensure that they are educators because that is what they are being employed for. We realise that there is pressure from industry and others to let a person with minimal training loose, as it were, in the schools sector. I think the school sector would be very concerned about that.

CHAIR—I return to the issue of the HECS free scholarships for tradespeople and industry people who come into teaching. Would there not be a problem of inequity regarding people who go through university, do a Dip. Ed or Bachelor of Education—the standard approach to teaching—and accumulate a HECS debt and so on, albeit perhaps less than others? However, someone could come in through another course, such as through TAFE or with a bit of industry experience, and go into teaching without a HECS debt. Is that a significant barrier, do you think?

Prof. Gonczi—Well, it is already happening.

CHAIR—Through TAFE.

Prof. Gonczi—I do not think there is. Of course it is a slight issue. But compared to the other issues, it is really quite a minor one, I think.

Mr Bradley—I think so.

Prof. Gonczi—With regard to your earlier question, though, about the different sorts of standards of the qualification and the different lengths, that already happens in the TAFE area. For example, TAFE teachers who are undergraduates, who do not have a degree, can do a degree in two years rather than three because they are given advance standing for their trade and industrial experience. That has now become standard across Australia.

CHAIR—Across Australia?

Prof. Gonczi—Yes. That has happened. It took a number of years for that to happen, but it has happened. So I think that those sorts of models can be put into place. But it requires the equivalent of the extra year and industry experience and so on. So it is possible to do that and to get agreement both in the universities and in the systems.

CHAIR—So more work needs to be done between the states on that?

Prof. Gonczi—Absolutely.

CHAIR—Pat, do you have some more questions?

Mr FARMER—No, Chair.

CHAIR—There are a lot of other things I would like to ask, but time has gone. I will ask one other quick question. In the 1996 study, you said that the equality of status between vocational education and general education seems to be improving, or the perception issue there is improving.

Mr Bradley—Yes.

CHAIR—Is there a perception problem in terms of status within VET? That is, the more traditional trades are seen as perhaps second-class VET whereas the VET that involves business studies, IT studies et cetera is a higher status VET. How do we raise the status of building, bricklaying, plumbing and hairdressing et cetera?

Mr Bradley—I do not know that that is an issue.

CHAIR—Is that not an issue?

Mr Bradley—I know what you are saying. The most popular ones do happen to be IT. IT is extremely popular in VET. Often the IT ones are popular because they lead directly into industry positions. You have Cisco and Microsoft qualifications, which are internationally accepted, so they are very popular. We still find hospitality extremely popular.

CHAIR—That is still one that has a degree of esteem—hospitality, tourism et cetera.

Mr Bradley—The building one has not gone off that well in the ACT in the schools sector. It is seen to be still in the CIT type sector.

CHAIR—Do you think there is an image, status, perception problem?

Mr Bradley—I would say that it is more that we have relied upon the teachers and we do not have many teachers who would be able to do those sorts of areas. We do have teachers who are motor mechanics and engineers.

CHAIR—There is a problem there, isn't there, if there are skills shortages in some of these areas? So there is a problem regarding which aspects of VET we are focusing on in schools.

Mr Bradley—With the ones you mentioned, such as the building type areas, we do not have in the schools many ex-builders who become teachers.

CHAIR—We need to, then. Again, we have a problem.

Prof. Gonczi—My answer to that is cooperation with the TAFE system.

CHAIR—So for those courses we need to access TAFE.

Prof. Gonczi—Unfortunately, TAFE is not funded to do that. That is why it is not going to happen. The TAFE colleges are already full of apprentices and so on. For them to want to do extra stuff in the schools, there has to be some proper funding associated with it. Otherwise it is not going to—

CHAIR—You have all these funding problems. In some states, students have to pay to buy the TAFE courses. You also have the private-public issue whereby in some states public school students can access TAFE while private school students cannot. How do we overcome that problem?

Prof. Gonczi—My funding solution to that would be that the dollar goes with the student. In a sense, it would be a voucher. You do not want to mention vouchers, but you know what I mean. They would have an entitlement to X number of hours in a TAFE college. That money would go to TAFE. Of course, the schools do not like that because it means they do not get the money. But that seems to me to be the only solution.

Mr Bradley—There is the issue of what that dollar is. For example, if you have a student enrolled at a college who spends three-quarters of the time at the college and one-quarter of the time at the local TAFE and you take one-quarter of what the government says you have been allocated, that will not necessarily compensate for the loss. We still have to do things that the quota taken over by TAFE has not done. So it is not very simple and straightforward. In fact, you can end up with a disincentive because the loss to the school by allowing the person to be paid to go somewhere else is not compensated sufficiently. There needs to be cooperation both ways.

CHAIR—I would like to pursue this a lot further. Unfortunately, we do not have time to do that. I would like to explore the whole private-public school things as well. Thank you very much. Pat, did you have any other questions?

Mr FARMER—I am fine, thank you. Thanks very much, gentlemen. That has made a big difference.

CHAIR—That has been very helpful and quite stimulating. There are a lot of other issues that I would like to pursue. Michael, that other report you had there, do you have a copy of that for us? I do not think we have that one.

Prof. Gonczi—The Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Quality of Teaching, or MACQT, in New South Wales published a report on vocational education in schools, on teacher training. It is not a terribly good report but is worth looking at. It is on the web site.

CHAIR—It is the Ministerial Advisory Committee on—

Prof. Gonczi—Quality of Teaching. It is in New South Wales. You can download it.

CHAIR—You mentioned some European studies, Michael, on some good things happening in VET.

Prof. Gonczi—There is a whole series of OECD publications. I will look them up for you.

CHAIR—If you could perhaps give us the names of them and send them to us, thank you.

Mr Bradley—The OECD research has drawn a comparison between all the different countries. The Finnish one was extremely interesting, wasn't it?

Prof. Gonczi—Yes. The OECD do country studies, as you know, on a regular basis. They have recently done individual country studies on some of the Scandinavian countries, including Finland. They also have comparative things occasionally. There have been so many. I will just check that for you.

Mr Bradley—There seems to be a bit of a theme from a couple of members. The recent material shows that the German model of separating students out at an early age into a technical strand and an academic strand is not producing the goods for the German economy. I suggest that you do not go down that line. It is not working.

CHAIR—So integration earlier on and then separation later?

Mr Bradley—All I am saying is that the German model has now been shown not to produce the goods for the economy.

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

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

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

Committee adjourned at 10.34 a.m.