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Official Committee Hansard

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Vocational education in schools

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Wednesday, 1 October 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 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 9.02 a.m.

DOBSON, Mr Robert, Senior Project Officer (VET in Schools), Department of Education, Tasmania

EVANS, Mr Nicholas, Director (Strategic Planning and Development), Department of Education, Tasmania

STEVENS, Mr Michael, Deputy Secretary (VET Strategies), Department of Education, Tasmania

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing of the inquiry into vocational education in schools and I welcome representatives of the Tasmanian Department of Education. I remind you that the proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. We would prefer that all evidence is given in public, but if you would like to make any comments in camera, please ask and we will consider that. I invite you to make some introductory comments after which we will proceed to questioning.

Mr Stevens—Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission and to present our views. We do not wish to say too much to start with. Most of the information is in our submission. If I could start by saying that the current government has developed a 20 year economic social plan for the future of Tasmania. It is based on what the state should look like, as determined by its community, by the year 2020. It is a range of economic and social goals. They are measured by a series of benchmarks. Not surprisingly, one of the series of major benchmarks and strategies is around increasing the number of Tasmanians in education and training.

As a state, we have lagged behind the national average on just about every measure over the years. There has been a determined attempt to try to increase the amount of Tasmanians in education and training. One of the major areas and indicators of personal success, as well as community success, is the number of people who successfully complete year 12. There is a debate about what 'successfully complete' means. In our case it is getting people to grade 12. In the education system in this state we have a series of eight colleges that provide the critical mass that allows a whole range of subjects to be taught.

Also, we are probably the largest state in terms of the proportion of the population outside the capital city so we have a number of smaller district high schools which go to grade 10. There was a policy decision made a number of years ago to try to increase the participation rate that district high schools would offer. VET in Schools certificates, mainly certificates I and II, to encourage people to go from year 10 to 11 and then hopefully on to grade 12 have been a great success. Consequently, our retention rates have increased markedly compared to the rest of the country. We needed to do that anyway so we are now very close to the national average and would hope to be hitting that soon. VET in Schools has been a major policy push for the government and for the department. We are the department that looks after the running of it so obviously we are keen to express our views.

The basic policy driver is to try to present VET in Schools as a mainstream provision of a course. What we are trying to do is to get across the principle that VET is an offering in the same way as maths or English or anything else. Historically, it has been seen as a good supplement or

alternative for students who do not have an academic bent or do not wish to go on to university. We wished to inculcate it so that everybody who wishes to do a VET subject, could do a VET subject.

The other major driver we have had in this state is to try to replicate the quality of the VET offering so that an employer can be satisfied if a certificate II comes out of a Don College or an Oatlands High School or one of the private providers then the industry has the faith that the competencies are equivalent. We have put a lot of effort into delivering VET through the school process so it does not differ in quality or compliance standards from VET delivered elsewhere. Consequently, all our schools who are RTOs go through the full order process. We have no hybrid rules or special exclusions for schools to be registered training organisations. They have to satisfy the full standards.

You would have heard in your evidence that that results, amongst other things, in concerns expressed by the schools about the amount of red tape and bureaucracy that people go through to become RTOs. We are of the belief that at this stage that is a lesser evil than having a dual quality system, especially with the amount of effort that has been put into the general VET area, into getting the standards definable, deliverable and clear. We run a system which is compatible with an industry led system. Consequently, we have an average number of work placements per student which would be higher than just about any other state, perhaps with the exception of Western Australia.

We would ask you, as a committee, to look at the quality of our system as well as the numbers because we run a reasonably strong line, at the national level, that the quality is important and we would like our system judged on its quality, not only just on the raw numbers, which tends to happen when we are compared with other states. That is as much as I would like to say. If you are happy, we would probably spread the questions around a bit, Mr Chair, because two people are here who have expertise that I do not necessarily have.

CHAIR—If I can begin by following up the point you made regarding the need to make VET available for all students, including those with university aspirations. I notice in point 3.2 of your submission that you commented that TASSAB is making progress towards an approach for tertiary recognition of VET in Schools courses. Could you outline for us where that is up to and also comment on some remarks made yesterday by one of the principals who gave evidence that perhaps trying to incorporate VET into tertiary schools is not the right way to go; that it compromises what both are trying to do. We might be better off pursing other means by, for instance, allowing VET work placements to occur during holidays and so on so that students can still do the full pre-tertiary range in addition to a VET course. I would be interested in your comments on that.

Mr Stevens—Being a small state, I wear a number of hats. I am on TASSAB so I am well aware of that. Essentially, where we are at this stage is that there is an acceptance and a desire by the university to incorporate the VET outcomes into its entrance requirements. I chair a committee—though I would have to confess that as yet that committee is still to meet—which will have representatives of the VET system, the university system and the education system. We are looking at some systemic approach for the university to actually incorporate the scores.

As I am sure the committee is aware, ANTA has run a series of projects which are trying to get an Australia wide approach to this. We had hoped that we would be able to leverage off that but it probably has not gone as far as it was hoped that it would have by this time. We are going to, essentially, do our own as that is easier in this state because we have one university. We would have a series of agreements with the university about what that might look like. We would anticipate that in 2004 we should be able to have an agreement with the university about how VET certificates generally, in principle, would be reflected in the tertiary entrance score.

CHAIR—Do you have any indication of what that might include and how it might work?

Mr Stevens—We are looking at various models. The issue is that the university, as a point of principle, as its first point, would look at re-examining almost, to get some sort of scale. The problem is that you have two scales at the moment. You have the scale approach of pre-tertiary subjects and the competent or non-competent approach of VET. It is trying to work out some mechanism—and that is not easy—about how we translate that without requiring students to re-sit an exam.

In many cases, because of the level of the competencies, it does not necessarily best lend itself to an exam type of situation. I would have to say universities are very sensitive to that particular requirement and have not said that they would wish to re-examine or scale. We would probably end up with some sort of uniform mark, which of course is not ideal in the sense that it is not going to distinguish the students in terms of level of achievement, but it is certainly going to give everybody some comfort that they can count that towards their entrance requirement.

In response to the point about principles, we are of the view that it is really important, as we see it and in the community's eyes, that it is not VET or tertiary. The more things that integrate them, the better. We would not claim that having a mechanism by which VET can be recognised at tertiary entrance is going to increase participation, retention or achievement. But we do say that if parents see that you are doing VET it is not as though you are cutting off your options to go to university —in fact, that is a good thing. We hope that will encourage parents to be happier with their children undertaking VET offerings. We differ slightly from the principle and say it is a good thing, but we do not say it would be the primary plank by which you would increase.

CHAIR—What about the approach that one or two states are taking, where the number of pre-tertiary subjects needed for the TER is reduced, so within a normal school load you can do both? You might do four subjects at pre-tertiary level and still have the capacity and the timetable to do a full VET course. Is that an option you are looking at?

Mr Stevens—It certainly would be one of the options. It is probably one of the options high on the list we would be looking at. We certainly have had informal discussions with the university about that.

Mr Dobson—Historically we differ from other states in terms of our 11-12 program. Because we went for a model based on a full certificate course in either year 11 or year 12, we have not had the blockage as in the other states. Students can do theoretically between eight and 10 subjects over years 11 and 12. The way we run VET in Schools, two of those subjects make up a course; one being the training package course and the other one being the vocational placement course. There has not been a blockage, which is why we have not had a lot of pressure to reform

the tertiary entrance link. The issue you were picking up perhaps in the other colleges is the practical one in terms of students wanting to maximise their TE score. Therefore VET in Schools is quite often a secondary choice. That is really the problem we are trying to overcome.

CHAIR—There is a real dilemma there, isn't there? In order to meet the university's requirements, there would need to be some level of theory and academic element, as part of the VET course. That then almost defeats its purpose in terms of meeting the needs of those students who are less academically capable.

Mr Stevens—Yes. There is no question about that. The university is also cognisant of the fact that if you leave school and you apply to go to university two or three years later, your entrance score is not quite irrelevant but it is not nearly as important; it goes back to your history and your experiences and a range of various other things. Universities are more accepting that in a lifelong learning continuum the barrier does not need to be too great at that level. There is certainly a range of competing tensions and the universities are very keen to ensure that the quality of people who go into university as undergraduates is maintained at the levels they see as necessary to turn those people into graduates.

CHAIR—Is part of your deliberations looking also at access to university via TAFE courses—a student who does VET then goes on and achieves, say, certificate IV at TAFE, then gaining access to university via that path?

Mr Stevens—Absolutely. We are lucky in this state in the sense that we have one Institute of TAFE and one university. They have had a number of discussions which will hopefully result in a memorandum of understanding which will allow for some sort of systemic approach so that there will be a flow-on from a TAFE outcome to a university.

CHAIR—Does that happen at the moment?

Mr Stevens—It does on a faculty by faculty basis. It happens in tourism and in some agricultural areas, but it is not systemic. We are trying to get a systemic approach. Again, the goodwill on both sides of the fence indicates that we should be able to get that.

Mr Evans—Why I think that is increasingly important is that industry in some areas are demanding that sort of flexibility and that sort of pathway. The food technology industry, for example, in this state anyway, see a pathway through VET in Schools programs, in some horticultural areas, some food technology areas through TAFE and then to university. They do not see the pathway for their industry being the normal tertiary subject approach through the senior secondary years into university; they want their future employees to have gone through a VET pathway to get to university. That flexibility from the system needs to be there, to respond to what industry wants in terms of developing pathways for students across systems to allow that to happen.

CHAIR—Regardless of what ANTA is doing nationwide, you are working towards an outcome here in Tasmania. What would be your response, having set something in place here—agreement between the schools, university and TAFE—if MCEETYA then decides on a national approach? Certainly we are moving in that direction with the curriculum and so on anyway.

Would you consider it desirable to be part of a uniform, national approach and therefore be willing to change what you might have in place in order to do that?

Mr Stevens—Absolutely. We plan to have this committee informed. Obviously, because of our networks we are in close contact with people in New South Wales and Western Australia who are leading the charge and looking at the models on a national level. We would have them feed into our committee, so it would all be done on the basis that if we need to change we do, because we need to be part of a national approach.

CHAIR—You consider it desirable to have a national approach?

Mr Stevens—Absolutely. We want our school graduates to go on to university. Ideally, we would like them to go on to the University of Tasmania, but we would prefer them to go on to higher education than not to go on to higher education. As you know, our mobility is greater than other states, and that is not necessarily a bad thing, with people leaving the state. What we need to do is try and encourage them to come back when they have their experience and their degrees and to settle and contribute to the community.

Mr SAWFORD—Ever since European settlement, Australia has had a shortage of technical skills. We have one currently in a whole range of areas. If you look at the 1890s Depression, when the emphasis was first placed on technical training, it has oscillated since that time between meeting the needs of industry and meeting the needs of a liberal education. We never got it quite right. It has only ever been on the public agenda after World War I, the Depression, World War II reconstruction and for a brief time in the Whitlam middle seventies. If you did an assessment of vocational training around Australia at a federal and state level and you examined the mainland state budgets—I have not examined the Tasmanian one, by the way—and the federal budget, you will see no extra money. That tells a story.

You used the term, which most people do, 'having an integrated approach to education'. I sometimes wonder whether we ought to be looking at the differentiated approach. Has Tasmania thought that maybe this is not the be-all and end-all, that maybe there is a different view in terms of senior secondary colleges from the rest of Australia? Are there other views being put to you about a differentiated system?

Mr Stevens—There have been views put to us. I suppose our overall approach is looking at it from the learners' point of view. They do not really care whether it is university, TAFE or secondary. They want a set of specific skills, or they want the underpinning knowledge. Our goal is to show that there are areas of expertise in a TAFE system, a university system and a school system which in fact contribute to all that.

What we should be doing is making it easier for people to take what they want from each of the particular sectors. You can do that through qualifications which recognise past achievements from other sectors and there are not the barriers to get through. Obviously the funding is complicated because you have an education system, a VET system and a higher education system. You have different funders, state and federal, as well.

Mr SAWFORD—Different degrees of autonomy too.

Mr Stevens—All that does not make it easy but I think we are like most other states. If we could look at it from the point of view of a learner wanting to get skills then really the names of the particular sectors become less important but you then tend to drown a bit in the actual negotiations and machinations, and the sort of policy issues that go with how you actually fund a system which will be based on that level of choice or movement. We are attempting to approach it in that way. As I said, it makes it easier here in the sense of there being one university and one TAFE. Of all the states, we probably have the best chance of achieving that.

Mr SAWFORD—Do universities have too much control over education? Would it be better for TAFE to be a counterbalance? Only 30 per cent of our kids go to university but they seem to have an inordinate control over what kids do, particularly in secondary schools. Across Australia there is almost a public lack of faith in the public secondary system, as people are walking the walk and talking the talk. Is there a need for a greater balance in terms of who controls public secondary education in this country?

Mr Stevens—Speaking just from the state point of view, we have probably a historic high level of cooperation between the state government and the university here. We have a government-university partnership agreement which basically specifies a whole range of issues from infrastructure through to approaches on particular areas. Through that process we are getting closer to a more combined approach to what the priorities are for a university education system for a state. I do not think we would be of the view that universities have too much say but it is important that we have some sort of balance. Each of the sectors is equally valid and at the end of the day they produce an outcome for the good of the individual, for the good of the community and for the good of the country. We would keep that sort of layering in place in a policy sense. Each of the areas impacts on the policy.

Mr Evans—Rather than thinking about it in terms of whether, institutionally, universities have too much say or too much control over what goes on in secondary schools, it is important to recognise the cultural issues that surround how teachers and others within schools see their roles in terms of preparation for university or preparation for other sorts of pathways. What VET in Schools has done, at least in this state, is start to break that down. It has started to very successfully demonstrate not only to the community, not only to industry, not only to the university but also to people in schools in colleges that they have responsibilities to a wider range of kids than they may have previously thought were their responsibility.

Whilst I would not say that there are no vestiges of people within the public system, at least, who still regard their primary role as preparing young people for university, it is nothing like it was seven or eight years ago. The great success, to some extent, of VET in Schools, despite all the problems it might have had, has been that it has brought with it an acknowledgment and acceptance by people in schools that they have a responsibility to the broadest range of students possible—a view which I do not think existed previously.

Mr SAWFORD—Prior to the mainland states initiating VET in 1993, which seems to be the special year—and I notice that in your submission you mention 1993, even though in Tasmania the actual push did not really come until 1997-98—there was a great hiatus in the mid-seventies and in 1993 it was almost 'hands off'; it went nowhere. In Tasmania, why did that happen? Were there some reasons? Was it the senior secondary college concept? Why was the move to VET in 1997-98—that is when it really happened—rather than in 1993 when it happened in New South

Wales or South Australia on a mass basis? Was it because those states had lighthouse schools that were doing some of these things anyway and getting a fair amount of national publicity, or were there other reasons? What were the reasons for Tasmania being later in going in the direction that it went?

Mr Stevens—I might ask Rob to answer that because my background is not from the education sector. I have been in the department for only about three years. I cannot answer that or even make much of a comment. Since I have been involved there has been an enormous push and that is almost a shared vision of the principals, the colleges, the teachers and the education system to inculcate it. I am sure you would have seen, when you toured the colleges yesterday, that it is mainstream and is smack bang in the curriculum. It is not a sort of bolt on. I suspect some of the answer is it takes a while for penetration to affect the culture.

Mr Dobson—Historically it had a lot to do with the development of secondary colleges which came through with a philosophy of education for complete living. It was a broadening of education away from the academic to a whole of life skills approach.

Mr SAWFORD—Did they actually do that?

Mr Dobson—Especially if you look at some of the colleges, perhaps Rosny first. It had a reputation; when I went there it was referred to as Disneyland because it had a complete range of alternative subjects. It was often referred to as a smorgasbord approach. A student could walk through the door with theoretically no pressure from parents, communities or teachers, and decide what she or he might like to do. In the long run it proved problematic in the sense that students perhaps were not as able to make choices that went together all that well. Also, up into the 1980s you are really talking about matriculation colleges. They were preparation for universities. Then it started to broaden out through what were known as level 2 subjects. The academic subjects were level 3.

Then with the changes to income support through the eighties there was a large influx of students who were clearly non-academic. The level 2 subjects were watered down level 3s, so they were not terribly useful. Certainly the colleges started to raise the question of vocational or work related subjects. Again, as teachers from academic backgrounds, they were fairly hopeless at the world of work, so they were not terribly useful but that is when subjects like catering, tourism and child studies first started to emerge. There were no external pressures from industry or through the education system for colleges to do anything about it. Through the eighties there was experimentation but largely drift until the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael reports eventuated.

At about the same time a couple of colleges were exposed to the Dusseldorp Skills Forum training and retail and commerce programs. That was in 1993, which was also the year when the first of the Carmichael pilots, the AVTS, happened. Our Carmichael pilot was really a traineeship and it was based within process engineering with some of the larger employers—what is now Norske Skog paper mills and Cadburys and so on—it and was very much like our current school based New Apprenticeships. The bulk of the development came through the training and retailing and commerce models. It was not VET related in that sense. The principle of those models was a local community college negotiation with its community and businesses in the community to work out what sort of skills employers wanted that could be delivered through schools.

It is also where we became involved in 240 hours of work placement and the idea of students learning those skills in the workplace under supervision rather than teachers trying to develop those skills. At the same time the current Premier was head of the TTLC and was keen on the idea. That led to the union agreement for the 240 hours of vocational placement, because the great fear at the time was that students would displace casual workers. The mixture of influences at that time, apart from the traineeship model, came from a different set of principles rather than VET principles. It was not until those later years, 1996, when we started to move those programs, that it was obvious it had to become part of the training system if it was to succeed on a larger scale, rather than putting students into work locally. That is fairly longwinded but that is the drift.

Mr SAWFORD—As far as VET and those reports you mentioned are concerned, even Karmel did not pay much attention to VET. Then we had the Finn and Carmichael reports. Carmichael seemed to think that kids were born at 15 years of age, in some respects. Finn did not get it quite right at all. I noticed that in your submission you say that the expansion of VET has slowed. Why has it slowed? Is that because of the resource level or is there some other reason for that? Are we at a stage nationally, not only in Tasmania, where we need another major report not necessarily just in VET but over all education sectors?

Primary schools seem to be at a resource loss. They have been avoided—abandoned, I reckon—for the last 20 years across Australia. Junior secondary has not had a great deal of attention. Senior secondary has. Universities have, of course. TAFE, except for a bit of impetus in the seventies, has been overlooked as well. VET, as we see it around Australia, has grown, often because of the goodwill of principals and teachers. Enormous effort is required, with burnout being reported back to us. The age level of many of those teachers in VET is 55-plus, so there are replacement teacher training implications there. Back to the report, do we need another major report not only on VET but also having a good look at all sectors of education rather than a sectoral approach?

Mr Stevens—I would not speak on behalf of the country but in this state there is not so much a major report but there is a sustained effort to try to get a more integrated approach between the sectors. The Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training was specifically designed to get some systemic approach to VET, to higher education and to 11 and 12 generally. As Nick said, look at it in terms of pathways, because people have different requirements for pathways. Look at it in terms of pathways and how the system works its way around as opposed to looking at the system first and trying to work out how people can go from one to the other. Certainly that is what we are approaching.

In relation to your question about numbers, one of our problems at the moment is that, because of the insistence on the 240 hours of work placement, it is quite hard to find employers. Although we would say quite strongly that employers gain from being involved in the process, the reality is that they would see it as community service at worst and goodwill at best. We do struggle to get the placements. The demand, if we could cater to it, would continue. Obviously, resources always come into these things but the involvement of the employers in the industry community at this stage is probably the key inhibitor. I say that without research to particularly back me up. It is an intuitive feeling—anecdotally based rather than research based. I do not know whether that would be your intuition about the numbers.

Mr Evans—Of employers?

Mr Stevens—Or about why we are not continuing that—

Mr Evans—Industries that saw that as a valuable pathway for young people, the industries who immediately grabbed onto it, are all absorbed now. The issue is to take it into new industry areas, which is much more difficult than it was at the start when young people and their parents were very well aware and knew about careers in automotive mechanics, hairdressing or a range of other areas where there were significant numbers of VET in Schools. They are not very aware of careers that might be available in food technology, electrotechnology or a range of other industries where, if VET in Schools is to expand, it needs to go.

There is the great task of raising the awareness, not only of students and parents but also of schools and the community, that there are worthwhile and fulfilling careers in a whole range of industry areas which are not immediately obvious and which people do not know about. They are not as familiar with them as they are with the range of industry areas that have seen the expansion of VET in Schools in the last five or six years.

Mr SAWFORD—The representatives from both the colleges yesterday raised some doubts as to the effectiveness of the marketing of the VET subjects while they were in years 9 and 10. It was a pretty cursory, one-off sort of thing. The kids picked that up. They did not have enough information on which to make decisions. The last thing: money. You avoided, like good public servants all, the resources thing. In the Tasmanian budget were there any initiatives for VET?

Mr Stevens—There were a range of initiatives in the post-compulsory area. There is specific money, as I am sure you would have picked up. We, as a state, do not do so well in school based new apprenticeships. We have specific new money to have a resource to do something about that. There was a policy called Guaranteeing Futures, which was basically about creating what are called youth liaison officers, which is not necessarily just VET but it is about looking at that cohort of grade 10s who are unlikely to go on to grade 11 and to have almost a case management approach to get them into a pathway. There are some other initiatives—perhaps not new money—through which TAFE has expanded into a program called Start at TAFE, which is aimed specifically at grade 10s who are unlikely to go to grades 11 and 12.

Mr SAWFORD—I notice you are putting forward some possible arguments for a differentiated system.

Mr Stevens—Yes. We need to keep the differentiation in the sense that there are levels of expertise. You would not have a homogenous system because it probably would not work as well as having those technical skills at TAFE and higher education. Somehow we have to crack that nut and find a pathway approach.

Mr SAWFORD—Thanks for your submission and for the work that you do. Rob, you gave a terrific history of how it evolved—haphazardly almost. When you see that in *Hansard*, make sure it goes out to everybody so they can appreciate where it came from. You talked about hoping that people judge the quality of the VET program in Tasmania, rather than look at the raw numbers. If you do look at the raw numbers you would say that Queensland has gone mad on VET and Tasmania is holding back. When you look at the nature of the programs, embedding

VET in the curriculum and everything else, it is totally different. I know they have workplace assessment and so forth but not to the extent that we do, so that is important.

Yesterday an interesting point was made. I asked a question about the correlation of the introduction and the expansion of VET and retention, which is that political figure as well. The point was made that of about 100 kids that were pulling out in grade 11 to 12, a great proportion of those got employment and, for most of them, through VET. That is something you do not see in the stats coming through. All we see is: 'We've got a retention problem.'

Mr Stevens—That is a really important point. One of the surprises when I came into this area, not having been from an education and training background, was that the definition of success did not include gaining appropriate employment for your particular needs. In a retention sense it is seen as a failure if people leave an institution to get a job. We need to do something about that. Their retention rate should include employment as a legitimate outcome. The bottom line for a lot of VET subjects is that many of the people who do them, if not in the high 80 per cent, do them because they want to get a job. They are in the education system so they can get a job. It is their best chance of getting a job and the better the job they can get, the better it is for them. If we do not measure it in our official statistics, or if we do not link it, I think we miss out something. We are looking at doing our state statistics to include employment outcomes as well.

You are probably aware we did a destination survey on the whole cohort of 2001 grade 10s. We did a survey of where they went. If you look at education, training and employment as successful outcomes—there are some definitional issues about what employment is—91 per cent of the cohort has gone on to those three things. We only have nine per cent of the cohort who are not in education, training or employment. When you take out those who are travelling and a few others, it reduces even further. In a policy sense it makes it easy to identify. Then you start to unpack, because we are a small state, the particular attributes of that.

CHAIR—Is that a longitudinal study?

Mr Stevens—We are doing it for three years. It is the 2001 total cohort for three years. We will pick up what I am sure is more than anecdotal concern that it is between 11 and 12 where there is a higher drop-off than between 10 and 11. We will be able to test that this year, to see whether it is the case.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—In terms of public perception of the education system—and this is necessarily national—certainly in Tasmania, that qualification of what we mean by retention rates and what is going on in there, has to come out. Otherwise we get a negative and disproportionate view of Tasmanian retention rates compared to the national figures. I think that is a story we have to do along with marketing VET as well.

One thing I am sure you will appreciate is that in most of the schools we have been to—and certainly in Tasmania—we have a very dedicated work force, not just totally but particularly in VET, because that is where it evolved from. You have ageing teachers—around my era; the baby boomer era, as we come through—and a lot of them are pretty well burnt out. From when I left in about 1997, to now, I would say that the resourcing issue is a bit better. But they are ageing, they are getting tired but they still have energy. The next step is that VET is playing a very significant role in our schools and will continue to do so and may filter even further down

through the system. What are we doing about getting younger teachers into VET? Particularly, what are we doing in pre-service training? Should VET pre-service training be compulsory?

Mr Stevens—Again, as good public servants, we would not respond about whether it should be compulsory or not. Certainly we would say there should be emphasis on looking at the pre-service training to include a VET component. We also say, from a policy point of view—which gets back to the point made earlier—if we have a TAFE system which is geared for teaching certificates II and III, we need to find better ways of involving that system in VET in schools.

If we are not careful we will end up with a work force in schools doing VET and a work force in TAFE doing VET. If we are trying to get the outcomes of the certificates equivalent, so industry does not make any judgment about whether you come from TAFE or a school, we need to integrate those approaches. We have some successes—certainly lesser in number than just straight VET in Schools—but if you go to Rosny for the building construction that is a relationship between the TAFE teachers and the school and about each doing their bit to get a rounded approach.

Part of the answer to that question is to involve the TAFE work force in VET in schools delivery. That brings up the resourcing and funding model issues, which are always difficult things. That is one of the logical outcomes. Also, if we accept VET as a mainstream offering within a school system, there should be some cognisance of it in the pre-service training.

Mr Dobson—It is fairly early in discussions of pre-service training. Your observations about the current sustainability of VET in Schools effort is pretty much on the money, but there is also the question under the national framework for VET in Schools, which we have interpreted as the vocational, education and learning framework in this state, of which VET in Schools is a major component. It covers years 7 to 12 and it is directed by the Adelaide declaration philosophy of saying, 'This is an area which we have to get right for all students.' If it is to be part of education then it needs to be integrated with teacher training.

That is not necessarily all VET in Schools. In the secondary system we have a system where one teacher is not responsible for a student all the way through, for years 7 to 12 and post transition. It is saying, 'How can we get closer to modelling or tending towards that philosophy?' That issue then of having all teachers conscious that they are working towards students' transition, whether they are in year 7 or year 12, is one of those developments. The VET in Schools element is specific technical training for those teachers. But developing that consciousness is a key issue. Given that issue is standard across the nation, we would want to see that as a national development for consistency and interpretation.

Again, like it or not, our students are part of a national tertiary training system; our students are part of a national training system; part of a national labour market and so on. Being able to have a teaching service more conscious and sympathetic to those needs is obviously a medium- to long-term issue we need to be working on sooner rather than later.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—What emphasis do you place on supporting teachers in industry; in other words, going to industry, experiencing it again; updating and whatever else and then returning to enhance the VET system?

Mr Stevens—Obviously we do in general in principle which can mean lots or not. Specifically there is a fund, but it is not a huge amount of money. It is about $300,000. Historically it has been in the TAFE budget for allowing retraining or re-immersing of teachers into the industry. Part of the agreement we have managed to come to over the last year or so, is that that money would be available to use for teachers to go back and obtain some relevant industry experience. At the moment there is a major push in the IT industry for teachers, especially in the TAFE area, to be aware of what the current industry trends and practices are. There is great emphasis on getting the TAFE teachers out there and we plan to look at doing something similar, as far as that money goes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Submissions made to us yesterday from a number of employers were that they would certainly value teachers coming in. One industry in particular which surprised me was retail. Effectively they said they were getting virtually no students because somehow it is seen as the lowest of the low, yet retail has incredible possibilities with the range of experiences you can have through that. But they were saying that to be able to get VET teachers in to participate in that for a while would be a very useful exercise. It just follows on from what you were saying.

Mr Stevens—It also picks up that point made before: it is about marketing. Everybody wants to do multimedia and IT at college, yet we need to overlay that with the realistic possibility that getting a job in the IT industry—especially in the Tasmanian context—is far less likely, but if you do a forestry certificate or aquaculture or agriculture, then you have a much better chance. We need to get information out to students, parents and teachers which matches the labour market needs as well as the skilling requirements.

Mr Dobson—There has also been an unintended side effect of the development of training packages and the quality standards. Historically our teachers have spent a lot of time in the work force. Initially we started off with a teachers in industry program when there was specifically Commonwealth funding around to support that. It picks up on the resource question as well. The reason we can sustain 240 hours of workplace training and integrate that into the education system is because the state does not have a completion certificate at 11or12, so it was by sleight of hand.

We were saying, 'Look, if we are making this move into VET in schools and we are serious about it, then it should be reflected in the curriculum.' To do that we reallocated our teaching resource. We turned a lot of academically trained teachers into workplace supervisors by the creation of the vocational placement syllabus. We extended the classroom to the workplace and teachers now run the vocational placement course, with that time to work with their students in the workplace. We are different from most other states. We tend not to broker out our placements of students and so teachers work with their students in the workplace. We work on an industry-by-industry basis. There is a fair amount of industry knowledge within those teaching areas. Teachers initially assessed students in the workplace and through VET workplace training and development. Now, because of the industry competency standards, there has been some retreat from that. The issue of how we maintain the specific VET technical skills is the source of that questioning you were picking up in the colleges.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Some of the students yesterday talked about how they did not think VET was marketed very well. We all appreciate that unless you are interested in something at a

particular moment, no matter what is in front of you, unless it is standing on its head blowing whistles and ringing bells, it is difficult. They did take that on board. But it led the committee, throughout our investigations, to this whole issue of the advice our students are given: by whom, how it is resourced, how well trained they are, how relevant their knowledge is as to what is really going on out here, how much we either emphasise or ignore the importance of this advice both in terms of people who liaise and people who give career advice. Would you regard the whole area of careers advice and liaison with young people as important in maximising student educational outcomes and choices?

Mr Stevens—Absolutely. If I could digress slightly, we are in the process of developing what we are calling a post-compulsory education training strategy for the state, which is about getting more people in education training, more achievement et cetera. To do that we have released a series of discussion papers. One of the discussion papers was career and work education—exactly that point. There is a whole range of labour market information. There is a whole range of career information. There is a whole range of other information. We need to integrate it and get it to the point where it is needed, which is at the student level. We would be happy to provide the committee with that discussion paper and anything that comes out of it.

That is a very good point and it all goes back to needing an integrated approach. The best approach is an integrated approach where everyone is working not so much from the same hymn sheet, but has access to all the information. Devices such as My Future allow you to drill down into any geographical area to look at labour market information with specific information from the providers. We have the tools to do it but we do not yet have the policy basis on which to ensure that it will happen in a way which is consistent across all schools and various other points.

Mr Evans—It is probably important to point out that there has been significant curriculum reform in Tasmanian schools in the last year or two. That is only just starting to raise its head in high schools in the state. The essential learnings curriculum, which is now in place in every K to 10 school in Tasmania, has as part of it a personal futures dimension which all teachers in all schools are required to integrate into their curriculum in every subject they teach. The whole point of that is to get students and staff thinking in a coherent way, across all subject areas in high schools, about the career and pathway approach that needs to be taken.

That is a relatively new thing in high schools. Whilst the framework is there in a curriculum sense, the materials and resources to assist teachers and others to do the delivery of personal futures is not there, but for the first time—in the last couple of years—we have a framework to enable us to do that, to explicitly acknowledge and recognise those issues and perhaps even to assess against them.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I have some experience of exactly the thing you are talking about. The framework is very nice. It is like a lot of frameworks: the resourcing of it and the ability to professionally develop the teachers involved are the key. It is nice to see the framework there and the recognition of it, but it still leaves the issue of resourcing.

CHAIR—I return to a comment you made about the use of TAFE and the need to ensure that there are not two parallel systems running, duplicating what is happening. Clearly there are some examples where schools are working well with their local TAFE colleges, but there are clearly a

lot of cases where it is not working well. In Tasmania, what is the situation regarding the charge to schools for outsourcing VET courses to TAFE? Do you charge?

Mr Evans—There are probably three sets of arrangements which occur in relation to TAFE delivery of VET in Schools programs for government schools. In the main, non-government schools are charged by TAFE for delivery. For government schools there are three buckets. One of them is a charge basis: TAFE will charge for some programs where the other two buckets cannot meet the need. The other two buckets are effectively money that comes from the government to TAFE in what we call the purchase agreement, which is basically the funding instrument for TAFE.

They allocate about 40,000 curriculum hours a year to VET in Schools delivery, which effectively—leaving aside some small amounts of money for materials—is free to schools and colleges. There is that 40,000 hours. Last year in the state budget there was an additional amount of money, up to $200,000, made available for additional TAFE delivery of VET in Schools. Schools put up their hands collectively to say that these were the types of programs they would like TAFE to deliver. An additional 12,000 hours of TAFE delivery were made available to schools effectively free of charge. Over and above that, if that 52,000 hours are not sufficient for the delivery that schools want TAFE to do, there is a fee involved. If you take 52,000 hours as what is provided for nothing, fewer than 5,000 hours were delivered on a fee for service basis.

CHAIR—What about non-government schools? I know you say that they are charged the full amount by TAFE. Do you think there ought to be an accommodation there at some level of subsidy for non-government schools, perhaps on the same proportion they get of the AGSRC for their normal recurrent funding programs?

Mr Evans—The issue at the moment, particularly in relation to the non-government, non-systemic schools is that their numbers are quite small and quite spread. It is very difficult, for example, for TAFE to make available significant resources when you are talking about a handful of kids in any one locality.

CHAIR—Equally, size is a real impediment to their running their own VET courses. Even if they were small numbers who could be plugged into existing TAFE VET courses, it would supplement the student numbers for TAFE as well if there were some accommodation to assist with funding. Is that not feasible?

Mr Stevens—It is certainly feasible. One approach we are pursuing is picking up—this works better in a place like Hobart, obviously—a number of government and non-government schools who have small numbers of people who want to do a specific certificate or vocation. We round them up and run them through a TAFE in a combined government and non-government approach. We looked at that probably more than subsidising non-government schools.

CHAIR—Do you have any examples where that is working?

Mr Evans—There are non-government enrolments in the electrotechnology program run through Hobart College.

Mr Stevens—There is electrotechnology at Hobart College and there is an automotive one which is being run by a group training company called Work and Training, which is partnered with TAFE. At this stage it is advertising to start in 2004, with a number of school based New Apprenticeships across the combined government and non-government sector. They are looking at up to 45 people in that.

CHAIR—What other work is being done to better coordinate the TAFE and the school sectors? Are there other impediments there? Is there a duty of care issue, industrial relations and award issues, transport issues and so on? Are you looking at addressing those?

Mr Stevens—They are all there. Yes, we are looking at addressing them. The industrial issues do not seem to be such an impediment at this stage. As for the duty of care and insurance, certainly we have noticed that. We have a work experience advisory committee which deals with insurance for work placements, and that is becoming more of an issue. As yet we have not had to withdraw any placements as a result of no insurance funding but I suspect that that time will come. New South Wales had a lot of trouble with that but we have managed, probably through the good faith of the insurer, to keep going. I suspect that at some stage that will come to an end.

CHAIR—Do you think there is a capacity to better use TAFE than what we are doing at the moment?

Mr Stevens—Absolutely.

CHAIR—You mention in your submission that there has not been much of a take-up of school based apprenticeships. Why, and what are we doing to address that?

Mr Stevens—There are a number of responses. The school response has generally been that the VET in Schools system is so good that it has almost a crowding out effect. Our rules of engagement for school based New Apprenticeships have been probably more difficult than they need to be. Through a series of forums involving the unions, industry, the peak industry group and schools, we have worked out rules of engagement which will make everybody understand. It will make it easier for students to become school based new apprentices. We now hope, with the appointment of the broker, that we can actively encourage some pilots which will quickly stop being pilots.

Our view is that if we can get a good model up people can then see it happening. I do not think we are ever going to have huge numbers and I think when it was designed it was always for a particular cohort. But certainly we believe there are things that we can do to at least make everything on a level playing field so the proposition is testable. At the end of the day the market will decide whether or not it happens as long as we make sure that the rules make it equally as easy to do it as to do VET in Schools. We are putting a lot of emphasis on trying to get some pilot projects up.

Some of the definitions of what a school based new apprenticeship is vary from state to state. As has been raised before, we are quite often compared to Queensland. Not that we want to get into interstate rivalry here, but some of their definitions of a school based new apprenticeship mean that some of our people would probably be classified as school based new apprentices. But having said that, they have done a good job.

Mr Dobson—I think you will be talking to the Hobart Education Business Training Partnership sometime today. They do their own studies of where students are going. The evidence from their studies shows that a lot of students are going from VET in Schools programs into traineeships, so a lot of our VET in Schools programs have been designed to articulate with traineeships. We suspect that may be another reason for our low take-up.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Related to industrial relations and VET, we heard yesterday of an instance where they were looking to do work experience in a block over the holidays. It seems like everybody signed up and it fell over. Are there any impediments to that occurring?

Mr Evans—I do not think so.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Sorry, they were doing their workplace assessment and there was a need by the employer that they do it in block. Most people involved wanted it to happen over the holidays. Apparently a lot of people signed off but it fell over. Is there an impediment in the system to allow that to happen?

Mr Evans—There may be. Not being aware of the precise example, there may be industrial relations issues that do need to be worked out. There needs to be training plans submitted at the start of a VET in Schools program to specify when work placements will occur. Generally speaking, there is union involvement in those things. There have from time to time been industrial issues. If it is an industry with high casual employment that is busy over the Christmas period, which is when most casual employees might be employed, there have from time to time been industrial issues about work placements occurring and, as was referred to earlier, potentially replacing casual employees during that period.

CHAIR—The comment was made that it was the system. The implication was that it was the department that was discouraging that sort of placement.

Mr Dobson—No. Traditionally in the work experience area there has been an agreement not to place students from years 9 and 10 during holidays. With the VET in Schools program, the understanding has been always that the nature of the industry will determine the best form of placement. There is no systemic bar to those placement arrangements and they are worked out on an industry by industry arrangement. Unless it is poor appreciation of that point—

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—It was mentioned that the Workplace Learning Unit pulled the plug on it. That is the only information we have. It strikes me that if everyone was signed up and it was pulled—

Mr Stevens—We are not aware of that but we will certainly go back and follow it up. We would not be encouraging that not to occur.

Mr Dobson—The only other possibility is that because we operate a systemic placement system with insurance arrangements, the nature of the work placement can lead to that being prevented. That causes a deal of angst from time to time.

Mr Evans—It is not an issue of when the placement actually occurs.

Mr SAWFORD—Sid made mention of longitudinal studies which we do not have a very good record of doing in Australia. It seems that in terms of the VET you are quite proud of the quality of the VET that is offered in Tasmania and there are some question marks about the quantity. In fact you need both. Too many research studies in this country are qualitative, often of a small sample, then huge headlines are written about them, which is very inconsistent. Then you have the quantitative ones that do not go into, for example, the kids who leave school to work. Some of those employment positions only last 18 months and they are gone; they are finished. Once they turn 18, that is the end of that. What is your view about that?

Mr Stevens—Certainly a longitudinal study on a whole cohort is the best way of doing it but, as you know, that is expensive. We hope that in ours, which will be for three years, we will be able to see that. Those who leave in grade 10 to go straight to employment we have tracked for that first year. We are going to use a call centre to follow them up. Assuming we can follow them up with some degree of certainty, we should be able to get some picture of what the average length of employment is for those who leave in grade 10. What happens the next year? Are they on the dole? We are hoping that will give us an employment picture. We are also hoping that we can talk to some of the employers about some of their observations as part of that process. At least we will have a snapshot in this state about what employment patterns might look like, taking into account that it is one cohort, say 2001 grade 10s. It may not be typical but we will assume it is.

Mr SAWFORD—I will leave the second question to last because it is a bit harder. Take degrees and diplomas, just a snapshot. What is your view?

Mr Stevens—Our view is that TAFE, if it wishes to offer a higher education degree or a qualification which is determined to be higher education, it should be registered through the higher education process. Associate degrees are an issue. As you probably know, the government has expressed a pretty strong view that associate degrees could well be quite problematic for the TAFE sector. There is the potential for associate degrees to displace diplomas and advanced diplomas as a preferred mechanism. If that is the case it needs to be dual sector, not higher education only. AQFAB is going to do some work on that to see what it is. Although it will be retrospective, we would probably be pushing for a change if that resulted. At this stage we would support the AQF approach where sectors have their qualifications, and if one sector wants to practise in another, then it needs to be registered appropriately.

Mr SAWFORD—A quick response on ANTA: what is good, what is not?

Mr Stevens—Clearly, what is good is that they are a broker for a national approach. I wish I had taken this one on notice or at least had some advance notice! I suspect what is not good is that we waste too much time in not really coming to decisions. In a sense we need to have a process by which we make decisions, good or bad. As you know, the cost of not making a decision is usually greater than the bad decision which can be changed. We tend to spend too much time debating and referring to committees. It would not be difficult to look at ANTA and say there is a large part of it which is a welter of committees and what comes out at the end? Part of that is our federal system. I accept that, but we should sharpen that up, make decisions quicker and better.

Mr SAWFORD—That is an eminently sensible response. The last one is the Adelaide declaration. From someone who has been involved in education for a long time, it has been a long time since I have read such a woolly-headed incoherent statement of rationale, process and outcomes. There is no coherence between those three categories, which I thought there ought to be.

CHAIR—You are not a fan then?

Mr SAWFORD—I am not a great fan. It seems to me that the Adelaide declaration is symptomatic of where education is in Australia. It does not know where it wants to go. Would you like to comment on that?

Mr Stevens—I think that is a little harsh. It is that amalgam of state and Commonwealth approaches and perhaps you do not get, as with any communiqué to a certain extent, as clear a picture as you might like. But if you look at what is similar between the education systems around the country you get a better view and the underpinning goals in that are starting to be realised. They are actually translating into policies and practice.

Mr SAWFORD—Would you redraft the Adelaide declaration?

Mr Stevens—Would I?

Mr SAWFORD—As an individual.

Mr Stevens—As an individual I probably would, yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Rob, do you have a view?

Mr Evans—As an individual?

Mr SAWFORD—Yes.

Mr Evans—No.

Mr Dobson—It has been useful in terms of just taking the VET in Schools area because it does give us a common platform and it has given us a common platform in this state to relate to between the government and the non-government sectors. It has been useful also in terms of opening up the appreciation that VET in Schools is not only for the non-academic kids in colleges and that we need new notions of what career education means because there are not any careers any more, or very few, that are left. In terms of some of the visionary elements it gives them a run, but in terms of if you walk down to the local school and ask anyone do they even know about it, clearly they do not. So it is not a driver in that sense.

Being able to have it as a useful interpretative statement that connects up policies, they would be the sorts of reforms that I would like to see. If you went through each area of the declaration, people from various perspectives would reinforce those sorts of comments. The other thing about VET in Schools is that going back to 1993 it was then just a curious experiment and one of the many fads and fashions that go through education. But in 10 years it has gone from just

another experiment into something which is mainstream and that we are all trying to accommodate, so that sort of revision will need to be done on a fairly constant basis to interpret what we mean. So do we believe in a differentiated system or is vocational education something which belongs to everyone and should it be driving transformations in the system?

Mr SAWFORD—Would you redraft it?

Mr Dobson—I think it needs redrafting on a fairly regular basis.

CHAIR—Finally a question of fact. What percentage of your post-compulsory students would be doing VET courses?

Mr Dobson—That is a tricky one. It is one of the reasons why we underreport in this state. If you go back to the principle that our model is that we want students doing VET in Schools to complete a cert 1 or a cert 2 within a year, because of the nature of our system colleges variously will have students undertake a course in year 11 or year 12. If you look to other systems, perhaps Victoria, students may do a bit of the course in year 11 and a bit in year 12—so they double-dip in the statistics. This will be the first year we will be able to give a total of our number of students who have undertaken a VET in Schools course as part of senior secondary so it is somewhat above the stats that we report now but how far above we do not know.

Mr Evans—It is roughly about 28 per cent.

CHAIR—You have given us an absolute number, about 28 per cent. Is there any final recommendation you would make to us in terms of what we should be reporting to the government to improve VET?

Mr Stevens—We would urge you to look at the things we put in place to try to ensure the quality; to try to get around the industry's concern that, 'A VET in Schools certificate is not worth anything and I will take someone from industry or TAFE.' We would emphasise that the threat to quality is the greatest threat to the VET system and the greatest threat to quality comes from the school system, in a sense, nationwide. We would urge you to consider that point.

CHAIR—Thank you for your comments this morning. Your input has been valuable.

[10.25 a.m.]

SALIER, Mr Malcolm, Chair, Australasian Curriculum Assessment and Certification Authorities

CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Salier. I need to remind you that proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. Could I invite you to make some introductory comments and then we will proceed to questioning. Before you do, I thank you for your very detailed submission. It was very helpful.

Mr SAWFORD—Particularly the comparisons between the states.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Salier—Which I have no doubt you will pursue. If you do not mind, I will read my statement, so that I make sure I do not leave out things I want to say. The Australasian Curriculum Assessment and Certification Authorities, with the unfortunate acronym of ACACA, consists of the chief executive officers of all the boards of studies of the states and territories of Australia, plus the head of the schools section and New Zealand qualifications authority. ACACA made their submission to this committee because, while each agency has its own state or territory specific responsibilities, generally the responsibilities of these agencies include the responsibility under the national agreement for VET in Schools, for reporting all post-compulsory school achievement in VET and for ensuring that the VET data is AVETMISS compliant. Most states and territory ACACA agencies also develop courses or the non-endorsed component from the training packages, but not all.

These are significant roles played by the individual curriculum assessment and certification authorities in each state and territory. Boards of studies, in agreement with state and territory recognition authorities, will recognise as VET in Schools only that which delivers national and/or enterprise competency standards or accredited training where no relevant training package qualification or pathway exists, all within the national training framework.

All registered training organisations across Australia, including those schools that are registered training organisations, are required to meet the requirement of the Australian Quality Training Framework, AQTF, and to deliver training in accordance with national training packages or accredited courses if there is no training package available.

Our submission points out that irrespective of the model or framework within which VET is delivered in school programs, VET in Schools programs are delivered and assessed within the same quality framework, AQTF, and to the requirements of the same training packages being used by other RTOs. It would therefore be inappropriate if the debate about the quality of VET in Schools was to centre on the model or process of delivery. Boards of studies believe that discussions about the model or frameworks within which vocational education is delivered can detract from the fact that delivery and outcomes are in accordance with the requirements of the AQTF and of national training packages.

It is ACACA's view that any debate about the quality of VET, irrespective of the RTO or the sector within which it is offered, should centre more appropriately around industry's level of acceptance of the AQTF as the overarching quality framework and around industry's level of acceptance of training packages and the requirements outlined within them. I will illustrate this point with three examples.

The first is a concern that is often expressed by industry that competence can only be demonstrated in the workplace and that consequently VET in Schools does not compare with VET in the workplace. ACACA notes that in the vast majority of cases the training packages do not specify work placement requirements—there might be six, seven or eight of those which do—and that schools are operating within the AQTF framework in providing VET within an institution. If there is a problem about the location of learning then it has to do with the AQTF and the specifications that are contained within the training packages themselves. ACACA would go on further to note that the majority of VET in Schools is actually delivered by non-school RTOs, most of which are TAFE colleges. The perception by industry does not appear to us to be about VET in Schools but about the differences between the delivery of VET in an institutional setting, or in the workplace. This is a matter for the AQTF to address.

The second concern expressed by industry relates to differences between states and territories as to the time spent in structured workplace learning. While it is true that there are variations between states and territories in the length of time a student spends in structured workplace learning, it should be borne in mind that each jurisdiction structures their workplace learning requirements according to the local 'needs of industry' as specified under the AQTF. Again, this is a concern that needs to be addressed and it should be addressed through the AQTF and the specification within training packages. Similarly, where simulated workplaces have been criticised, advice should be included in training packages, as to the nature of that simulation environment and the extent to which it is appropriate for the delivery of competency in an industry area.

The third criticism is that secondary students should not be completing VET above AQF level II. In many states and territories, for example, secondary students now have the opportunity to complete a certificate III or even certificate IV in information technology. In other industries, however, there is considerable resistance to any VET in Schools programs extending beyond either AQF level I or II. If schools, as RTOs, or in partnership with RTOs, can demonstrate compliance with the AQTF and the training packages, then this should not be an issue.

To reiterate, ACACA believes that the debate concerning quality of VET in Schools should more realistically be a debate about the level of acceptance by industry as a whole of aspects of the AQTF and the specification of training packages, for these set the guidelines to which RTOs involved in VET in Schools programs are currently demonstrating compliance, as demonstrated by ANTA research. That is all I would like to say.

CHAIR—Thank you, Malcolm. Again, thank you for your submission. Just to pursue that issue about where the debate ought to centre, you have made it very clear in your comments there, as you did in your submission, that the debate ought not to be focused on whether VET is stand alone or embedded, or whether it is provided by schools or other RTOs. But does not industry have a very different view of the quality of VET based on those distinctions? Does not industry have a view—this is some of the feedback we are getting—that stand-alone courses are

more valuable than embedded courses and, in some cases, that VET provided by other RTOs is perhaps more reliable, if it is provided through a TAFE for instance, than if provided by schools? That is notwithstanding what you have said about the key issue being the workplace learning rather than institutional learning.

Mr Salier—Yes, I think they do. In fact, that is what I am saying. The perception is centred on the perception of the difference between embedded and stand-alone VET. All I can say is that in the few embedded cases that now occur, they are in fact explicitly assessed as per the AQTF and are therefore well within the provisions of the AQTF. If that perception is a correct perception that needs addressing, then that is where it should be addressed. What I am really saying is that there is not an inferior delivery, because it is delivering according to the current standards.

CHAIR—So how do we address a perception problem?

Mr Salier—If you decide it is a reality, you specify that you will not accept embedded components. That is easier said than done, of course.

CHAIR—Would that be your recommendation?

Mr Salier—No, not as—

CHAIR—You have argued that there ought to be a degree of uniformity. At least you make the point there is a lack of consistency across the states. A couple of states, as you have pointed out, do focus on an embedded approach. Would it be your view that we ought to have stand-alone VET courses across the country?

Mr Salier—As chairman of ACACA it would not be.

Mr SAWFORD—And as an individual?

Mr Salier—Yes, it would be.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr SAWFORD—Can you explain the difference? I understand your position is a professional position. Could you give your view as an individual?

Mr Salier—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—Are you comfortable doing that?

Mr Salier—As an individual, if you take it as that and not the view of the ACACA agencies.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes.

Mr Salier—The embedded model relies on specifying competencies within the normal curriculum. It does so quite explicitly. It assesses them according to the VET model. What it

does not do is structure a worthwhile pathway for students, which is why I would oppose it and why I have opposed it in this state. What we are concerned with is pathways for students into further educational opportunities or into employment. To do that you really need to take an industry-specific certificate. In the case of at least one embedded model I know, it does not lead to certification. It leads to more a statement of attainment of a number of competencies from a variety of areas.

CHAIR—Do you hold much hope that we will develop in the medium term a uniform approach; that the states will come together on this?

Mr Salier—I have seen one state change its direction already and there is only one now still in a position where it is involved with embedded only in the way I describe. Western Australia are not so much embedding, but they are putting a framework around what is essentially a VET qualification as well as their Western Australian certificate of education qualification. That allows them to develop either specific VET programs or the Western Australian certificate of education. It integrates those studies and it does not lead to duplication, which is the other problem if you take the embedded approach. I think that other state is feeling the pressure.

Mr SAWFORD—Malcolm, thanks again for your submission. It was excellent. Technical education in this country has had this oscillation between the two different dichotomies—stand alone/embedded, integration/divergence. They all have strengths and weaknesses. One of my observations of this push towards integration that you get from education departments and the propaganda about VET is that it attains that aim of consistency across Australia. One of the great drawbacks of integration is that it can also create a system that is totally resistant to change. If you have a divergent system, you do not get the consistency but you get a greater adaptability to change. Is there somewhere in the middle or is there somewhere else?

Mr Salier—There should be. It is to do with who develops what. In the one case it is nationally developed. That causes problems for ACACA agencies because it has a developmental cycle of three years, generally speaking—the packages do, anyway. That leaves the ACACA agencies in a difficult position, if they want to keep an integrated yet separate balanced curriculum, so that part of it is pure VET and part of it is more general education, both of which are valuable. Many students embarking on VET are doing it as part of a general education, not as a career pathway. It would be possible, but because you have two different agencies—actually there are more than that—within any state or territory, it becomes a little difficult to make sure that you have the integrated model. The national model takes no account of what is going on within the state, so the state model is therefore forced to do the reverse and it has limited capacity to do so.

Mr SAWFORD—Regarding accreditation of VET, would you have any specific recommendation you would put to this committee about that in terms of tertiary entrance or other options?

Mr Salier—This reflects the view of ACACA agencies and they have come up with different solutions because of the problem. The essential problem with VET is that it is a front-end moderation model. It says, 'Let's get everything right before we start teaching and the outcome will be good.' There is no checking of comparability between outcomes. That is the basic model and I am not suggesting that would change very easily. That is the basic model that is presented

as a difficulty for ACACA agencies because they are in a very high stakes environment of competitive entry to university. Therefore, the quality assurance of whether or not the learning has actually occurred and whether it is comparable from place to place is very much an issue.

You get responses, like from Victoria and New South Wales, of putting in an examination on the underpinning knowledge within VET, because the only way they can feel comfortable that the comparability is actually there is in fact to do that. I sit on our state registration body and I know there is no guarantee that VET is delivered, having gone through the registration processes that now exist. Apart from satisfaction from employers about the people they are employing, which is a very restricted snapshot for any individual employer, there is no actual checking on outcomes. That is a situation I think ACACA agencies find very difficult when it comes to recognition of VET in tertiary entrance. The universities also find it very difficult to accept. Without the outcome qualifications quality assurance, they have difficulty in accepting it on face value.

The recommendation I would have is one that I do not think would be contemplated within the VET system as a whole. It is that there ought to be a greater guarantee that the training is actually delivered and that the levels that are attested to are in fact reached.

CHAIR—How do we ensure that?

Mr Salier—I am not going to offer you that solution. We do it by setting up a very complex mechanism which includes external examinations. The VET system is not amenable to that. This is the conflict with the real purpose of VET. The real purpose of VET was never to enable tertiary entrance. This is a difficulty for people who want students to do VET because most students aspire to going to university but many of those students never do go there. Many of those would be benefited by VET studies but, if they do not count for tertiary entrance, the better students simply will not take them.

Mr SAWFORD—Does that come from the students or the teachers or the parents? Where there has been good technical education around this country through the last hundred years it has gained status and credibility through its own intrinsic worth. Is that really the challenge for technical education: that maybe higher education has too much control of education in this country? Maybe there needs to be a differentiated system. Should we be looking at TAFE degrees?

Mr Salier—It is community perception of the value. That comes from a whole variety of reasons. The perception of the value of VET is the issue that ought to be addressed. I do not think any of the professionals in the area would doubt the value but certainly the general community, and students in particular, vote with their feet.

Mr SAWFORD—It was interesting yesterday. We were at a couple of secondary colleges in Burnie and Devonport. The very impressive students themselves gave credibility to the VET. They were not prepared to be put down by anybody—teachers, parents or whatever—in terms of the integrity of what they were doing. That is a change that may be much more relevant than we anticipate.

Mr Salier—I cannot tell you for last year but I can tell you for the year before that of all the students who got a TER score—probably about 24 or 26 per cent—only 23 students got a tertiary entrance score who also did a VET certificate. That is what I mean by voting with your feet. That is a difficulty because we do not recognise VET here. We are about to do so, we hope. The better, more able students simply do not take it when it would be very valuable for them. If they do, they take it because they want employment to put themselves through university.

Mr SAWFORD—Or they want a break. They want to do something a little bit different. They want the challenge of something else.

CHAIR—Given the efforts to try and get recognition of VET for university entrance and given the general view that we need a greater uniformity of approach across the country, do you have an opinion as to which approach to incorporating VET in TER scores is the best approach?

Mr Salier—Personal or national?

CHAIR—Whichever you prefer.

Mr SAWFORD—Give both.

Mr Salier—Nationally there is no view because there are multiple models. That is quite clear. Personally, in this state, in the direction we are pursuing, we do not favour an examination. We think that is against the general philosophy of VET. What we are looking at is the Western Australian VET sector—not the school VET sector, the larger VET sector—of scored assessment in the key competencies that supposedly underlie all of the training packages. We can meet the quality assurance requirements of the university. We have confidence in that because, in our curriculum, 40 per cent of all our assessment criteria are based on the key competencies. We have a great deal of confidence that we can check that statistically against the mainstream subjects that students are doing and satisfy the university's needs. At a personal level I do not have any doubt of the validity of that.

CHAIR—What about the alternative approach of reducing the number of subjects required for qualification for TER so that students, say out of six subjects they study, would only require four for TER? Therefore, there would be capacity and time to do a VET course as well, without that having to be compromised in terms of exams or alternative assessment for university entrance.

Mr Salier—That has limited life because of the number of subjects that the university insists on and the proof that students are involved in what they call academically demanding subjects. We will be going down that path of asking them to reduce that. We are saying rather than just reduce it, with enough time—which is a fairly low level recognition of VET—we can give recognition to the VET as one of those at least.

CHAIR—You would say that ought to be done by focusing on the key competencies that are basically common to all VET courses?

Mr Salier—The basic problem is fairly obvious; 'competent' and 'not competent' is no basis for selecting students for university entrance. Its contribution to the tertiary entrance score

disadvantages high ability students, because they can get a qualification that they could have got at a much higher level, if higher levels existed, but they get exactly the same recognition as somebody who just falls over the line.

CHAIR—Has ACACA put some paper together in terms of how that assessment ought to work?

Mr Salier—No, because there are already in place different state and territory approaches.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Salier—Fiercely defended.

CHAIR—That is a fairly critical issue, I would have thought, if we are moving towards a uniform national approach and we want to incorporate VET into tertiary entrance acceptance.

Mr Salier—Yes, it is.

CHAIR—That whole issue of how we assess it is critical.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Just for the interest of the committee, Malcolm was also assistant principal of the Don College for a number of years.

Mr Salier—We go way back.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—We do go way back. Thank you for those comments. I will refer to the vocational education in new and emerging industries section, because you seem to put your finger on a couple of issues. You say that access to what you call 'an up-to-date national resource which highlights new and emerging industries and associated possibilities for VET would be essential.' Would you like to explore that a little bit more? It also leads us into supporting the work of careers advisers, which appears to be a pretty crucial element in terms of people selecting educational outcomes, including VET. I would be particularly interested in your comments here about new and emerging industries and the national up-to-date resource approach.

Mr Salier—One of the problems behind the offerings that are made at schools and colleges relates to the fact that it is not actually industry driven; it is supply driven by the students. In most places there is not sufficient acknowledgment given to the availability of work at the end of the study. It would be an interesting study to see how many students embark on a VET in Schools program with the intention of pursuing that particular career path, or that particular industry area where they are going to work. Many of them, I suspect, do not. They have an interest, or they want employment and that is why things like catering, tourism and so on, are fairly popular within schools because they can get casual employment and support other activities. But often that is not their longer term intention.

So when it comes to structuring programs and knowing whether or not ACACA agencies should offer particular things, it depends on the emerging industries that are going to become available. In our latest redevelopment of the science syllabuses we are moving into some of

those areas. It would be foolish of us to do so if, in fact, there are going to be VET courses available in those areas. It would be rather foolish for us to move in and cause duplication. We would rather do it in a way that is complementary. We are in the somewhat ridiculous situation, which we will cure next time around, of offering a tourism course which I believe is properly done under the VET umbrella and not under ours. Knowing what the emerging industries are and where the jobs are going to be for students in the future is fairly important to us and also to the people who are offering career advice, obviously.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Yes, that is an issue that is a bit difficult for you. You might individually approach this, but do you see the whole issue of careers advice, both in secondary schools and in colleges, as an issue in terms of people's selection of VET?

Mr Salier—Yes, I do, with the reservation I put on it before; that many of them are not pursuing it for their own purposes, for their own career pathways. But, yes, a student really ought to know what is going to be available for them by the time they reach year 10; probably year 11 in this state from now on, but year 10 generally speaking.

Mr SAWFORD—I want to raise a question about emerging new industries. I always get a bit uncomfortable about this in terms of people using the space industry, biotechnology and nanotechnology. These are going to be areas of incredibly small employment growth. I can remember the predictions by people—*Future Shock* by Alvin Toffler and that sort of thing—20 or 30 years ago. They were saying the same sorts of things—they got it wrong then and they are still getting it wrong. Predicting the future job market is prone to disaster in the sense of where the numbers come from. More often than not they finish up in more traditional and often lower skilled industries. The big growth has been in low to medium skilled, has it not—retail, tourism, hospitality, those sorts of things—where a few people get high wages but most get low wages? Is there a delusion about emerging industries? Would we be better off doing something else?

Mr Salier—Probably certainly on that list; nevertheless, you have to make some sort of guess because we are educating students who are going to be employed, or begin the education process 15 years before they are likely to reach employment, so we have to make some sorts of guesses as to what will be the most appropriate skills. You are really arguing for the mainstream game of the ACACA agencies. Specific training for specific purposes will always have that problem of predicting where the needs are going to be. I could not agree with you more. Future predictors have been very poor.

CHAIR—And you make the point that by definition almost it is impossible to adequately offer VET courses in those areas, because training packages have not been developed. Is it more appropriate then that we ought to be focusing on developing generic skills? I think you mentioned the possibility of certificate I level courses covering generic skills and perhaps making that compulsory right across year 10 students. Is that a better approach?

Mr Salier—This is my personal view, because I have to say ACACA agencies have very different approaches to generic skills.

CHAIR—Sure.

Mr Salier—Our personal view is that certainly within our own mainframe courses we concentrate very heavily on that. As I have mentioned before, they are not really the key competencies any more; they are a development from the key competencies and they are certainly modernised, particularly in light of the employability skills framework. Yes, we believe that is very important. At the end of the day it is what you remember. I do not think I can remember very much about my third-year university mathematics at all, but I think I can probably remember a lot of how I go about solving problems within that context and how I do research and how I find out how to find out and those sorts of things. They are the skills you are left with. Specific knowledge these days is a commodity and you use it as a tool, really, to develop learning skills of individuals. Yes, I would strongly support a more generic approach.

Mr SAWFORD—Sometimes the kids themselves want a hands-on approach. There is always a balance. Within a senior secondary framework of curriculum study is it not possible to do both?

Mr Salier—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—And that they ought to be doing both?

Mr Salier—Yes. As I said, 40 per cent of our criteria are on the generic and the rest are very specifically within subject areas. Yes, I believe you are quite right. When students know exactly what they want to do, then they want the specific skills to be able to pursue that so they have to have access to that as well.

Mr SAWFORD—On this particular inquiry, trying to get a picture in my mind about what is an impressive secondary system or school or whatever, I always keep coming back to those almost lighthouse sorts of schools like Mandurah in WA, Salisbury in SA, Junee and out there in a little satellite town of Wagga, where they seem to have consistent benchmarks. At the moment they have benchmarks of 70 per cent of children doing accredited VET—although they did not start off with that figure—but they are still allowing the transition to university. Both options are available. We went to Don yesterday and to Hellyer. They have under 30 per cent of their children doing accredited VET. Do they move towards that figure of 70 per cent?

Mr Salier—Yes, but the barrier is that tertiary entrance recognition and the acceptance by the students that this is a worthwhile study. One of the things we do is say, 'We have three classes of study in this state: those that can get to university; those that can get you to a specific employment position; and those which do not lead anywhere, but are a general education.' Until you fuse those top two classes—and hopefully the third as well—and allow them to do both, I believe you are right.

Mr SAWFORD—How far away is that in Tasmania, do you think?

Mr Salier—We are in current discussion with the University of Tasmania, who are going back to their general university with a proposal which would allow that.

Mr SAWFORD—You would think, in some ways, it would be easier in Tasmania to do that.

Mr Salier—Yes, it often is. The will has not been here until fairly recently.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—What about the requirement of the 240 hours and work placement and workplace assessment? Is that not an inhibiting factor, apart from the historical and cultural ones, for the 30-70?

Mr Salier—We are talking about, in two years, of 1,200 hours minimum. It is often more than that with students. There is room to do it within that, but what you are looking at is one certificate II, for example, which takes 240 hours. Most of our pre-tertiary syllabuses at the moment are 150 and, on top of that, they have the actual study in the institutional setting. It is a considerable amount of time. They are talking about 300-plus hours, at least, in most certificates. That is a fairly demanding slab of time. When we recognise that we are going to have to give it recognition, it is probably more in line with the time needed to reach the competency than in fact we allow for the other pre-tertiary syllabuses.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I see what you are saying there, but in Tasmania VET in Schools is effectively workplace assessment, workplace training and then in-the-school learning. In actual fact, because of the way they have packaged it, the ability to be able to find a sufficient number of employers and workplaces must inhibit the number of places they can make available.

Mr Salier—I cannot comment on that. The previous people would have been better able to comment on the availability of workplaces. I am not aware of any major problems, but I do know that people say it is an issue they have to address. I would not know where those major problems exist. It would be industry specific, I suspect, but I have no evidence on that.

CHAIR—Going back to the issue of tertiary acceptance again, if I understand you correctly, you are saying ACACA does not have a view on what model is best. I find that surprising. Should ACACA not be trying to develop an approach that all its members would agree to?

Mr Salier—The horse has bolted. New South Wales have a position; Victoria have a position; Western Australia have a position and any debate will defend that position. It probably needs a wider audience for that debate.

CHAIR—Each of those members would agree to the benefits of a uniform approach?

Mr Salier—Yes.

CHAIR—But they would want everyone else to adopt their own approach.

Mr Salier—In some states—and you probably know to whom I am referring—they would say, 'That is fine, as long as it's ours.'

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—This is the old magic question at the end, I suppose: why is it with education, particularly in English-speaking countries—because it is not just symptomatic of Australia; it is true of the UK, Canada, New Zealand and the United States—if you have collaboration then competition is evil; if you apply synthesis to the way you analyse things, then analysis is out the window. You either have qualitative assessment or you have quantitative. We oscillate from one thing to the other. In VET we have oscillated over the last 120 years, basically

from meeting the needs of industry to the intrinsic liberal needs of the student. We have fluctuated over that time. Yet most sensible people, the students themselves and the parents, recognise there is worth in both. Why is it in education and particularly in VET that we have oscillated from one thing to another without recognising the value of both extremes and finding some sensible balance in the middle?

Mr Salier—I do not think I would like to speak on behalf of the VET sector on that one. I do not know, but in general terms there does seem to be an oscillation in the same way in the educational sector. I do not have any particular enlightened views to inform that. I can say, though, there are approaches where both the qualitative and the quantitative assessments are available and are used, in fact, but less so in VET that I am aware of at the moment.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for your contribution today.

Mr SAWFORD—We found your comments very incisive and very helpful.

Proceedings suspended from 11.01 a.m. to 11.19 a.m.

CREHAN, Mr Tony, Executive Director, The Association of Independent Schools of Tasmania

GROSVENOR, Mr Roderic, School to Work Project Officer, The Association of Independent Schools of Tasmania

CHAIR—I welcome representatives of the Association of Independent Schools of Tasmania. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mr Grosvenor—Yes. I am employed by the Association of Independent Schools as a project officer for School to Work programs. I am also the Chair of the Hobart Education Business Training Partnership—HEBTP—because I represent the independent schools on the HEBTP committee.

CHAIR—Thank you. I do need to remind you that proceedings today are considered as proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. I invite you to make some introductory comments, if you would like to. We have your submission. Thank you for that submission and for your supplementary submission.

Mr Crehan—Thank you, Mr Chairman. Basically our supplementary submission, which we have copied to you today, covers the items we would like to speak to and also perhaps we can reiterate our recommendations from the submission, if that is all right with you.

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Crehan—Firstly, in terms of the supplementary information, under the heading of 'The nature of VET in Schools', AIST makes the point that this is not a single thing but varies enormously between jurisdictions. In our submission we describe VET in Schools as it is practised in Tasmania. Since our submission we have been told that, nationally, of 180,000 VET in School students in 2001, 80,000 had no workplace component in their VET course. Under our heading 'Growth and development of VET in AIST schools'—that is, the independent schools in Tasmania—we note that, in 2003, 126 students are involved in 18 industry areas. The growth in industry areas is possible because most of our schools buy in their off-the-job courses from RTOs—either other schools or non-school RTOs.

Since our submission, the industry areas that have been added in the independent schools in Tasmania are: agriculture, beauty therapy, business, engineering, broadcast media, and music industry skills. The area of workplace skills, which is not an industry specific course, has also been added. Under the heading of 'Effectiveness of VET in independent schools in Tasmania', we note that evidence from recent stakeholder feedback research continues to suggest that the effectiveness is still high. In terms of infrastructure development, one area we did not mention in our submission but we should mention now, because it is valued by the teachers and is currently important, is the VETNETwork, particularly its publications and especially its national biennial conference, which is to be held in Hobart in 2004. Despite reports that cuts in general funding to VETNETwork have caused some downsizing to that organisation, it is our hope that there will still be Commonwealth financial support for the conference next year. Finally, there is our

section on resourcing of VET programs in schools. There is no doubt that VET programs, as offered to our students here in Tasmania, are resource intensive. Teacher time is very significant, especially in respect of arranging vocational placements, without which we do not believe we would maintain employer support.

To reiterate, Mr Chairman, the recommendations in AIST's submission are: firstly, that adequate recognition be given to the substantial differences that do exist between VET programs delivered to school students in different jurisdictions, which are the result of the jurisdictions' responsibility for school education; secondly, that future funding models take into account the different costs of VET programs to schools in different jurisdictions, because of those differences we have pointed to; thirdly, that current efforts be made to enhance the esteem of VET programs for students and that it be continued and further developed especially amongst employers, parents and the wider community; and, fourthly and finally, that the rhetoric about community partnerships needing to be developed to meet national goals through local solutions be parallelled in the funding models, in effect, so that funding guidelines do not predetermine any particular model of partnerships.

CHAIR—Thank you. I noticed in your original submission that less than 10 per cent of your post-compulsory students in independent schools are doing VET in School courses. Has that number risen since the submission?

Mr Crehan—I think the 126 we referred to would be still about the 10 per cent.

CHAIR—Do you have a view as to why the number in your schools is substantially below the state average? The figure we had from the department is around 28 per cent in the state. Why is it that the number is less for independent schools? Is it the nature of the students? Are there barriers in your system to the take-up of VET which do not exist in the public system?

Mr Grosvenor—I think it is much more a matter of the parental aspirations. People who pay fees to send their children to the larger independent schools—although they are not the majority of our schools, they are the majority of our students—are looking for tertiary entrance and therefore it has been a slower uptake. But all schools in the independent sector have now made a policy decision that, where appropriate, VET programs should be made accessible to their students.

CHAIR—Apart from that perception or aspiration issue, are there tangible barriers that make it more difficult for your system? For example, the cost of purchasing courses through TAFE is an issue. Are there other barriers in your system?

Mr Crehan—Quite a large number of our independent schools in Tasmania are low-fee, community based or church based schools. Many of those do not offer year 11 and year 12 education; a number of them do not offer secondary education either. There is inevitably a shift of students away from those schools. Those who have aspirations to undertake vocational education would tend to seek those schools which have the facilities specialising in those areas, and frequently our independent schools—secondary schools also—are in areas where there is no independent year 11 and 12 college nearby. The short transport solution for the students is to then move into the government sector. Would that be a fair summary, Rod?

Mr Grosvenor—I do not think there are any barriers other than the barrier that does exist in a lot of schools, and that is that the school timetable is something which is almost worshipped by heads of academic departments. That does interrupt the general program of a school, particularly if you are going to provide the vocational placement element. Most of our VET students would be out of school either for one day a week on a vocational placement or for three two-week periods in the course of the year. If a student also wants to do their pre-tertiary courses, you have to persuade the teachers of those academic subjects that they can make up the time. By and large we are achieving that but it is a slow and sometimes rather painful process.

CHAIR—We are certainly seeing a lot more flexibility in schools as to how they arrange their timetabling. On your third recommendation about the need to further enhance the esteem of VET programs, could you offer some suggestions as to how we might do that?

Mr Grosvenor—Again, it is by a greater recognition of the differences that exist. We have had one particularly strong example in the Hobart area, where one of the leading employers in the area in hospitality, who represented Tasmania on national bodies, came back with quite virulent attacks on VET in Schools. We had good contacts with his firm, which took vocational placement students from a variety of schools—including some of our independents—and so we invited him to meet with us and talk about it and to bring along his head chef and front of house manager, who were the people who dealt with VET in Schools students. He climbed down completely from his criticisms in the face of his own employees saying, 'These kids are wonderful.' It is difficult. We find it difficult to say: 'Yes, the way we do it is good. Don't take the criticisms you get from your colleagues who may be dealing with the sort of students who don't get any sort of structured workplace learning component in their VET and tar us with the same brush.'

The problem is that, as long as we think of VET in Schools as a particular thing, employers who are not particularly geared into the system will criticise it for aspects that do not actually exist. There is another element which comes in and which we need to try to do something about—and we have done in Tasmania—and that is the confusion that employers have about the variety of students who come into their workplaces. They think that a student who comes in for work experience in year 10 is the same thing as a student who comes in for a vocational placement in years 11 or 12. To get around that, we have developed, through the HEBPT organisation, a series of identification cards which are colour coordinated. That idea has been taken up by the department and spread across the state.

A VET student doing an industry specific program has a card and an identifier which identifies them as such while a work experience student has a different colour card, as does a non-industry specific work skills student. Again, they do not have the same industry skills being developed as those we would expect of our students who are doing a full industry program. It is a slow process. You are trying to change language. You are trying to get them not to talk about work experience when they mean vocational placement.

CHAIR—What about the perceptions of parents? That is another issue, isn't it?

Mr Grosvenor—It is. In some of our schools that one is being dealt with by the feedback they are getting from the kids who are doing the program. By and large, the feedback from parents

and from students who are involved in the program is good. Whether you can get that to spread across the ones who want their children to be doctors or lawyers is a rather different story.

CHAIR—That is the challenge, isn't it?

Mr Grosvenor—It is.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr SAWFORD—The critical mass of 126 kids is pretty small.

Mr Grosvenor—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—It asks the obvious question: would these kids be better off in a public school or in a TAFE system?

Mr Grosvenor—I would have to say no, obviously. The fact is that most of our schools are not RTOs themselves but buy in their programs for their VET students from a variety of others, including the state colleges. We have a very healthy relationship with our state college colleagues. If you have one student in a relatively small school—and one of our schools that is an RTO, Calvin Christian School at Kingston, would have 60 or 70 students in years 11 and 12, which is not a big group—who wants to do furniture design and making they go to Elizabeth College. If they have students who want to do automotive engineering, they will either go to Hobart College or to Rosny, according to where they live.

Mr SAWFORD—Would the same thing apply if there was an academic area that was offered somewhere else—would that be outsourced as well?

Mr Grosvenor—Yes.

Mr SAWFORD—So it is basically a policy of outsourcing it all?

Mr Grosvenor—Outsourcing where you do not have the critical mass to make it a viable proposition to run your own class.

Mr SAWFORD—You have 18 industry areas and 126 kids—

Mr Grosvenor—Exactly.

Mr SAWFORD—I would not have thought there would be one viable industry—not one.

Mr Grosvenor—Yes, there would be, because a considerable proportion of those would be doing hospitality, IT or multimedia. Those three manage to maintain reasonable class sizes, again, by sharing facilities—for instance, the multimedia program run by Fahan School, which is a girls school in the Sandy Bay suburb. It is quite a small school—I do not know what its year 11 and 12 enrolment is.

Mr Crehan—I think it is 300 in total.

Mr Grosvenor—Yes, I think there are about 60 I think in years 11 and 12. They run a very good multimedia program but it takes students from four other institutions, some of them Catholic and some of them other non-Catholic independent schools. We are trying to develop regional programs in the Hobart area. I believe you are going to look at one of those this afternoon, the electrotechnology program, which is sponsored by HEBTP—the Hobart Education Business Training Partnership. We hope that, because they have a slightly more academic touch to them, programs like that—and one in laboratory skills, which is going to be centred at Elizabeth College next year—will attract some of our students, and they are free to go to them. We have an agreement between the seven non-government Catholic and independent schools in the Hobart area that any student from any of those schools can attend a VET program at any of the other schools.

Mr Crehan—If I may elaborate on that question you asked about whether they would be better off in state schools or training establishments, one answer is that even though the courses are outsourced there is a considerable advantage to be gained by maintaining the continuity of support structure that the students have had in previous years. The chairman alluded earlier to the problem of parental recognition and support for the programs. That recognition is strengthened and maintained by the fact that parents see that support offered by the institution they have chosen for their children's education, and they have a line of communication open to the principal and staff of the establishment for confirmation of their recognition of the value of the program.

Mr SAWFORD—A point in your supplementary submission talks about the effectiveness of VET in your schools. You say:

Evidence from recent Stakeholder Feedback research continues to suggest that this is still high.

How do you measure that?

Mr Grosvenor—The local partnerships like HEBTP carry out customer feedback research annually, involving students, parents, teachers and employers. They are surveyed with a reasonable survey instrument which seeks to get their views. For instance, over the last three years we have run the surveys, the vast majority of employers have said that they consider the programs in which they are involved as employers to be highly satisfactory or very highly satisfactory. We had something like a three per cent employer response that was satisfactory and virtually nothing below that. We are getting higher commendation from parent groups which are surveyed—but, again, they are the parents of students who are involved in the programs.

Mr SAWFORD—Can you see the participation in VET in your schools growing from that 10 per cent or is it going to stay around that mark?

Mr Crehan—Funding is a big issue there. With additional funding, I think a number of schools would be keen to develop their activities in those areas.

Mr Grosvenor—Yes, I think that is true. We are finding at the moment that those programs which are viable to be run by schools themselves are tending to be run in alternate years rather

than every year, so you get a bit of a flux in the statistics, whereas where they are buying in a program for an individual student or two or three students, that goes on year by year. The signs are that some of the larger schools are gradually taking a greater interest. For the first time, this year we have some school based new apprenticeships in one of our major independent schools in Launceston. That is a straw which I think is being followed up. There will be an increase, I believe, but it will be a slow increase and it will depend on whether schools feel they can purchase in the sorts of courses their students want to have. At the moment I do not think any of the schools are passing on that cost to parents. They are counting it as part of the fees the parents pay to the school.

Mr SAWFORD—In the supplementary submission you use the term 'resource intensive'. VET, whether it was in the fifties or the sixties or in the 1900s, was always 25 per cent more than academic courses—that is a given; some will be more than that, some less. Obviously that is not resource intensive: 25 per cent is an increase but you would not call it resource intensive. Is that what you meant by that or did you mean you have included that as 125 per cent because the cost of a teacher is involved in there somewhere, in terms of the outsourcing? Or is it because you are being charged too much for outsourcing? Has the cost of outsourcing been prohibitive? What is the reason for using that term?

Mr Grosvenor—The principal reason is that, where schools offer a program themselves or even where they buy it in, there is the secondary cost of organising the vocational placements. Generally speaking, as in the secondary colleges, that occupies two lines; therefore your teacher cost is doubled. As teacher cost is generally 70 per cent to 80 per cent of the total cost of education, you are pushing it up to nearly twice the figure. If you look back at the first survey of the cost of VET in Schools done by DEST when it was DETYA, three years ago—three states were involved—the Tasmanian figure for the cost of VET in Schools was nearly twice the average cost of an academic program for a normal sort of TCE subject. Obviously those general subjects vary enormously, whether it is science or whether it is English.

The number of students is the other variable that very strongly affects your costing. Languages are very expensive to run because you get very small classes wanting to do Japanese at year 12 level or whatever it is. But schools have continued to operate those programs. And that is also true of VET: schools feel this is important.

Mr SAWFORD—So cross-subsidy is with us?

Mr Grosvenor—Yes, very much.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Most of the questions have already been asked by my colleagues. I am particularly interested in the section about resourcing of VET programs in schools. You quite rightly pointed out how resource hungry they are. They are resource intensive in terms of teachers. You also quite rightly talked about what is almost an equity issue of the pressure on teachers involved in VET programs and, of course, the burnout rate. You say that your association is keen to support and assist teachers in their professional development, industry experience and so forth. How do you go about that? How do you resource that?

Mr Grosvenor—We resource it mainly out of ANTA VET in Schools funds—

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Specifically targeted for that?

Mr Grosvenor—Yes; funds which allow for the development of state infrastructure, professional development and so on. But a lot of it we do in cooperation with the other two sectors. The Catholic sector and ours work very closely together in the VET area particularly. We have had a lot of assistance to our teachers from, for instance, Guildford Young College, which is a large secondary college in the Catholic set-up. But we also get tremendous help from the VSDOs, the VET in Schools development officers who are situated in each of the secondary colleges, and there are three in the rural areas. We get a lot of assistance to help us with that, so that professional development and support is cost effective; more than it would be if we were trying to do it entirely on our own. We give support to our VET coordinators because, even where a school is buying in the program, there has to be somebody on the staff of the school who is actually coordinating the activity, arranging vocational placements and working with the external RTO. We bring our VET coordinators together, usually with the Catholic VET coordinators as well, and of course we bring them together in the local partnership groupings as well.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Is it your experience that people who are involved in that are, in terms of equity, almost on a load and half, plus goodwill, plus 'above and beyond the call of duty'?

Mr Grosvenor—All of those things and more.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Yes. I know that is part of the profession and that people take pride in that, but we met a person—not a member of your association but closely associated with it—who saw a doubling of their numbers predicted for next year. This person had just come off leave and looked about ready to go on it again. They were absolutely swamped with this. I suppose I am commenting on something you are already aware of. But what about the issue of whether your association and your schools have communications with the faculty of education in terms of pre-service training in VET for all teachers so that this may indeed affect not only a general body of knowledge about VET but also the cultural thing you were talking about even in your own schools?

Mr Crehan—The Department of Education here in Tasmania is currently going through a process of implementing new strategies for post-compulsory education. Our association has just been invited to be represented, as has the Catholic sector, on the steering committee for the further development and implementation of those strategies. While that is not an issue which has arisen for us to fully address head-on at this stage, it will be part of that emerging process over the next months.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Do you have a view towards this?

Mr Crehan—As an association I have to say we have not formed a view.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—What about individually?

Mr Grosvenor—I have a very strong view that the pre-service education of teachers needs to take into account much more forward looking than backward looking, but then I tend to be rather ahead of my time, according to some people, in what I want to see. I am concerned about a

number of aspects that impinge on this, such as the strong feeling in some areas—and, to some extent, in national policy—that VET ought to contribute to tertiary entrance. What I want to see is what I think that is alluding to; that is, parity of esteem for courses that students undertake, if they are appropriate courses for those students.

I think we have forgotten about individual differences and meeting the individual needs of students in favour of something which, at one point, was a sort of equity of outcomes. I do not think we are ever going to get equity of outcomes. Kids are different. If we are to meet the individual aspirations of students, we ought to be prepared to give parity of esteem to the appropriate courses for them. Therefore—and Sid knows only too well my background, which has been 12 years at the state Board of Studies, as its chief executive—I do not like the idea of scoring VET programs. VET is a competency based system, and I think that once you start saying, 'He's competent to one point, two points, three points, 20 points above competent,' you are making a nonsense of the basic VET system. Therefore I have always been an advocate of talking not about VET in Schools but VET for school students.

That is stressed at one point in the quality report to ANTA dated July 2003; there is reference to that. I want to see real VET being given to students in our schools. There is a danger that if you start saying, 'But you could do an external exam so that we can score you and add it into your TER,' you are then making two sorts of VET.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You have really opened up an interesting area that obviously has national implications.

Mr Grosvenor—Yes.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I go back to your original statement about your own clients, and their parents as well, that there may be a stigma on VET because it does not have that quite clearly defined line into a TE score and therefore count towards tertiary entrance. Do you think there should be a national uniform approach to this in terms of allowing it to be part of, or count towards, a TE score? I am interested in your individual comments, if that is how you would like to approach it. It is pertinent to what we are doing, so I am very interested in your comments.

Mr Grosvenor—I cannot see how you can do that, other than by having a national senior secondary certificate. As long as you have individual boards of studies running their own particular versions, whether it is SACE, TCE, the Higher School Certificate or whatever, I cannot quite see how one would implement a national way of recognising VET. I was at the ANTA one-day seminar on this issue last month, representing independent schools nationally. There was a suggestion that perhaps the answer was to view a certain level of VET certificate as meaning you needed one less subject to develop your average TE score. That is fine, except for the fact that there is not a level across VET. A level 2 in some VET courses is a very different demand, particularly intellectual demand, from a level 2 certificate in another industry area. I can see there are real problems in it.

Sid would be aware of the problems we had when we introduced the TCE, particularly with some employers who did not feel very happy with it because it did not make it easy for them to compare students by scores. What they really wanted was a uni-dimensional score that would say, 'This student is better than that student.' We said, 'No, that isn't possible. You have to be

prepared to read the student's results and see what is pertinent to your particular desire of the employee.' The same is true of VET. If we can get employers to recognise the value of VET programs delivered to school students alongside their academic programs, I do not think we need to go down the path of creating a means of getting it into a TER. But perhaps we could persuade the universities to actually interview students and determine university entrance on the basis of individual merit.

Mr SAWFORD—There is a wonderful irony there, if you were educated in a classical way, isn't there? I think you have made that point.

Mr Grosvenor—Yes; having come from the UK, where every student going to university is interviewed—and there are a lot more students going to UK universities than to Australian universities. But we find it so much easier to try to use a uni-dimensional system of scoring. I find that, as you know only too well, Sid, anathema to me. It is very much a personal view, not an AIST view.

CHAIR—You have certainly highlighted one of the key dilemmas, Rod. We were discussing earlier how we might proceed in terms of recommendations regarding the whole issue of tertiary entrance. There is undoubtedly a need to raise the esteem of VET in Schools, but whether that is better done by incorporating it into university entrance recognition or an alternative approach—as you suggest, by employers better recognising the quality of VET and the outcomes that students achieve from that—is the question.

Mr SAWFORD—ANTA: what is good and what is not?

Mr Grosvenor—There is an enormous amount that is good in what ANTA is doing and the whole development of the AQTF and VET quality and so on is admirable, but I do not think that ANTA understands VET in Schools.

Mr SAWFORD—Does that go back to the Carmichael report when Laurie thought that kids were born at 15?

Mr Grosvenor—Yes, to some extent. They have a real problem in that they are dealing with, on the one hand, a VET system which is national—at least to a point, although state interpretation of national guidelines always impinges on that to some extent—but, on the other hand, they are dealing with a school system which is jurisdictionally based and where the interpretation of VET in Schools has been so very different. I do not think ANTA has really come to grips with that, even though I see in almost every one of their publications that they acknowledge that VET in Schools is different. But I do not think they manage to take that into their thinking.

Mr SAWFORD—University has too much control of education and not enough accountability?

Mr Grosvenor—I think you are out of date, at least in Tasmania. I think we got rid of that shackle very largely nearly 20 years ago: 20 years ago, I would have had to have said, 'Yes, the universities determine particularly senior secondary curriculum almost entirely.' In Tasmania we largely got rid of that over the period between 20 and 15 years ago. I think their current

shackling of school education is in the training of teachers more than through their influence on curriculum.

Mr SAWFORD—Why the late onset of the introduction of or the growth in VET in Tasmania? Basically other states started it in the early nineties. Tassie might have acknowledged the start in 1995, but only got going in 1997-98. Why did that happen?

Mr Grosvenor—Because we were already trying to provide a much more liberal and broad senior secondary education program from 1991 and we had been thinking about it from 1985-86. There has, to some extent, been a backlash more recently against that—that it was too broad and that there had got to be too much emphasis on breadth of study. There were a lot of programs that were acknowledged through the TCE that had a fairly strong industry or vocational element to them, but they were not actually VET. It is a bit like school based New Apprenticeships, which have been very slow to get off the ground in Tasmania, compared with other states. That is partly because VET programs provide a very strong industry focus and workplace experience focus; therefore, SBNA was less necessary.

Mr SAWFORD—What is the right balance between technical education and a liberal education? Should there be TAFE degrees or TAFE diplomas?

Mr Grosvenor—I do not think there is a panacea for that one.

Mr SAWFORD—I am not asking for that. What do you think is a reasonable balance?

Mr Grosvenor—The balance will differ between individual students and their needs. We have in the past tended to underplay the preparation of students for the world of work. But that is much broader than just VET. I am a strong supporter of the vocational learning aspects of the Adelaide declaration, bolstering career work in schools—which in some areas has been rather poor—bolstering work studies types of things, coming right through the whole thing. I see that very much as the task force did: a K to 12 operation. The kindergarten visiting the fire station is the beginning of it.

Mr SAWFORD—What about TAFE degrees?

Mr Grosvenor—You have to look at the whole question of degrees. You should not ask me for a quick one on that: I am the registrar of the body that registers non-university providers of higher education, so I have very strong views on the subject. TAFE institutions can deliver degrees, but if they do we have to make sure that the degree has comparability and that it does not become a second tier of degrees. That is my worry about associate degrees.

CHAIR—Thank you, Rod and Tony. We appreciate your time, your valuable comments and your submission.

[12.02 p.m.]

BROWN, Ms Elaine, Committee Member, Hobart Education Business Training Partnership

DRIESSEN, Ms Penny, Executive Officer, Hobart Education Business Training Partnership

STEPHENSON, Ms Jodie, Committee Member and Deputy Chairperson, Hobart Education Business Training Partnership

CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Ms Brown—I am also a VET in Schools development officer.

Ms Stephenson—I am also the business and industry School to Work Alliance adviser from the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

CHAIR—I need to remind you of the formalities. Proceedings here today are legal proceedings in the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings in the House. Thank you for your submission and for your time this morning. I invite you to make some introductory comments and then we will proceed to questions.

Ms Driessen—I will start with painting a general picture about our partnership. Elaine is going to give you a bit more information from the education point of view and Jodie from the business point of view. I will go very quickly and leave questions for later. Hobart Education Business Training Partnership represents 11 schools that provide senior secondary education and provide vocational education and training as part of that. We encompass over 800 employers in the Hobart area, over 1,300 students in the Hobart area and over 100 teachers that particularly are working on vocational education and training. We cover 22 industry areas and 44 qualifications. To cover those areas we run over 16 industry committees, which include the teachers that provide those courses and industry members.

The organisation is one that is established to research, market, coordinate and facilitate vocational education and training in the Hobart area. Unlike some other partnerships that you would have heard from, we do not get involved in the provision of vocational education and training as such; we work with the schools that do the provision. We also get involved in resource development, and I have brought some examples to leave with you.

In terms of our research in particular, we have done research over the last five or six years on student destination and customer feedback. That gives us a very good picture of what we are achieving in the Hobart area. Over 84 per cent of our 2002 VET in Schools leavers are going on to further training and employment. That is a significant achievement when you compare it with other areas. Teachers surveyed say the best thing about VET is the employment opportunities for students. They put that as their No. 1 identified opportunity. Over 80 per cent of students

surveyed rate our programs in Hobart as good or very good. Parents who have been surveyed—a significant number of parents have been surveyed—rate our programs as having positive outcomes in giving confidence to the students and giving them experience in the workplace. They say they would continue to encourage other parents to encourage students to be involved in vocational education and training.

From our experience, the most successful thing about VET in Schools in our area is our significant work placement component, which is always over 120 hours and closer to 240 hours in a year. We put that as our No. 1 achievement and the thing that makes our programs most successful. The programs that are most successful in the Hobart area have dedicated, involved and interested industry partners. These things sound like clichés but there is a significant difference between having and not having industry very involved. They also have dedicated teachers that are working above normal teaching expectations. You can see the difference when teachers are putting in extra hours over and above what should be expected of them. They are achieving amazing outcomes in that industry relationship. The other thing that makes a significantly successful VET in Schools program is where there is an industry demand and a recognised skill shortage and therefore the demand for these students is also large.

In terms of crucial issues that we want to draw your attention to, VET in Schools is significantly different from state to state and it is significantly different in our Hobart area. We are concerned that funding still relates to bums on seats. A broader type of formula for funding for VET in Schools needs to be considered because there is such a difference in VET in Schools. We are also concerned about teachers needing to keep their competencies up to date and relating to the industry area. I have some thoughts about things we think you should take on board in terms of national recommendations, but I will leave those until later. I will now hand over to Elaine to talk about the education side of VET in Schools.

Ms Brown—I will just go through and map out the picture of how it actually happens within schools in the Hobart region and the purposes behind it. The VET in Schools programs in the HE cluster are, we believe, innovative in meeting students' needs. They enable students in year 11 and year 12 to combine general education and vocational education that for many provides more enterprising and practical focus for their study. It gives them direct experience with industry with the on-the-job experience which employers, parents and students value. That comes out constantly in our surveys.

It provides partnership arrangements with TAFE and other RTOs, allowing them to access state of the art resources, which creates an easy transition for our students going on to further education and training. It provides entry level certificate I or certificate II national qualifications in general with the exception of IT where we look at certificate III. The schools and colleges have altered their timetables to best facilitate access to programs and enhance delivery of VET.

There are a variety of models used, dependent upon the industry needs and the educational needs of the students. The first model is off-the-job training, with the on-the-job component conducted one day a week. The second model is one- or two-week block placements during the school term to minimise interruption to other classes. The third model, with the regional electrotechnology program, is two one-week block placements during term holiday and one week in term 3. With them all aware that training is on one day, the college and schools are also accessible to students who have part-time employment and want to be part-time enrolments.

It is not one model fits all. It depends on the programs, and student and industry needs. One of the models that is quite similar to the school based New Apprenticeships is the one day on the job at the relevant RTO and the other three days at the school or college studying their general education TCE subjects, the difference with VET in Schools being the students are not under a contract of training for two years with their employers or their host employer, the college or school and the RTO and they are not paid for the employment for that particular day.

VET in Schools students undertake between 120 hours and 240 hours structured on-the-job vocational placement as part of their VET enrolment. The on-the-job component provides students with the opportunity to be treated as adults and learn from adults in real working environments. As well, all students have 150 hours off-the-job training. Through maintaining contact with industry and workplace supervisors, we have been able to maintain relevance to Tasmanian industries. The on-the-job vocational placement enables students to make informed decisions about their career choice. It also places them in contact with prospective employers. The employers find this valuable in terms of viewing the employees. They see how the students work with their current staff, conduct themselves in their work environment with customers and products, and generally observe their attitude to work over a period of time.

Students also gain from this process. They learn the sort of work ethic required by employers while they learn the very complex and important communication skills required for success when working in a team and when attending to customers. Over the period of a placement and with the subsequent placements throughout the year, students develop in confidence, knowledge and skill about their chosen industry, which results in their becoming very employable. Most of these students gain work or an apprenticeship as a result of vocational placement, for the reasons previously stated. Students also gain employability skills that may not necessarily lead to direct employment in industry areas that they have actually chosen. For example, 31 per cent of the 2002 cohort of VET in Schools students in the HEBTP cluster went on to further training, 24 per cent gained new apprenticeships, 23 per cent were employed and not in further training and six per cent were employed and in further training.

The on-the-job component of VET in Schools in Tasmania is one of the reasons for the great success of VET in Schools in this state. Other states and territories do not have a mandatory model of on-the-job training. To enable the on-the-job training, schools and colleges resource the ongoing facilitation with industry by providing staffing time for the continuous coordination and relationship building with industry, which we see as a critical factor in terms of the success of VET in Schools. The teaching and learning environments have been designed to promote stimulating delivery and meet stated outcomes, working towards meeting certain goals that are put forward with the state initiatives.

I will go on to discuss the resourcing of vocational educational programs in schools. It is in our submission. There is certainly a significant resourcing issue with regard to VET in Schools. There is no doubt that within Tasmania's system there are not enough resources allocated to the running of a VET program. The ANTA funds to schools and colleges and ECEF allocation to clusters have had the most significant impact on resourcing our VET in Schools. It is resource hungry for the following reasons, many of which are not recognised in funding formulas. There are resourcing issues with maintaining facilities to industry standard. To alleviate the duplication of resources, we have endeavoured to work in partnership with other RTOs, rather than have duplication.

Setting up and maintaining these partnerships is also resource hungry. Schools and colleges in this cluster have developed many key partnerships linked directly to the delivery of AQTF training packages, further education and training, and industry skill shortages. There has been a longstanding success with the relationship that this cluster of schools has with the Institute of TAFE Tasmania, in particular in the areas of construction and more recently hospitality and hairdressing.

The most recent successful regional partnership is the electrotechnology program that has been offered this year, which you will learn more about this afternoon. In response to a skill shortage, HEBTP looked at the electrotechnology industry, at ways and means in which we as a cluster could look at offering a program. In doing that, we set up a partnership with TAFE, with great sponsorship from Hydro Tasmania, where all the other schools and colleges can enrol through one particular college to have that program delivered, so there is no duplication in terms of resources.

Many of the VET courses take up two timetable lines and therefore must be 1½ times more expensive, if not more. Schools and colleges have put significant resources into staffing in this area—significant in terms of their staffing—to enable the development of on-the-job training to take place. Teachers are required to be double qualified, to meet the teaching qualifications and industry qualifications and competencies. To maintain this there is a constant in terms of professional development, with attrition of teachers leaving the VET sector or the education system and new teachers entering the VET system. There is a requirement for certain qualifications. With the ageing population of teachers, continuous professional development will be high on the agenda.

The qualifications are currently not part of the initial training at universities. For instance, certificate IV in assessment of workplace training is not part of teacher training here at our institution. Schools and colleges are required to facilitate this professional development. Some of our teachers have the advantage of an industry qualification and find the transition into the VET in Schools sector quite smooth.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Should it be a compulsory qualification, cert IV in teacher training?

Ms Brown—It probably would not be hard for it to be. It would be an added bonus. I would say it would certainly be an advantage.

CHAIR—It would save teachers having to do it once they have started teaching?

Ms Brown—Yes, they would be learning the principles of what happens within the industry and it would be an enormous advantage for them to have that background—not only certificate IV but also some depth in terms of industry knowledge.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—As it filters through the system and up and across?

Ms Brown—It would be an advantage and not difficult to meet. Something else quite resource draining on systems is meeting the AQTF standards and requirements as they move and change with the weather, at times. The schools and college sector in this state employ VET in Schools development officers—they are dedicated people within the system—to be responsible to lead

the development of the programs across the state and the sector and to ensure that AQTF requirements are met. There are resources that the Department of Education put in there along with the Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training. Putting students in workplaces, visiting them and assessing them in workplaces, also takes a lot of time. Because of the itinerant nature of employment in some of our industry areas, notably hospitality, tourism, information technology and retail, and often due to part-time employment and meeting industry needs at the time, there is a constant education process for our teachers to keep employers updated as to what a VET in Schools student is, as opposed to a work experience student or a catering student or a work education student who are simply in a workplace to observe and experience, whereas the majority of VET in Schools students are genuinely thinking about entering the industry and they are being assessed to industry standards using industry competencies.

Schools and colleges resource this with VET in Schools programs but this is often not the case with the other programs. It leads to confusion with employers understanding the differences between the students that they have in the workplace. As we continue in the education sector to work more closely with industry and businesses, this will be a constant in terms of demand and in terms of resources required to facilitate the relationships that you need to have when you are working with students in the workplace.

Teacher training is critical in both areas of assessment and industry competencies. There is also a need to accept that, where teachers do not and cannot meet industry requirements, experts can and should be brought in from industry. This is common practice in Hobart schools but it is not understood or recognised enough by other RTOs and employers. For example, in hospitality, where the teacher does not have the relevant qualifications to teach a number of the units, industry experts are employed to teach those units. Another example is the electrotechnology course. We would not duplicate the resources, as I mentioned earlier. We would not employ the qualified staff that we need, so we are working in partnership with the Institute of TAFE to look at addressing a national shortage in the electrotechnology area where they want VET in Schools students to feed into that environment.

Finally, there is the impact of vocational education on other programs. VET programs are resource hungry and there may be a view that they take resources from other programs. Currently we do rely on the ANTA funds and the ECEF funds—now DEST—to support and assist in that. As more students want the option of doing a VET program, timetabling may become more of an issue. There may also be an impact on other programs when students are out on placement and missing other subjects. As more pre-tertiary students take up VET courses, there may be an impact on the tertiary entry system.

You may be aware that in this state we are yet to have a system in place where VET programs equate to a TE score. For a number of years it has been mooted that we need to look at this. The TQA, the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority, is a new authority combining the Tasmanian Secondary Assessment Board, the Universities Registration Council and the Tasmanian Accreditation and Recognition Committee. The authority aims to enhance lifelong learning opportunities by improving the relationship between qualifications from school, university and vocational education training providers, as well as learning in the workplace. The TQA may actually assist in implementing some changes there. Thank you.

CHAIR—Thank you, Elaine. Jodie, did you have some reasonably brief comments?

Ms Stephenson—It will be reasonably brief. I will speak about basically dealing with my colleagues from the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It is amazing for us to find out the differences in VET in Schools programs that range nationally, let alone explain it to our members and expect a national appreciation of VET in Schools when the programs are all so different and yet come out with a nationally recognised qualification, apparently. For industry to be able to embrace such a qualification, there needs to be consistency across the board in what is being delivered.

Tasmania is a prime example with regard to delivering structured workplace learning. That is a key, as far as industry is concerned, to a VET in Schools qualification. That in itself is powerful in industry embracing VET in Schools programs because they do differ in regard to work experience or just observing and being there. Until something is done to bring it in line, and promote it as one program, a multitude of different concepts of the way it is delivered and how it is delivered will exist—'Yes, I was never put in a work environment to obtain something that is equivalent to this.' Unfortunately industry will stand back and not embrace it fully.

CHAIR—Thank you.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—What implications are there for VET in Schools from the abolition or removal of ITABs? Also, what implications are there for the relationship between VET and industry?

Ms Driessen—I used to run an ITAB when VET in Schools first started in Tasmania. That was a significant time to be involved. I also was involved in many national meetings with industry training boards and I could the see difference in their responses in terms of their state relationships. The reason why it is going to be a problem here in Tasmania is that they were crucial in bringing together the industry and the education system. Because we are smaller here, because we have smaller numbers and we are closer in terms of proximity, it was so easy for us to achieve that. It was so easy for the development officers to knock on the doors of the industry training boards and build that relationship. The industry training boards could bring the industry into that work area.

When I attended national meetings I could see the thing that was missing. The industry training boards that I was speaking to had no relationship in terms of what was going on with VET in Schools in the other states. It was a very significant difference. As they disappear it is going to be harder and harder for us to keep up that relationship in two areas. It is harder for us to keep up the relationship that exists and it will be up to clusters like ours to build that relationship, to keep the industry involved, and that is very resource heavy.

The other side of it is in identifying new and emerging industries. That was something that was said in our submission. Vocational education and training needs to be incredibly responsive. As new and emerging industries came on board, it was the industry training boards that could identify that there was a skill shortage and then quickly approach the schools to start that development and to get something in place within 12 months. While those industry training boards are not there, there is a whole step that we miss that we have to try and create ourselves. It is going to be harder.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Did the ITABs drive the development of Tasmania virtually mandating the workplace learning assessment model?

Ms Driessen—I think they did. They certainly had a significant part in that.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Your association sees that as a credible model?

Ms Stephenson—Definitely.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Were you saying that you think nationally that is a more credible model than a lot of the other models that exist for your association to accept the validity of VET in Schools? Is that what you are alluding to?

Ms Stephenson—Yes, I believe so. In respect to what is VET in Schools, is it one unit or two units of a qualification or what actually is the whole component made up of? In regards to promoting the importance of VET in Schools to our members, for it to be embraced and supported truly in the work environment it does have to have that component of structured workplace learning. Unless that happens, as far as our cohorts are concerned, it might as well be just work experience.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Interesting. Thank you for that. Elaine, you referred to electrotechnology in terms of renewable energy and engineering. It sounds very exciting and I want to have a look at that today. You mentioned that that would involve holiday block work placements. Are there any impediments to that occurring?

Ms Brown—It is a program that takes in students who are doing pre-tertiary subjects in physical sciences and the maths field. Although it is not mandatory, the types of students that have gone into that course have been those students. In terms of it fitting in with their other studies and for them to get their other pre-tertiary subjects over the two years, it has been the best way for them to do it. As for impediments, we wondered whether the students would really complain about that, but they have not to date.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You have no departmental impediments to this?

Ms Brown—We have resourced that with our staff member, who is able to visit them at the workplace during that period. They have time in lieu out of that.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That was negotiated?

Ms Brown—That was negotiated with the workplace. If that was not possible, I could do that. I could visit students at the workplace. My employment conditions are different from a teacher's employment conditions. I am there during the holidays and able to be contacted, so it is not a huge issue.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Let's look at the model that was raised with us yesterday on the north-west coast. A number of employers said that they would much prefer to have one-week or two-week blocks of workplace learning and assessment. They negotiated for holidays but it fell over. It seemed to have everyone on board but it seemed to fall over within the system somewhere.

What indications do you see for this in terms of VET in Schools becoming a lot more flexible for employers' needs?

Ms Brown—At the moment it depends on the programs. In construction and in the auto industry, week blocks are preferred. In most circumstances they are able to do that during term time. Those students are not studying pre-tertiary, so they can do that on block. They can negotiate their other school commitments around that. It depends really upon the aims of those particular students: whether they are planning to do pre-tertiary or whether they are planning to not do pre-tertiary.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—But isn't this a timetabling thing? We have our holidays three or four times a year and that is when things stop. Aren't we really talking about the needs of the students and in terms of the industry? Do you think it is flexible enough to cater for all this at the moment?

Ms Brown—Probably not for all programs but for electrotechnology it seemed that it did suit.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—I can see that.

Ms Brown—I would not say that it would suit all programs at this stage.

Ms Stephenson—If I may add to that: I recently surveyed members in regard to what they would prefer for the work placements. It is definitely better in blocks in regard to being able to plan for it and being able to resource for it. It is a lot cheaper to resource for something that is for two weeks than it is for one day a week. From the industry point of view, just from this recent survey, that was highlighted. They definitely would prefer an option to have them for a week, whereas with some of the programs you can have them one day a month or one day a week. That is resource heavy on business.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—It just seems to stop in the holidays.

Ms Driessen—It is also in some of the independent schools and in the Catholic system as well. The thing that we have to learn from this is that our system has to be flexible enough to respond to it. We have to be able to provide people during holidays if we need to.

Ms Brown—In terms of our tourism and hospitality teachers, they have students in the workplace in the holidays as almost a constant. It may not be a whole class, whereas with the electrotechnology program that was a whole cohort of students. Just recently we had two tourism and hospitality students at Freycinet in the holidays. They were visited in the workplace by their teacher. We had staff at the school who could be contacted if they needed to be. It does happen across the state. It may not happen in general across all programs but it does happen, including in the retail sector.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—Thank you.

Mr SAWFORD—Just on statistical anomalies, 30 per cent of kids in Tasmania go on to university, 70 per cent do not go on to university, but only 28 per cent do accredited VET. Do you have any comment on that?

Ms Driessen—Do you mean VET in Schools?

Mr SAWFORD—Yes. Do you think we have the balance around the wrong way? Is there something wrong there?

Ms Driessen—It is a traditional thing and how the system has developed. Yes, it is indicating that there is something the wrong way around. That is why the system needs to keep developing and we need to keep changing to get that balanced better. Traditionally years 11 and 12 were always there for that tertiary entry, whereas now we need to recognise they are not and we need to change that system. It is changing but it needs to keep moving.

Ms Brown—In terms of the 28 per cent in the VET sector, you are wondering about what is happening with the rest and where they are going?

Mr SAWFORD—Yes. There is a gap there, isn't there?

Ms Brown—There is a gap and the education sector is well aware of that. It is working hard, looking at ways and means of directing people into the transition pathways.

Mr SAWFORD—One of the worries in terms of the Tasmanian education department's submission, which was a very good one put to us this morning, was that growth in VET in years 11 and 12 has stalled. That is a similar situation all across Australia. There is a range of reasons for that; money being one of them. There is also lack of trained personnel. Sometimes some people put up workplace placements as being a difficulty. I do not accept that and you have given me evidence that that is not really right. You have 1,300 students in VET and 800 employers. That is 1.6 and that is pretty good. I reckon that is similar to most urban environments around Australia. In some regional areas it may be not as good. Can you see that changing? And who is going to change it?

Ms Driessen—We have to change it. It is the resources issue that is causing it to stall. When we first started VET in Schools in the Hobart area, the momentum was huge. There were many people working on it and the change was very significant and fast but it slowed. I do not think that was a bad thing because it was time to consolidate as well. The growth was so fast that programs were almost getting put on too quickly without enough consideration of industry needs. It is time to consolidate but in many of our partnership discussions we have had people saying, 'This industry is saying there's a skill shortage. It is saying it wants VET in Schools. How are we going to respond to it?' We have been having trouble in the last two years in identifying a school that has the capacity to respond to it. So, yes, we are recognising that as a problem and it really comes down to a limitation in resources.

We have to be smarter. Because we have been fortunate with years 11 and 12 being in the senior secondary colleges and, therefore, having quite a significant capacity within each college, we now have to be smarter. We have to look at the regional models that Elaine was talking about. We need to be able to respond to industry needs. Another one we are looking at now is in the food technology area. Again, the industry specialist skills will be hard to meet. The numbers of students wanting to be involved will be small to start off with. We have to look at a way of making that course available and appealing and of getting industry expertise by building

partnerships. We have to be smarter in the way we put these programs on but we need to keep that development happening.

Mr SAWFORD—Elaine, you mentioned cost. In the fifties and the sixties, when technical education was taken seriously in some of the states—not all—they deliberately put some of their best principals and their best teachers into the technical system. They funded them differentially; it was sometimes up to 75 per cent different but it was usually 25 per cent. When we went to Western Australia they recognised that an average cost of delivering VET effectively was adding a 25 per cent cost; some courses being more, some a bit less. Does your organisation have a view of what the additional cost is in implementing VET?

Ms Brown—The largest cost to our organisations would be the staffing resource. That would be around 25 per cent.

Mr SAWFORD—That is a rough sort of figure?

Ms Brown—That would probably be a rough sort of figure. The other thing I would like to go back to is the cohort of people that we are not getting into VET. If we had articulation, where VET would lead to university, it would change that enormously. There is an enormous number of students out there whose parental expectation is for them to go to university but they don't. They go through to year 11 and get to year 12. They struggle through year 12. They have chosen the pre-tertiaries. They have tried to get there but they do not get there. They have not actually gone along a vocational training pathway which may have been more appropriate and led to a diploma and then to a degree, if that was their aspiration. There is a large group of students whose parental expectations and their early expectations do not meet where they are going. If we did have that articulation, parents would recognise that their children may be better served to go into VET to start with, and then they might go on to further education.

Ms Stephenson—It comes down to career education starting earlier as well in regard to the promotion of vocational education and training—not as a default but as a pathway. It is still considered a default by industry as well, meaning the kid probably did not want to go on to further education, did not want to participate more at school and so forth. It has to be promoted in earlier years, rather than as an alternative when you get to years 11 and 12. That is a crucial transition time for many students in regard to dropping out and finding a job midway through year 11, rather than pursuing it as a direction from years 9 and 10 and educating parents at that earlier stage as well. I am a parent of a year 9 student and I have received no information in regard to careers and opportunities. My son definitely does not want to go into further education, so it is up to us to seek that information. Where do we start? I am involved with the industry—let alone someone who does not have a starting point.

Mr SAWFORD—That was the message given to us yesterday in Devonport and Burnie by the students themselves. They felt that the marketing of VET was an issue. They referred to the situation where in year 10 there was only one instance of a five-minute spiel and a bit of promotion, and for the others there was two goes but limited promotion. Are we looking at this in the wrong way? From a national perspective, we have 1.8 million people in this country, 600,000 of whom are unemployed. We know that for a fact. We know there are 850,000 people who for some reason or other do not get counted in the statistics because of their family situation

or their monetary situation or whatever. We know there are another 650,000 people who want to be full-time employed but who are not.

We listen to business at a national level. They tell us this country needs $55 billion more in exports in order to share that distribution around to employ that potential. Do you think that maybe the marketing of VET and skills is far too narrow? Maybe it needs a more revolutionary approach to marketing it. For example, we train enough doctors in this country but when they finish they decide on lifestyle: they do not want to do it full-time or they want to do something else. We have plenty of teachers, except when the teachers all retire in five years time there will not be enough. We train plenty of nurses but people are ornery. They do not necessarily want to continue in those sorts of industries.

When it comes to more basic businesses such as manufacturing or even agriculture—the real gutsy export industries—maybe we delude ourselves in Australia. We have always had technical skills shortages. At the professional level, we have never been short. We have plenty of lawyers and theoretically plenty of doctors, engineers and architects. Some of them have to go overseas in order to get a job because we have far too many of them, but in building we have huge gaps—even in things like road building. These days, we do not have people to operate the machines that build roads. We build airports around this country and we import the skills from overseas—we fly them in every six weeks from overseas in order to do the work. Do we have something wrong here?

Ms Stephenson—We do not embrace trade and we do not embrace our dirty skills. We should also not forget the mad rush to get information technology skills on the basis that: 'Your job will become obsolete. We will not need you to do this anymore.' That has flowed through. I suppose we are now looking at the cohorts that listen to all of that and do not want to encourage the kids to go on to those dirty jobs because they will not be in existence. You have to head down the track of something that is going to give you longer jeopardy than working on a shovel. It is not encouraged. Even though this person may have a window of opportunity, a great employment opportunity is pushed outside of that for the purpose of further education.

CHAIR—Is there a role for organisations such as yours to get into the schools and informing the kids of their career opportunities, well-paid career opportunities, in some of these less popular vocations?

Ms Driessen—There are two things there. You are right. This is not just VET in Schools; this is VET completely. We do not market it well at all. If you look at the recognition of sport in Australia, you see that it gets much more recognition than vocational education and training. We are hopeless at marketing it. Various strategies are being talked about within Tasmania and nationally through ANTA to market VET better. We need to look at a whole range of marketing. There is the other side that you were talking about in terms of career education. Yes, our organisation is very well placed to provide that career education. We do not have the capacity to do it as well as we should be doing it.

CHAIR—Because of funding?

Ms Driessen—It is because of funding, but there is also an overall breadth of capacity that we need to be able to do. We also need the system to recognise organisations like ours. We are a new

organisation. We bring together a whole group of people which could be very useful in career development but the education system is still having trouble recognising the value of an organisation such as ours.

CHAIR—Do you think the way ahead for career education in schools is for careers advisers rather than teachers to do it?

Ms Driessen—I think it has to be a combination.

CHAIR—Is that because the teachers know the kids and their attitudes?

Ms Driessen—The teachers are there all the time, but it is very hard for those teachers to get the information about career opportunities, so organisations like ourselves can provide that information to the teachers.

Ms Brown—In terms of career education, if you go to the year 11 schools in the state you will find they have dedicated personnel who take charge of those areas. They bring in experts from the field as well. They will bring in Jobs Pathway people and have a range of different people who will actually work with students on transition. It is not as if it is not happening and it is not as if it is only happening with a teacher in the classroom. There is a structure set up in most of the schools where there is a dedicated group of people who do focus on career education, but probably not as well as we could do it.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—That seems to be at the end of the track.

Ms Brown—That is right. It is.

Mr SIDEBOTTOM—You made the comment earlier, and Jodie and Rod made it earlier too, that kindergarten should visit the fire station and that career education should follow the student all the way through. Do you think it also comes down to the teacher education we have? Mr Grosvenor said earlier that the universities have not so much shackled the curriculum in Tasmania—that is quite correct; it was democratised a long time ago—but they have shackled teacher training.

Ms Driessen—You were talking about whether it should be part of the teacher education to do the assessor course. I think the other value from putting that into the teacher education is that, even if they do not go on to use it, even if they do not become VET in Schools teachers, by doing it they have actually learnt about what vocational education and training is. We have this real problem where half the teachers are quite anti-VET because they see it as the poor cousin, whereas if they learnt about it they would not see it from that point of view.

Mr SAWFORD—Penny, when you answered Sid's question about whether it should be careers advisers or groups like yourselves, you said there ought to be a bit of both. That is a very pleasant response to hear. Often when we talk about VET in this country it is either one thing or the other, one oscillation or the other. For 100 years we have oscillated between technical training meeting the needs of industry as the be-all and end-all, and a liberal education. In fact, it is somewhere in between or probably both. The current propaganda from VET that comes out of political offices, whether they are Labor or Liberal—Liberal at a federal level, Labor at a state

level—and out of education departments, certainly out of higher education, is this integrated line: 'We must have everything integrated.'

I worry when people put all their eggs in one basket, because integration has a great strength in terms of meeting the needs of consistency around the nation. With an integrated system, it is much easier to make it consistent but then you cannot change it, whereas if you have a diverse system consistency is very difficult to achieve but at least you are adaptable to change and to local circumstances. How do you get a balance in education instead of oscillating from one flavour of the month, year or decade to another? How do you go back to what you are saying, Penny, of a commonsense approach using a bit of both? We all talk about being inclusive, but education is the most exclusive industry in this country.

Ms Driessen—It is exactly as you say; it is a commonsense approach in trying to get that balance. It has to be industry responsive but it does not necessarily have to be politically responsive. We are so politically driven, and vocational education and training in particular is so politically responsive, because it is about employment, that quite often that can be a danger as well. It gets pushed from one extreme to another.

Mr SAWFORD—It is fascinating in that, in the federal budget and all the state budgets this year, not one extra dollar went to VET.

CHAIR—You mentioned in your submission that you were assisted in your establishment with some ECEF funding. Could you just elaborate on that? Are you receiving any funding at the moment from any government source?

Ms Driessen—ECEF has disappeared. DEST now is funding us for the rest of this year. They have verbally told us that the funding is likely to be rolled over for next year.

CHAIR—What level is that?

Ms Driessen—We receive approximately $80,000 for the year, and that basically employs me as an executive officer. Most of the money goes out to projects, because I am part time, whether they are research, resource development or career information projects—that sort of thing.

CHAIR—Is this a good model which we ought to be encouraging around the country: the government funds organisations such as yours to look after a cluster of schools, to do research and to look at job placement and industry needs and careers advice to students?

Ms Brown—It brings all the players together—industry, education, tourism.

CHAIR—Jodie, you look worried.

Ms Stephenson—Yes, I am. In this state at the moment the clusters are Australian government funded with basically nothing coming from the state, apart from special projects. I think it is bigger than one department; we need more of a partnership at this level to be able to make this work. Unfortunately, especially from an industry point of view, we get: 'We don't do that; that's done over here,' or, 'We're going to go off and do it on our own because this is what we see as best for us.' More conversation has to happen between state and Australian governments before a

partnership like this can work to its true potential. There are so many opportunities for a partnership, such as HEBTP, that is stalled time and time again because we are waiting for funding to come through.

Ms Brown—And gamble with that one.

Mr SAWFORD—That is the ideal world, I agree. But the history of progress in education in this country is when one state or somebody has grabbed it—some individual, either political or professional—pushed it ahead and dragged everybody kicking and screaming behind.

Ms Stephenson—It is so frustrating seeing it trying to happen but because this will not join here the money is being spent twice in achieving this outcome. It could be spent better in order to achieve two outcomes.

CHAIR—Where should the funding be directed?

Ms Stephenson—More negotiation has to happen from the state and Commonwealth, but there needs to be more agreement on a joint outcome where both want to achieve the same thing, not split.

CHAIR—We all want to achieve the same thing but, as you say, there is a lack of coordination on how to do that.

Ms Stephenson—Yes, or until there is agreement on the way the funding is delivered: is it delivered on a VET in Schools program or is it delivered on the amount of structured workplace learning hours, or a structure of the funding—

Ms Driessen—I think that maybe we have an opportunity now. We are hearing—this is verbal at this stage—that the DEST funding and arrangements for transition will operate out of Tasmania at a state level rather than being managed nationally. We have the DEST people, who have a good relationship with our state government people. We do have an opportunity now to change and bring those two organisations together and enable them to work through our partnerships. Our partnership has worked well for various reasons, but it has a lot more capacity which is not being realised.

CHAIR—I think that was part of the reason for rolling ECEF funding into DEST. That was part of the rationale. You said in your introductory comments, Penny, that the funding formula ought not to be a 'bums on seats' based approach. Could you elaborate on that?

Ms Driessen—We feel strongly that you have to make a national definition of what VET in Schools is and therefore you can fund it because everyone is talking about the same thing. If you cannot achieve that—and I suspect that in the long run that may be very hard to achieve—then you need a formula that brings together a balance of the different length and resources that go into VET in Schools. If Tasmania chooses a model that has a high proportion of structured workplace learning compared to another state that may have a very low amount of structured workplace learning, we need a formula that recognises that. It cannot just be a matter of numbers of people on seats because there is too much variation.

CHAIR—Do you think every state ought to have a similar mandatory requirement for structured workplace learning?

Ms Driessen—I would certainly advocate that. I would prefer that, yes, definitely. I think that is one of the major problems—why we have seen industry respond the way they have. I know it is: there is too much variation. I should say that another hat I wear is Chair of the Tasmanian Accreditation and Recognition Committee. It comes down to an even lower step than that. Our training packages are not strong enough in expecting work placements and workplace assessments, so that goes back another step. If in those training packages there was an expectation of that, then we would be able to enforce it. Another problem is that the Australian Qualification Framework is not strong enough at making the levels of the qualifications recognised. They are national problems. We need to continue to strengthen.

CHAIR—You mention that the AQF is not strong enough. You said in your submission that there still is an industry perception that school based VET is not as rigorous as non-school based VET.

Ms Driessen—We are all doing the right things.

CHAIR—How do we resolve that issue? How do we address that problem?

Ms Driessen—My experience in being involved in accreditation and recognition is that when we meet nationally we are still talking about different systems. Even though we are talking of a national system, we are talking in a different language. I am hoping the model clauses will change this, we will move closer to bringing our system together, but it has been a long time coming.

Mr SAWFORD—Thank you for your contribution. It has been an excellent.

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

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

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

Committee adjourned at 12.56 p.m.