



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Reference: Factors influencing the employment of young people

CABOOLTURE

Thursday, 14 November 1996

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

CANBERRA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Members

Mr Charles (Chair)

Mr Peter Baldwin	Mr Griffin
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Matter referred for inquiry into and report on:

Factors influencing the employment of young people.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING
(Forum)

Inquiry into factors influencing the employment of young people

CABOOLTURE

Thursday, 14 November 1996

Present

Mr Charles (Chair)

Mr Brough

Mrs Elson

The committee met at 10.05 a.m.

Mr Charles took the chair.

PARTICIPANTS**Bribie Island State High School**

Dale Barron
Stuart Bell
Mrs Trish Haupt (Teacher)
Karla Levings
Jethro Lyons

Caboolture State High School

Thomas Bywater
Melissa Hanlon
Sarah Harris
Roydon Moore
Leigh Talbot
Tusilima Talo
Simon Warne

Morayfield State High School

William Adams
Daniel Cavanagh
Loretta Fawcett
Shane Holmes
Matthew Koehler
Kevin Nugent
Jodie Robinson

Tullawong State High School

Jaime-Leigh Alexander
Johnathon Borg
Simon Cake
Ryan Colbran
Chrissie Hart
Emma Payne

CHAIR—I declare open this school forum for the inquiry into factors influencing the employment of young people. I welcome the first of a number of school forums that the committee will conduct across the nation during the course of this inquiry. The forum is a valuable and important part of the inquiry process. The

purpose of the inquiry is to consult widely and produce recommendations for government action that will help promote the employment prospects of young people.

So far the committee has received over 80 submissions and conducted public hearings in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane. For the most part, the evidence collected has come from employers, government and non-government agencies. Through this school forum, all of you will have the opportunity to voice your views and opinions on this very important matter.

The agenda and issues for discussion have been sent to you and you have had prior opportunity to discuss the issues. Some of the issues we wish to discuss include the effectiveness and appropriateness of the secondary education system, vocational education in schools, employers' perceptions of young people, apprenticeships and traineeships, youth wages, income assistance and any other issues that you may care to address.

To help structure the debate, I will introduce each section with a few comments based on evidence that has already been provided to the committee. I will then seek your comments and views on the matters under discussion. If you wish to speak, please raise your hand. When you have been given a microphone, please state your name, age and the school that you are from.

I will take this opportunity to welcome the contingents from Bribie Island, Caboolture, Morayfield and Tullawong. I should introduce my colleagues. Kay Elson is the member for Forde. She tells me that she went to Bribie Island Primary School as a child. I do not know what that says for Bribie Island, whether it is good, bad or indifferent—I will let you decide that. Mal Brough is the member for Longman and your MP. Stephen Boyd is the inquiry secretariat. My electorate is La Trobe in Victoria where it is not anywhere near this warm.

We have *Hansard* recording what we say, but it is not going to be used in evidence against you. It is important that we hear youth perceptions of this issue. You know it is important because you know that you want a future. You do not just go to school for the heck of it, you want some outcome and you would like to know that there will be jobs waiting for you when you get out. I suspect you would like to know what kind of jobs and what sort of opportunities you will have and what might help you get the jobs that are available.

There are two things that we are trying to accomplish. Firstly, to sort out how we might help young people to help themselves to be more employable. Secondly, how we can encourage employers to make more jobs available for youth. They are the simple objectives of the inquiry. It is a very broad ranging inquiry. You can think of all kinds of topics.

We have listed a few today, but if there are other matters that come to mind that you would like to talk about, we would like to hear what you think. It is important that we understand youth views on the issues. It is not good just asking adults how we can fix up things for young people. One organisation that we have talked to, and which has youth in its title, has no youth in its organisation and it does not talk to young people. It only talks to adults. We are a bit uncertain about how it functions as an advocate for young people.

The first topic is the secondary education system. We have a range of views from respondents to the inquiry. Frequently, employers tell us that they would like to see a continuing shift in secondary school to

more emphasis on vocational education and training and perhaps less total overall emphasis on academic studies. They tell us such things as parents and young people seem not to be aware of what job opportunities are available and seem to head most generally on an academic path. Those that stay in school are trying to get jobs which may require a university qualification as entry into that kind of career. But what employers are saying is that there are a raft of jobs that do not require university degrees, that require other skills, and they would like to see the education system shift a bit.

We would like to hear from you what kinds of skills you think you get at school, what you think the employment market might look like and what you think employers might expect of you. Having started with that brief opening, who would like to speak first on the secondary education system?

Mr BROUGH—Perhaps if we ask a question first and the students might like to respond. How many of you are at this stage anticipating at the end of grade 12 going into the work force rather than going on to higher education? Could you raise your hands if you do not intend to go on to higher education at this point. It is not rock solid, but just an indication. There are three of you. Perhaps you would like to comment on whether or not you feel that you have the adequate skills to compete in the job market—that is, you know how to go out and look for work. Do you feel school is equipping you for that or is there something you feel the school could do in that regard?

Mr Nugent—I am Kevin Nugent. I am 17 and I come from Morayfield State High School. I do not think that the school equips you well enough to go out and look for work straight away. They mainly focus on higher education, as you were saying.

Mr BROUGH—Where do you think the system is lacking? How do you think it could be changed to assist you?

Mr Nugent—I think there should be more subjects available for manual work because the focus is mainly on the academic achievements.

Ms Robinson—My name is Jodie Robinson. I am 16 and I come from Morayfield State High School. I would not like to go to university. We would also like to know what jobs out there do not need a university degree. No-one says, 'You can do this job. It doesn't require you to do this.' We would like to know which jobs need which qualifications. They should educate us on what we can do. They should give us a wider opportunity to have a look at what we can do once we do leave school.

CHAIR—How many of you would share similar views? Some of you are happy with the careers advice you get at school, but most of you are not. You think you do not get enough information about what jobs there might be and what industries need what skills, is that right? Do you have any suggestions about how we might encourage your school to do a better job of that or get industries themselves to make the information available to you?

Ms Robinson—You could set up programs or brief talks with the students and tell them, 'You can do this,' instead of just saying, 'You can only go to university. Go to university and do this, do that.' You could tell us what else is out there.

Mrs ELSON—At what year level should you be told that?

Ms Robinson—They leave it until midway through year 12, but I think that is too late because we are supposed to have goals. I am in year 11 and we are supposed to have our goals set, but we do not know what is out there so we cannot set our goals.

Mr BROUGH—What involvement do the schools have—and could we have someone from each of the schools comment on this—in your relationship between the business community and your schools? Do you have business people who come in and explain what they are looking for from employees—and I am talking about someone other than your careers adviser in the school? How often would you see the careers adviser? You can talk on a personal level there. Could someone from each of the schools comment on that. Is there someone from Caboolture State High School to kick it off?

Mr Bywater—My name is Thomas Bywater and I am 17. I am from Caboolture State High School. In the year 12 program in English we have representatives from businesses come into our school and interview students about the sorts of careers they are looking towards in the future, after they have finished school. So those students who are not continuing on to university are given an opportunity to see what an interview for the job they are intending to pursue once they leave school is like. It also gives the students who are going to university the chance to see it because at university people are not going to look after you in that same way.

Also in year 10 our school operates a career education program so that we are given the chance to practice interview techniques. The government also provides us with a resume portfolio and things like that and we are taught how to compile that resume to best portray our skills to our prospective employers.

CHAIR—Is that everybody in grades 10 and 11 in Caboolture, or is that on a voluntary basis? How does that work?

Mr Bywater—In my year 10 it was compulsory. Everyone in year 10 went through a section on work experience. It was not actually in work, but was experience related to what jobs you could be looking for. We did a program called JIGCAL. It was a computer program. We entered in what we thought we would like to be employed as once we left school, be it at year 10 or at year 12, so that those students who were leaving school in year 10 could have a chance as well.

CHAIR—Would any other school like to comment on that?

Mr Bell—I am 16 and I am from Bribie. I am in grade 11. At our school we have, in grade 11, one week's work experience at the end of the year and we only get taught how to prepare for the work force about four or five weeks before that.

In grade 10 we do not have any job preparation skills like they have in Caboolture, except at the end of grade 10 those people who are thinking of leaving have a few lessons on making up a portfolio. That is about it. We do not have much at all. In the English classes we have one lesson a week, maybe, and not all of the lesson, on job preparation and job skills.

Mr Borg—I am 15 and I am from Tullawong. Our school is a new school and we only have year 10 students so we have not had any representatives of business come in yet. We have had no work experience available as of yet, but as I said, we have not had any senior schooling. We have had a few lessons in life skills to plan a resume and portfolio. We had portfolio folders given to all the year 10 students this year but we have not had any business people come in so far.

Ms Payne—I am 15 and I am from Tullawong. I am in grade 10 and I am hoping to leave at the end of this year if I can get an apprenticeship, but I feel that the school does not have enough information for people like me who want to do that sort of stuff. We should have a subject or something so people can help us look for jobs and show us how to read the columns in the newspaper or take us through what an interview is going to be like, so that we can get more information.

CHAIR—What sort of apprenticeship are you looking for?

Ms Payne—Hairdressing.

CHAIR—What do you think you would do? Can you give us an idea of how you think you would approach it, since you have been given no expertise or knowledge on it?

Ms Payne—Right now I am just going around asking all the hairdressers, sending out resumes to people, and I just keep hounding them until they tell me yes or no or give me an interview or something.

CHAIR—Would someone from Morayfield like to make a comment on that area?

Ms Fawcett—My name is Loretta Fawcett. I am 16 years old. I am from Morayfield. We actually have the same sort of system as Caboolture where in year 10 we put together our own folio and we have interviews. Mine was carried out with a teacher. We were told what job we were going for—I think we had a choice—and we went into a mock interview and answered the questions and everything and we were told whether or not we did well. I think probably to make it a bit more realistic we should have people from that actual area. If we were going for a secretarial job we should get someone who employs secretaries, just to make it a little bit more real and to help us with what they are looking for. They could tell us afterwards.

CHAIR—Let me ask you a general question: if industry and business got together once a year over a weekend, let us say, at a big public hall in a central area to hold some kind of exposition that helped to show you visually with videos, posters, photographs and whatever, and some descriptive material on what their industry did, what kinds of jobs were available and what sort of skills were required at entry level, do you think you would go along? Would you actually go? If you had to miss half a football match to go and find out what the future was like, would you do that?

Mr BROUGH—Just raise your hands if you would not mind—give us some sort of idea, or if it does not interest you perhaps, put your hand up then as well. Do not be embarrassed. We are just trying to get some sort of an idea. Be quite genuine.

CHAIR—So you think that would be a pretty good idea? Can you think of other ways that business

might help you to come to an understanding of what they do? How many of you would know what work is like in an abattoir?

Mr BROUGH—How many of you do part-time work now? Or have done at some stage in the last 12 months, say, on a regular basis? What have we got? About 80 per cent of the students here have done some sort of part-time work on a regular basis. Has that helped you, do you believe?

We visited a school in South Australia called Salisbury and it is not unlike Caboolture in many ways. What they do is invite business to take a student on one day a week for the entire school year. That student still has to do their school work on that day, so it means they actually work extra hours. One of the people we met was working for the Hyatt as a housemaid, cleaning rooms and all the rest of it. She was having to get up at five in the morning to get to the Hyatt by seven, working a full day and then getting back home at 5.30 at night, as she would if she worked there full-time. There were others in TAFE colleges, others working for builders, the whole ambit. Also people worked in solicitors' offices so that it did not matter whether they were going on to tertiary education or not, if they wanted to avail themselves of the opportunity of seeing what the workplace was. Others were working for Holden, helping to make cars on the factory floor.

What it was trying to do was show them exactly what was required in a workplace, what it was like to mix and be with adults in a workplace, what the demands were and what your responsibilities were as an employee. I would just like to know whether you think in general that is the sort of thing that would help you, whether you are going on to higher education or not and whether you would consider participating in such a program if it was available locally. Perhaps a few people might like to comment on that from the different schools.

Ms Levings—I am Karla Levings, I am 16 years old and from Bribie Island State High School. We actually have that, but at the end of the year. It is called work experience. We pick a particular field that we think we will have a future career in—or we want to have—and we work there for a week and we do exactly what you just said.

Going back to that other question about having those days when you go and find out what your career would be like, there are a few of those around, but not many people from our school go there because of transport problems. I think it would be better if they actually came to us on an individual school basis. I think a lot more people would listen and learn from it.

I think there needs to be a lot more help in that because our school is very academic based and our teachers think we should all go to university; our parents think we should all go to university, because that is all we have been told. No-one gets told, 'You can get apprenticeships here. There are jobs you can do that don't need a university degree.' We get extensive programs in how to choose subjects to help you get the degree you want at uni but we have no programs to help people who do not want to go to uni, and I think that is what you need.

Mr Warne—My name is Simon Warne. I am 17 and from Caboolture High. As the Bribie High School people were saying, there have been a lot of job symposiums and career expos in the area and, as well, we have a very similar program to Bribie High in that we have the week of work experience at the end of

Year 11. That has been trialled so it does not take out a large chunk of the time of the senior years or cause the inconvenience of going out every day to the work force. A lot of people would probably have to commute to Brisbane one day a week. It is easier for people towards the end of the year to go down to Brisbane and stay with relatives or something like that so they undertake their employment experience there.

Mr BROUGH—Are you only doing your work experience in Year 12?

Mr Warne—We do it in Year 11.

Mr BROUGH—Fine. The program we referred to in Salisbury goes over the whole 12 months so that you do not get to go and live with your relatives but you have to understand how difficult it is to get to transport and all of those sorts of things and turn up to work on time. That was one of the reasons why it was tried. Only about 25 per cent of the students actually participated in it but they were the ones that were not going on to higher education.

Are there any other comments on that area? Has anyone got any other views they would like to share?

Mr Cake—My name is Simon Cake. I am 15 and from Tullawong. I think there is too much emphasis on higher education in the schools and there is not enough information on what else you can do. As people have said, our parents and relatives say that you need a higher education or else you will just end up as someone on the street. I think there is not enough education about what else is out there and what else we can do.

Mr BROUGH—Thank you.

Ms Payne—I feel that we need work experience in Year 10 as well as the senior years for people like me who are planning on leaving. If we have work experience with a certain company, maybe they might be able to offer us a job for the year after we finish Year 10. If we do it in the senior year they might be able to offer us a job for after we finish our senior years.

CHAIR—I have to tell you that some employers have said to us that increasingly, even to get an apprenticeship, they want to see 12 years of primary and secondary schooling. Don't let us give you the impression that you should drop out of school in Year 10 or drop out in Year 11. What we are talking about is trying to find out what you think you need and what changes we might recommend about the school system to give you more information to help you make better choices. In doing that we would probably fail in our duty if we told you that in the future there are going to be heaps of jobs for 15-year-olds or 16-year-olds because, in fact, we are told there are not.

By the time we finish this inquiry and we write a report we would hope to have some definitive information on what sorts of careers are likely to be available in the next five years or perhaps 10 years, what the work force might look like in 10 years time, and what sorts of skills are required at entry level. You understand what I mean by entry level, don't you? When you go to get your first full-time job, that is called entry level. There are not a lot any more for 15-year-olds or 16-year-olds. It just does not happen.

We can say that is unfortunate but there is some thought, and some of you have talked around that issue this morning, that if we offer more vocational subjects in school that we can help make your schooling relevant for Year 11 and Year 12 and help give you some work experience in real jobs during that time and still let you finish your 12 years. That means you are going to have an opportunity at a career, at a full-time job, with probably some future training in that area as well.

Does that make sense to you or are we getting off base here? How many of you was it that said you were planning to go on to university? I think the figure was about 60 per cent. Are there any of you who are planning to go to university who do not know yet what you might do?

Mr Cake—It would be about 20 or 25 per cent.

CHAIR—That is good. You must have had some advice along the way. Would one or two of you who are going to university and know what you want to do tell us how you arrived at that decision?

Mr Borg—When I was growing up I always wanted to look for the high-earning jobs—the ones where the money is and where the success is. So I want to go to university and become a solicitor or a lawyer, so I am looking more for the academic side of it. I have had that goal for about five or six years now and I am sticking to it. That is how I came to it.

CHAIR—Okay. Somebody else? Don't be bashful. There must have been 15 or 20 of you who said that you were going on to university and you knew what you wanted to do. Surely you can tell us what it is and why you want to do it.

Mr Bywater—For me to work out what I wanted to do at university was a very hard decision. In fact, I only made the decision about two months ago because I was intending to go into the work force—into retailing. I was a bit unsure of how HECS and things were going with the new government and I was a bit worried that we were going to start having to pay more maybe a few years down the track if I delayed going university.

So I decided that I was going to have to make a choice now and I decided to go into international business, mainly because of the subjects I had chosen—because I was doing Chinese and I also was doing maths and science. So I had pretty much every door open for me at university, but I decided that, with our further integration with Asia, that was the way to go. So I was looking towards things that were in current affairs. I was trying to pick what was going to be happening a few years down the track.

I think that is very hard for us to do because most adults these days cannot really say, and that is to be expected. So it is very hard for us to find support as to what to choose. We have really got no idea of what the jobs are going to be like five years into the future because we are entering into a new millennium and all that, and there is a lot of fear for me or at our school that computers and things are going to take over our jobs. So we are pretty unsure what to look for. I do not know how we can get around that. But that was just one of my fears.

CHAIR—Thank you. Somebody else?

Mr BROUGH—Perhaps if you just tell us why you have chosen to go to university rather than go and look for a job now—even if you cannot tell us how you have come to that decision.

Ms Levings—Most of us in grade 11 at Bribie have decided to go to university because that is the only option that was given to us. We were told if you go to university, you can get a degree and if you have a degree, you can get a job. We are not told that you can get jobs without degrees, so we have all gone for the academic side.

We actually had to choose what we wanted to do in grade 10 because we were told that if you choose now, then you can choose your subjects for years 11 and 12 which will help you get into the university course that you want to get into. So we did all our preparation in grade 10 and had to decide in grade 10, really, what we wanted to do. But it is all basically academic stuff and going to university courses because that is all they said that was really available.

Mr BROUGH—So you are saying that the two reasons were: the lack of opportunities, as far as you are concerned, at Bribie Island to stream you into the work force; and, secondly, because you believe your best opportunity to get work is by going on to get a higher education.

Ms Levings—Yes.

Mr BROUGH—Would someone else like to comment on the reasons why you are going on to higher education? It does not matter if they are the same. We just need to get some sort of a feel as to the reasons you have chosen these paths—because a lot of people have.

Mr Lyons—I am Jethro Lyons, from Bribie Island State High School. I am 17 years of age. Basically, extending on that, in year 10 we are just given all the subjects and they give us what university courses they can get us into and prerequisites for university courses. So we basically choose, as Karla just said, from those subjects concerning what courses we are going to get into in university. I think most of the people around nowadays have the opinion that you cannot get a job unless you have been to university. With the lack of jobs around, you need to have a university degree of some sort to get a job nowadays because they are so hard to get because there are so few of them. That is about it.

Mr BROUGH—We have not heard too much from the other side over here. Is there someone over here who would like to make a comment on that?

Ms Harris—I am 15 and I come from Caboolture. Basically, I agree with everything that is being said. We are not really told that much about out-of-school jobs once we leave grade 10 or grade 12. It is basically university that is really emphasised. We are always told that uni will get you the great job; if you go out now while you are 15 to try to find a job, you are not going to succeed.

Mr BROUGH—What about TAFE? No one has mentioned TAFE at all. Is this an option? Is this something that you consider at all? How do you people perceive TAFE colleges? What are your thoughts on TAFE? Do we know anything about them? If we know anything about them, what is our opinion?

Ms Robinson—Our school knows quite a lot about TAFE because we have a careers officer. We engage in programs. TAFE will offer a group of students a course and we can go and participate in that course for a fee over a period of time and we gain experience in that pre-vocational course. We also know a fair bit about TAFE because they tell us all about TAFE. The careers officer will say, ‘TAFE has offered us eight positions in a hospitality course.’ We can put our name down. The only problem with that is they offer us only a limited number. It is really hard because there are so many students who would like to try it out and do that.

Going back onto work experience, our school offers it in years 10, 11 and 12, but I think there should be more of it so that we can try different stuff because once you try something, you may not like that field of work and realise that is not for you. You should have the opportunity to try other fields of work, not just one and say, ‘That didn’t work, but what else is there?’

Mr BROUGH—Are there any other comments on that area? Are there any different views—on TAFE in particular? Do we see TAFE as a second option or something? I do not want to put words in your mouth, I am just trying to find out.

Mr Cake—I think that TAFE is not being talked about much at our school. You do not really hear much about it. The real options are university or nothing. TAFE is not really talked about much. There is an opinion that TAFE is a last resort for an education; after school, if you cannot get into university, it is something else that you should try.

Mr BROUGH—Is that the opinion of other students from Tullawong? Do you not know much about TAFE colleges because you have not been given any information? Is that a generally accepted idea that it is like a last option if you have missed out on a job or university? So you do not see it as a way of really bettering yourself unless all other doors have closed in your face? Is that right? At Morayfield, do you get any information on TAFE colleges?

Mr Warne—At our school, like Morayfield, we are given the opportunity to participate in TAFE courses. We do have a very limited number of courses that we can be involved in at individual cost—and the school, I think, may subsidise some of it. It is very difficult for a lot of people to get in there because the demand for such courses is very high, but the actual numbers in them are extremely limited.

Also, referring to your previous question, a lot of my friends really want to go on to higher education. Basically the whole of year 12 is looking at higher education or vocational industries. TAFE is seen only as a real fall back, as I think Simon up at the back said before. If you fail university, you fail all your options through university, then TAFE is the only thing left that you have got to do. Then you use TAFE as a stepping stone to go into university—and go from there.

CHAIR—Only 25 per cent of students will be accepted and do university courses. Some of you may find that frightening but, believe it, it is true.

Mr BROUGH—I think Caboolture got offered 78 per cent or something last year; it was incredibly high. Another one was 80 and Bribie was higher than Caboolture. We obviously have a very unusual group here. We are a highly educated group in Longman.

CHAIR—It is very good; I am impressed.

Mr BROUGH—So about 80 per cent got offered a place. As the Chair said, it is only 25 per cent across Australia. Obviously, Tullawong does not have anyone offered yet because they are not at senior level.

Mrs ELSON—A large number of students said that they want a university education. I heard one young man say that he would give up if he did not get into university or TAFE. Would others of you give up if you do not get into university or TAFE? Would you not look at something else? Yesterday, the National Food Industry and Training Council told us that young people do not even consider starting work in a factory. But you can up to \$60,000 a year in a factory. Do students think that is not an option because it is not something that they get taught at school? I would like to know your opinions about whether you have an alternative should your university option not come up?

Mr Borg—If I do not get into university, I will see that as a failure and I will have to go back and try year 12 again, try extra hard and then get accepted. As my parents say, there are other avenues. You do not have to go straight for the top degree. You can get in at a lower degree and then build your way up to the higher degrees that you want to get. But I feel that if I do not get it the first go, I am just going to have to keep trying.

Mrs ELSON—Is your academic level fairly high at this stage?

Mr Borg—High, yes. About Bs, I am not failing.

Mrs ELSON—That is good. Would anyone else like to comment on what they see themselves doing if they do not get into university?

Ms Levings—A lot of people say, if they do not get into uni, 'Well, that's it.' Or they joke and say, 'I'll just get a job with my parents.' A lot of people in Bribie have paving jobs and stuff like that with their parents. TAFE is not considered at all. We are not taught anything about TAFE. TAFE is like a second-rate thing. A lot of people are not even considering going to uni because they are scared. People who are going to uni are scared because they know there is not a very good success rate of getting in and actually doing well. I think people are just sick of school in general because the academic side is pushed upon us so hard and no-one ever gets the chance to do anything vocational. We do not get any training in other jobs that do not require an academic side to it. I think people are saying, 'Okay, its uni or nothing.'

Mrs ELSON—What is the nothing—to stay on unemployment benefits or something like that?

Ms Levings—Yes, or just bludge off your parents.

Mrs ELSON—That is okay. If the parents let them, they should do it. Has anyone in this room considered working a factory of any kind, from food, manufacturing? So nobody has thought of that. That is okay. You have to start somewhere. When they told us yesterday that you could earn \$60,000 a year, I think there would be a lot of students who would say, 'Hey, there is an alternative out there.' But it appears today as though you have not been given any information on that type of work, as you are going through your final

years.

CHAIR—I think we have probably done topics one and two together. We have talked about secondary school and what you do in school, and vocational education in schools. Let us move on to a really controversial area now. For lack of better terminology, we have entitled this, ‘Employer perceptions of young people.’ I can tell you that from day one, from the first employer group we talked to, we have heard substantially that some young people—not all young people but quite a lot—have very poor attitudes towards the idea of work; they do not want to show up on time; want to leave early; do not know enough about personal hygiene or the work ethic itself; are not interested in the job, only how much money and what are the conditions; how frequently they can have off and how many holidays there are. We would like to hear your reaction to some of those statements.

Ms Levings—I agree with you, everyone thinks that because—this might be a bit biased—our life is so much more stressful than yours, you did not have all the complications that we have. School is just basically our life. We have to go to school from the time we are born until we are teenagers when we should be having fun. Then we have to work or we are going to end up in a gutter somewhere, life is just so much harder. We did this activity in English which was on that topic exactly, that kids these days do not care. It is not that we do not care—we do care—but there are less opportunities for us. There are not enough jobs out there so we go for the higher priced ones. We are so stressed out, we want more holidays, we want everything because we do not get the opportunities that you did when you were our age.

Mr Lyons—Can I just comment generally on something?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Lyons—The thing that I think is a shame is to do with raw talent. Some people might have a real raw talent, for example, in art, but might not have the certificates to back it all up. You might do really well in your art subject and have a real talent for that but you are not so good in your maths and English which you need to get into the courses to do your certificates. If you go out to get employment in that area, they will say, ‘Oh, yes, you have got talent but you do not have the certificates to back it up.’ I think that is just a shame. Some people might not be good at maths and English but they really have the nous for art or any other subject.

Ms Alexander—My name is Jaime Alexander, I go to Tullawong High and I am 15. I think that some teens may lose enthusiasm and self-esteem when competing with so many other young children for the same positions, especially when the unemployment rate is so high. It can all be very stressful.

Mr BROUGH—I just follow that up. Because the competition is so great, and we all acknowledge that, it is pretty hard to get work. A lot of young people do not feel that great about themselves in the first instance, so do you think that probably comes through when you go to an employer in the first place? Are you perhaps building up your defence barriers before you start by not being everything you could be because of the let-down if you do not get the work?

Ms Alexander—I think it is all very intimidating. I feel intimidated by people that have greater power

than me and that is why I am afraid of things like that.

Mr BROUGH—And the employer has greater power than you?

Ms Alexander—Yes.

CHAIR—Have you had a part-time job?

Ms Alexander—Yes, I have.

CHAIR—And how did you get on with your employer?

Ms Alexander—Well, my employer was friends with my mum so—

CHAIR—How do you get on with your mum?

Ms Alexander—We don't.

Mr BROUGH—There is a young lady at the back who put up her hand.

Ms Harris—Most of these things that come from the employers are kind of cliched. They see the guy with the long, blond, surfy hair and automatically he is discriminated against. Why? Because they are still living in the fifties. They are still living in the clean-cut, the dog tags, the whole sixties psychedelia sort of thing. They do not understand. This is the nineties, get with it or get a life.

Mr BROUGH—Can I follow it up again? We get these perceptions, so what we are trying to relay to you and get back from you, because we are getting both sides of the culture shock here—and I am so young, I am in the middle, so it is not a problem—

CHAIR—I am old enough that I did not even know what stress was when I was your age.

Mr BROUGH—So you think that when I turn up to an employer—just imagine me with long blond hair—that I have immediately put a black mark against myself. For argument's sake, what effort would you make, or do you feel is necessary for you to make, when you turn up to an employer to help you get the job? What are you prepared to do? I guess that is the thing. Are you prepared to meet what you think their perception of what you should be, or are you going to be yourself—'They either like me or lump me' sort of thing? I am not having a go at you, I just want to get a feel for where you are coming from.

Ms Harris—It is true, you should be clean-shaven and stuff like that when you go for an interview. It is necessary. But what is the point of lying, to be someone else? The employer has to employ you for you and realise your skills, not someone else's, someone you are trying to fake to be. It just does not happen.

CHAIR—Do you think presentation is important?

Ms Harris—For sure.

Mr BROUGH—I ask that as a general point. You can just raise your hands if you think presentation is important. All right. Let me ask you this question, and you can come back. It is about the three most important things. What do you think is the most important thing when you go to look for a job, from an employer's perspective? What is the No. 1 thing that is going to matter to them? Just one word comments, if we can.

Ms Harris—Your appearance. That is the first thing they notice.

Mr Warne—Dedication.

Mr BROUGH—Anyone else? Honest opinions.

Mr Nugent—How much they can benefit from you.

Ms Talbot—Communication skills.

Mr BROUGH—I hear people saying qualifications and enthusiasm.

Mr Lyons—Reliability.

Mr BROUGH—Someone else says self-esteem.

Mr Borg—Responsibility.

Mr BROUGH—We will tell you what the three top ones are that have come up. No. 1 is attitude. It did not matter whether we were interviewing people for shoe salesmen or right through to the most professional job with three degrees, the No. 1 thing they were looking for was attitude. No. 2 was appearance and No. 3 was your skills and your experience. They will tell you that you will not get the job on your skills and experience because they feel that it is too hard to put people down, to tell you that you really did not look as if you would cut the mustard in their job because your attitude was wrong. I am just telling you that that is what the employers are telling us. Some of you have touched on that. They are saying to us overwhelmingly—would we agree, Mr Chairman?—that it is attitude, attitude. Everywhere we go they tell us that it is attitude. Perhaps you would like to comment on that as to how difficult it is for you to portray that attitude to them.

Mr Warne—I would just like to say that, with the public perception and the employer perception of youth, I think that more than anything else it is just a general perception that we are young and it is a stereotypical attitude, as Sarah was saying. A lot of the times it is completely malinformed and misappropriate, in the fact that they really just go on what they see from the general public. I know in several areas in Caboolture you might see certain people who do not take advantage of schemes like those from the Department of Education, Employment and Training and all the rest of that sort of thing. That is a small portion of the actual society but the rest of us are discriminated against because of that. Also, along with the attitude: basically, what a lot of people are saying is that you need experience to get your job, but how are you going to get your job without getting experience? You can't get experience without getting a job to start with.

Mr Lyons—Just on what Sarah was saying before, I used to have long blond surfie hair. On many occasions I ran into people and when I told them that I was getting five VHAs and two HAs and things they just could not believe it and just automatically thought, ‘Oh, no, I thought you’d be into surfing, drugs and alcohol and all of that.’ I found that quite offensive. A couple of my mates have had the same things, going into interviews with employers and stuff like that. I think it is just a bit of a shame that you cannot be who you are and be accepted for what you are.

Mr BROUGH—So you have had to change your image, you believe, to help yourself get something?

Mr Lyons—No. I got a haircut and it looked worse so I shaved it all off.

Ms Fawcett—I actually did work experience last holidays. I was with Legal Aid so I was just doing filing and secretarial stuff. At the end of the week I got a report from the lady that was there and her main comment was that she was shocked that I did anything. She said that I was actually the first person—I got the impression they have had two or three in there—that did stuff. They gave me assignments like, ‘Here’s the correspondence, go and find this file and put it in there.’ That was pretty much all I was doing. I thought it was pretty basic stuff. I would do it all, come back and say, ‘Now what?’ She said I was the only person that did that. They would give some of the other girls similar assignments and they just sort of would not do it—just simple photocopying. She said it was just amazing that I even did any work. I thought that was just normal.

Mr BROUGH—Fair enough. It opens your eyes, doesn’t it.

Mr Colbran—I am Ryan Colbran from Tullawong, 15 years of age. You seem to generalise that some employers claim that all youths have a poor attitude to work. This does not seem to be right, in that you could wager that some adults would have a poor attitude to work as well. This is held true by the tens of thousands chronically unemployed and making a living off welfare. This in turn gives their offspring a false impression of how the system works, and it is these factors that are spawning a bad attitude to work.

Mr BROUGH—We might follow up on that one later. It just comes into something else about people whose parents have not worked.

Ms Hart—I am Chrissie Hart, 15, from Tullawong High School. I have been in my job for two years and I have never once had a day off or been late for work. My boss always says to me that she is so surprised that I have been there for so long, because she thinks teenagers do not like to work or anything like that. She said she is just shocked that I have worked for so long, because teenagers do not like working. That is the attitude she has.

Mr BROUGH—Do you agree, though, that teenagers do not like working—a lot of your friends? Do you think that you are out of the mould or that you are pretty common?

Ms Hart—No, most of my friends work.

Mr BROUGH—And most of them you think will do a good job and turn up, so therefore the

perceptions of the employers are wrong?

Ms Hart—Yes.

Ms Levings—That is the perception, and I think it is pretty bad because there is just a little group, a minority of teenagers who do not give a damn about anything and they are spoiling it for the rest of us. Also, we do try. We want jobs, we really do. It may come across that we do not care but it is not that we do not care, it is that half the time we wait until there is a good job, until there is a job, to come across. We are not bludgers. Because you see us walking around the streets, it is not because we do not want to have a job, it is because maybe there are no jobs out there, maybe we are waiting for a good job to come along, one we can really work in and get money for and stuff like that.

Mrs ELSON—I just wanted to ask: does anyone work part-time at McDonald's? There is one over there. I just wanted to see if they had part-time jobs there.

Mr Barron—My name is Dale Barron. I am 16 and from Bribie Island. Just to extend on what Karla said, I have noticed that a very general comment in society from adults is that they say that the unemployment rate is so high because generally kids our age cannot be bothered to go out and look for jobs. But they never really take into account that there just are not enough jobs out there, and that we are not being taught the proper qualifications to find a job.

Ms Payne—I agree with what Ryan said about the people discriminating against younger people. There are older people who do not want to work either, but it is a case of having to work. You get bad people like that who just do not try hard enough in every group of people. I think that it is all part of self-motivation. You have got to go for every job that comes towards you. Even if it is something that does not interest you, it is something that if you get it you can give it a try, at least.

It is up to the employer. If they have an interview, it is then that they are supposed to see if the person has a good attitude towards working. That is what the interview is for. So if they hire a person and they do not turn out to be what they wanted them to be it is their fault, because they had the interview and they should have known then what the person was going to be like for work.

Mr Cavanagh—My name is Daniel Cavanagh, from Morayfield. I am 16 years old. When you go into an interview I reckon that they should say the truth as to why you did not get the interview so then you can fix it up next time when you get your next interview.

Mr BROUGH—I will tell you why they cannot tell you the truth: it is because of discrimination today. If they tell you that you did not get the job because you have got long blond hair and you do not fit the look of their business, then you can sue them, and people do, all the time. It makes it very hard for people who are getting knock-backs time and time again and they do not know what they are doing wrong.

I have dealt with a lot of young people from Caboolture of late, particularly last year, and I would ask them, for example, what they would say if an employer said to them, 'Why do you want the job?' Some of the answers I got were: 'Got to do something,' or 'Got to earn some money.' If they are the answers the

employers get, that young person quite obviously is going to find it difficult. I am sure everyone in this room realises that. But the employer will say that you did not have the skills or you did not have the experience because no-one can discriminate against him on that basis, no-one can sue him, no-one can take him to unfair dismissal courts and that sort of thing. But it is very hard for you to find out the one little thing you are doing wrong. If you could sort that out then perhaps you could get the next job and that is what you would like to see happen, I take it. Is that right?

Ms Robinson—I also believe there is another problem. Some people go to interviews and the employer will actually say, ‘No, you are over qualified for this job,’ because they are afraid that you are going to take their job but then find a better job. So then they will take the person that is maybe not as good for the job as you, and that person does not do a good job and that is why they see that some people might not try as hard. You were willing to try really hard in that job, but because maybe, you were smarter or better at something than the other person, you cannot have that job. That is what I am scared of: going out there and going to these interviews for the job that I want to do and someone will say, ‘No, you’re over qualified because we do not want to lose you and have a high employment turnover.’

CHAIR—Anybody else?

Mr Bywater—I found that it was not very hard for me to get a job because of one thing and that was my numeracy skills. I went for jobs at Jewel Food Stores, and I got a job over other people. But the only reason I did was that I had numeracy skills. A lot of people were finding that whilst they could do complex algebra and things like that, they just could not do the simple additions and things. I found out later from my employer that they thought I had a bad attitude and they were surprised when I actually pointed out things that they could do better in their business.

They were quite surprised that most of the employees they employed in Caboolture were also reliable. In other states like New South Wales they were having a lot of trouble with their part-time staff continually taking advantage of the employer and stealing things. That is probably why they get this bad impression. I know if I was a business person and I had employed even three young people who stole from my business, out of 40-odd, I would be pretty disappointed with the youth.

CHAIR—Fair enough. Thomas raises a question that is under a subheading of the topic and that is literacy and numeracy. When we talk to employers it is an issue that is raised very frequently. In fact, clearly a majority of the time, employers are under an impression that literacy and numeracy standards have decreased. We would like to hear your views about what you were taught in primary school. Do you feel you or your friends have adequate literacy standards or do you think that the school system needs to do a better job?

Mr Bell—In primary school it is all, basically, literacy and numeracy. Once you get to high school, if you write an essay in English, they write a comment that your punctuation is bad, for example, but they do not actually tell you how to fix that. They just leave it and then the next time it comes around it is the same thing again. They do not teach you how to fix your punctuation or your spelling.

In grade 11 maths, there is maths A and B. You have to do one of those two but both of them are

advanced. They do not make note of the numeracy part and you are learning all these complex sums, et cetera. But you are using a calculator, so you lose all those numeracy skills and then when it comes to getting a job and you have to do all these simple sums, you think, 'Where's my calculator?' because you have lost the skills a bit.

CHAIR—In primary school did you have to memorise your times tables?

Mr Bell—Yes, we were taught that from grade 4 up to grade 7.

CHAIR—All of you?

Mr BROUGH—Do you all still know them?

Mr Bell—Yes.

CHAIR—Very good.

Mr BROUGH—Put your hand up if you do not know your 12 times table perfectly. Be honest. How many of you do not know your 12 times table just like that?

CHAIR—About 50 per cent of the cohort.

Mr BROUGH—And you are a bright bunch, quite obviously. Eighty per cent of you want to go to university.

Ms Levings—I think all of us here are probably the best in our school. Am I right? We are all probably pretty smart. When I left primary school I was one of the best in the class. I had a little certificate on my thing saying, 'You are so good.' I knew my times tables off like that. Now, I do not really know my times tables. I cannot do any sort of division without a calculator. Everything I learn like algebra is so hard, so complex. We have two tests in maths. I think it is techniques and applications. Applications I get As in and everything, and techniques I get Cs and stuff.

It is all the basics. Everyone has just lost the basics and they do not teach you that in secondary school. They do not keep up your learning for all that basic stuff. Like what Stuart was saying, we get taught all the English stuff in primary school and then you get to grade 11 and the teacher says, 'Okay, write a poem using all these techniques,' and you go, 'What are they? How do I do them?' We just do not know the basics anymore.

Mr BROUGH—Do you think it is important that you know your times tables and simple division and—

Ms Levings—Yes, because that is the stuff that will help you in life, not these stupid—

Mr BROUGH—Does everyone feel that way?

Ms Levings—Not these stupid sums that go for three pages. As if you are going to go into a shopping centre and do all these sums and stuff. You use your times tables, you use all those basics.

Mr BROUGH—That is very interesting. Thank you.

Mr Colbran—I believe the high schools are taking too much for granted—that every child that enters high school can read and write and add up to a satisfactory level. That may be fine at the primary school level, but once they enter high school they are expected to learn and keep up with everything that is being taught, but this is not always the case. About 25 per cent of students out of one of my classes will struggle over three syllable words when reading out of a textbook.

When students cannot pause at commas or stop at full stops then the text they are reading does not make sense and in turn they do not learn anything from it, nor do the listeners. It should be taken to an extra level with the special education. People who just have a minor struggle sitting on the D minus to D plus should be given a better education with special classes just to get their mark up to a pass.

Ms Payne—I think that with the literacy and numeracy skills, the literacy skills are to an average level in the schools, they do not really need any tutorials at lunchtime but with mathematics and all that sort of stuff people are having a lot of trouble with algebra and things that a lot of us will not need when we are older—as that girl said, the three-page long sums and everything.

This year, just in the past few weeks, we have gone back to learning how to do multiplication and stuff like that all over again because there are a lot of us who have just forgotten how to do it since primary school. Right now we need all of that so our teacher has taken us back and shown us how to do multiplication, long division and all that sort of stuff because all of us have forgotten it.

Ms Levings—We have a whole block dedicated to people who have learning disabilities, but it is basically for retarded people and stuff like that, but we do not have anything for people who are our age and are perfectly fine but have never really learnt the basic skills needed. I think that is what every school needs to help the slow learners, because you need those basics before you can do those three-page sums.

Mr Warne—I think that what is being taken for granted a lot, as someone up the back said before, is that the primary schools are actually getting the skills of literacy and numeracy to a level where it can be expanded on at high school. That is really what has to be done in year 8, because there is that much of a volume of work between year 8 and year 12 that has to be taught to the students and they already should have the knowledge. The high school teachers cannot be expected to go back and spend time teaching such topics over and over again. So I would say, more so, it is not the failing in the secondary school system or in the primary school system but in the transitional period between year 7 and year 8, where it should be introduced so that kids actually know exactly what they have to do and their tables and so on.

I heard Bribie saying before that with the maths—do you guys only have two streams of maths, A and B? I am told it is three. At Caboolture, we have also introduced another subject, mathematics investigations, which is basically the real stuff that you were learning in year 7 and year 8—fractions and so on. That can give a basic level of numeracy if you are going into, say, a vocational experience or something like that,

where you would not need, as has been said, the huge algebraic calculations and so on.

Ms Hanlon—I am Melissa Hanlon, aged 16, from Caboolture High. I basically agree with what both Simon and Karla said. We get taught these basic skills at primary school, but in high school we have to apply them; but how do we know how to apply them when no-one knows them? The literacy skills now that we have are not good. We should expand on them and we should have more programs to enable that, maybe tutorials. At Caboolture High in year 11, I think, once a week we had tutorial sessions where we could along to each subject we had difficulties with, like maths or English, and we could get help then. Surely I think we should have more of them.

Mr Talo—My name is Tusilima Talo, from Caboolture High. I have had most of my education in New Zealand—most of my primary years. What I reckon they are missing here in Australia is that in New Zealand we have primary, intermediate school and college. Intermediate school has grades 6 and 7, and they are the only two grades. It helps them to mature with a good attitude towards going into high school. They help them with skills and everything to do with maths and all that before they go on to college. Our grade 8s here, when they come from primary school straight up to high school, all we know them for is being smart because they have not got the mature attitude they need for high school. In New Zealand they have that.

Ms Alexander—We were brought up in a world of computers, and they are there for us to use, to do the thinking for us. We did not invent them; so it is not really our fault that we are using them so much and we are so used to them. If you are in home ec, when you are given a blender, you use it.

CHAIR—Can I ask you a question? If you punch into your calculator 10 times 10 and the answer is 1,000 and you do not know your multiplication tables and you cannot do it manually, you will accept 1,000; is that right? Is that a good answer?

Ms Alexander—Yes.

CHAIR—Ten times 10 is 1,000?

Ms Alexander—Yes.

CHAIR—Well done.

Mr BROUGH—At the end of it, what I would like to know is: if you are all going for a job interview right now, as you are sitting here, and the boss says, ‘What I want you to do as part of this examination for the job is to write a 250-word article. What I am really looking for is your ability to spell, your ability to express yourself and your punctuation. That is what I am really looking for. The idea is important but, more importantly, I want to know just how well you can do your grammar, et cetera.’ Would you put your hand up if you would not feel comfortable having to do that and you are obviously not going to produce a good result? So less than half of you would feel very comfortable doing it. Thank you.

Mr Cavanagh—I reckon the foundation of the maths should be pushed heaps more. I work with my father as a milk vendor and you have people come out with \$50 notes. I get confused and I quickly grab

calculators out of the glove box and people think that there is something wrong with you, because you cannot work it out.

CHAIR—Fair enough.

Mr Lyons—I do not know what it is like in the other schools that are here, but at Bribie, in my English classes, I have not touched on anything to do with punctuation once since I have been at high school. Not at all.

Mr BROUGH—Do you think it is important?

Mr Lyons—Yes, I do.

Mr BROUGH—Put your hands up if you do not think it is important. It is fine if you do not.

Mr Lyons—It seems to be important to the teachers anyway, because half of the marks that are lost in our essays are from the punctuation.

CHAIR—It is important to employers, too.

Mr BROUGH—From evidence given yesterday, a fellow—or a young lady I think it was—turned up for a job and she had a reference from her English teacher at school saying how brilliant she was. Her actual letter for application was woeful. He saw that as a contradiction and thought maybe the reference had been fabricated. He rang the English teacher and said, ‘I have a bit of a problem. Did you write the reference?’ And she said, ‘Yes’. And he said ‘But the reference does not really collate with what I have seen in this person’s own handwriting.’ And the teacher said, ‘Could you understand what she wanted?’ He said, ‘Yes.’ The teacher said, ‘What did she want?’ He replied, ‘She wanted to apply for the job.’ She said, ‘Well, where’s your problem?’ He had a big problem because he wanted to know that she had some ability, yet the teacher was actually happy with that result. I think that is where you are all coming from. You want to be able to have a bit more ability than perhaps you have currently got.

Mr Bell—The way English is at our school, every four or five weeks we rotate teachers. There are a few teachers in every class who get rotated and at the end of each time with the teacher, you get a piece for assessment. When you write that, you get back the comments that your punctuation is bad or your spelling is bad and you just do not think about it because you do not see that teacher again. Then the next teacher comes along and you just go through the same thing again. They do not know what your punctuation is like. At the end of that, you do a piece for assessment again and you get the exact same comments. That is it because you do not see them again either for the rest of the year.

Mr Lyons—It seems to be pretty much the same with every student on every piece of assessment. You see it has always got the comments about punctuation and spelling. I do not know—maybe the English program needs to be reassessed like the mathematics program. Next year, fortunately, we are getting business mathematics, but currently nothing is focused on people who just want basic maths. It is just all focused on whether you are going to be an engineer or be involved in a mathematically based career.

Mr BROUGH—If you wanted to go to university when I was at high school, you did not do what they used to call basic mathematics because the rating on it was too low to allow you to get the grades. Anyone who wanted to go to university had to do maths one and two. So how many of you who are wanting to go on to university, would take—what are you going to call it—business mathematics, knowing full well that it is going to lower your overall grade, even if you get the highest level. Would you still take it or would you say that this going to disadvantage me in my options at university? Perhaps someone would like to comment? Or just a show of hands? Those who want to go to university, would you still take business mathematics, if that is what they will call basic mathematics, knowing that it has not got the same grading as maths one and two? Just put your hands up if you would take that option. And you would not take that option, because it is going to disadvantage you at university? Even so, you see it is important, you are really looking at your longer term.

Ms Alexander—I have got a big test coming up. It is not that big, but it is a test. Our teacher told us that as long as we have our formula and we show what we are about to do on the calculator, if we do not get the answer right from the calculator, then we will still pass. She told us that we can get As and Bs even not getting the correct answers. So long as we have got all our working and that, then it is fine.

CHAIR—What do you think of that? Do you think your boss would be impressed if you were at a cash register and somebody buys something for \$50 and they give you a \$100 note and you give them \$75 change? Can you imagine an employer being impressed by that?

Mr BROUGH—The teachers are obviously looking for you to go through the process.

Ms Harris—Basically, they are just looking at the process, how well you understand it, and it is not just about the answer you get. It is totally different with a cash register and a supermarket. You are not really going to use the equation $a^2 - b^2 = (a+b)(a-b)$, are you? It is totally and utterly different. They can't be compared.

Mr Bell—At Bribie, Maths B and C are the harder maths and when you get to the applications test they tell you that no matter what you are doing just get a solution. If you get a solution in the test you can still get a B but if you are going along the right track and you only get half way through it, the most you can get is a C on that question. So they tell you that no matter what you are doing at least get a solution even if you know it is wrong so then you can at least get a B or an A.

Ms Levings—There was a lot of talk about our maths programs at school. There were a lot of rumours going around and a lot of parents argued. Maths C is our hardest maths. Maths B is a bit easier and Maths A is the easiest. To do Maths C you have to do Maths B as well and people who are doing both of those were getting A or A+ in Maths C and yet failing Maths B. There was a big drama about our Maths B curriculum. People said it was totally stuffed. Whoever wrote it must have been having a breakdown or something because there is honestly something wrong.

You can tell that because only the very high achievers in Grade 11 are actually passing Maths B. There are so many people who are getting C- or D. There are only about 10 people out of our whole grade who are getting a B or higher. When you ask the teacher, 'How will this help us in the future? How are these sums going to help us?', they say, 'I don't know but it's in the program so do it'. So if they don't know how it is

going to help us, how is it going to help us?

Ms Robinson—I completely agree with that. I do Maths B and Maths C and I know that I am getting higher marks in Maths C than I am in Maths B and I do not know why. Maths B is supposed to be easier than Maths C so how come I'm doing better in the harder one? They do not teach you the basics that you need to know to do this stuff.

Also, what is the point of doing half of it? They tell you all these formulas and give you great big mathematical equations and you just look at it and ask yourself, 'Okay, what am I going to do with it? What use is it going to have to me in the future?' They do not explain that to you. You say, 'How is this going to help me?' and they say, 'It will, just trust me, it will'. You think, 'Okay'. It is completely weird because Maths B is supposed to be easier than Maths C and yet you can't do as well in Maths B.

Ms Payne—In our maths assignments that we are doing this year people always ask, 'What is this going to do for us in real life?' Therefore, what the teachers make us do at the end of the assignment is write out how we found the assignment, whether we found it hard or easy, and write out a real life application for it. They ask us to write out what we think it would be used for in real life so we have to think about it.

CHAIR—Good.

Mr Barron—I do Maths B as well and I have noticed that the enthusiasm in that subject is extremely low. The main reason for this is that when we see these huge formulas up on the board we ask, 'How is this going to help us in real life?' and no matter what situation we're in the teacher always struggles to answer and finally says, 'I don't know, just learn it anyway'.

Ms Hart—We always ask our maths teacher how this is going to help us in the future and he always applies it to a real life situation for us. He does that all the time.

Mr BROUGH—Can you give us an example of some of the real life situations that he gives you?

Ms Hart—We just learnt about finding the gradient of a slope, a mountain slope or whatever, and the teacher always draws diagrams of how it is going to help us.

Mr BROUGH—I used to find in the army that if I could not walk up it was too steep, and that used to work really well. Otherwise you had to get on all fours. Fair enough. Thank you.

Mr Colbran—I would like to point out that with all the questions going on about where can we apply this and that, it is not so much where you apply it but can you learn it for going on to university. Everyone has been brought up in this day and age to go on to university, otherwise there is nothing else out there. It is not so much the ability, can you get it, but can you learn it and can you relearn it and apply it when you go into university and study astrophysics and when you go in-depth.

Mr Borg—I just wanted to ask the people at the front, with all the questions of how can we use it, have you ever used complex mathematical equations like algebra in your real life?

CHAIR—The answer to that question is I have. I am 60 years old and if I have got a couple of knowns and an unknown, I will always map out an algebraic equation in order to find out the answer. I have been doing that for years and years. I have not used calculus recently, but I can still do a square root manually, without a calculator. My son cannot remember his times tables. I am certain that we have taught them to him, but he cannot. So if you get an error of magnitude, that is a decimal point shifted and an answer of multiplication, or an answer of addition, and if you have got no basic understanding of additions, subtraction, multiplication, division, square roots or cubes or whatever, it is difficult for you to determine that there is an error of magnitude in an answer if you do not have the basics. I think it is extremely important. I have always used maths one way or another. I am an engineer by profession but I have done heaps of other things too. I have been in business management for years. Just in straightforward business management, I have used algebra over and over and over again.

Mrs ELSON—I have not used that particular maths, but basic maths I have used just about every day of my life. I have got eight children that have gone through high school. My youngest one is graduating tonight. Five have gone on to university and they said that the maths that they learnt at school, the complicated ones, they have not ever used at university, or the languages they used. So I think it all depends where you are going to head. If you are not going to be a scientist or along the top lines, probably those complicated maths do not need to be taught to that extreme. So maybe the school system needs breaking up to the ones that really want to learn that one and the basic maths to be learnt for people to carry on to their next job.

Mr BROUGH—The point the chap made down the back was very relevant, that it is not so much whether you are going to use it, they are seeing whether or not you can actually follow this process. I did not do maths 1 and 2, I think it was when I was at school, but I use basic mathematics. We all use it every day and that is what you seem to be lacking. It comes down to whether you can follow these processes. A small percentage of you will use it at university but, more importantly, you are not going to drop out of them, because it then limits your opportunity when you get to university, because you will not get the results that you want to achieve. Maybe something needs to be looked at in that line as to the weighting that is placed on those subjects.

CHAIR—I have got to make one other comment too. There are many educators who have said that really primary school, high school, tertiary education is not there to impart absolute definitive skills other than the basics, that mostly what you go to university to learn is how to learn. Some of the complex math subjects that you take, it is not that you will ever use the calculus or that you will ever use the differential equations or that you will ever use statistics unless you are going to be a scientist or an engineer, but it is a fact of applying the mental process to learning how to work it out. Having done that and having accomplished it in school, that skill is available to you for life, and it helps teach you how to address a new topic, a new career, a new direction and be able to work your way through learning the new skills that you need to know to do that new kind of job.

Unfortunately, I am going to have to go because I have to catch an aeroplane, and I am going to turn over to Mel since it is his electorate. Thank you. This has been absolutely terrific. I have just told our secretary that we have got to do heaps more of these. I think it has been one of the most valuable things that we have done. If your teachers and principals that are here today have not been listening, I am highly disappointed, because I think they probably heard things today that they have not heard before either. You

have been open and frank and we appreciate your input, and I can guarantee you it will be used. Thank you very much.

Short adjournment

ACTING CHAIR (Mr Brough)—The last few areas we will touch on are apprenticeships, traineeships, youth wages and income assistance, particularly Austudy. We did touch on apprenticeships and traineeships but perhaps you could let us know what you understand about what options are available. I know that came up earlier and there did not seem to be a lot of knowledge. On traineeships as well as apprenticeships, has anyone tried to get one or has anyone looked at it—and do you see that, having completed year 12, it is an option for you? Or, at this stage, having gone that far, do you not really believe an apprenticeship is something you would see as being a good option? Would someone like to open up the discussion?

Mr Nugent—I have done the first stage of a traineeship in carpentry. I did it at TAFE and the focus was mainly on really basic stuff that everyone should already know if they have done manual training or cabinet-making or any of that sort of stuff. It was virtually a waste of time for me and I think that is probably where a lot of people get their opinion that TAFE is a bludge.

ACTING CHAIR—It was too low level?

Mr Nugent—It was very low level, yes.

ACTING CHAIR—Would you prefer to have seen your traineeship done on the job—as in a workplace?

Mr Nugent—I have worked on the job most of my life, so it would not have been much of an advantage to me. But for a lot of other people, it would have been better like that.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you.

Mrs ELSON—Are you going into an apprenticeship?

Mr Nugent—I am trying to, but the employers do not seem to be making a commitment; they do not want to make a commitment to young people.

Mr Lyons—I have a couple of mates who left school at year 10. Most of the people who have got apprenticeships have done so through family connections and stuff like that. We were just talking about this issue earlier and it seems that the people who do not have the connections and so on are usually put on a waiting list and have to try really hard to get an apprenticeship. That is what happens unless you have the family connections there.

ACTING CHAIR—Apprenticeships are at a three-decade low. In other words, in 1995 there were fewer apprenticeships than there have been for the last 30 years. So it is a problem. The government has said

they are going to introduce a program where you can do an apprenticeship whilst you are at school—part of it. So you would spend some of your time in the workplace starting an apprenticeship and the rest of the time at school. I would like your views on whether or not you feel that would be of use not necessarily you, because I know a lot of you want to go on to university, but to other classmates.

Ms Payne—I think there are lots of opportunities for apprenticeships and traineeships but you really have to go out there and ask for them because a lot of people just expect them to come to them and land on their laps. But it just does not happen that way. Nowadays, people have to try a lot harder and just keep going and hounding people all the time until they give you a definite answer—a yes or a no. There are a lot of them out there. You have just got to inquire.

Mr Nugent—When I was at TAFE a few of my mates had left the year before and they were doing a six-month course that was supposed to set them up with an apprenticeship. They would do work experience with the employer that was supposed to apprentice them, as well as going to TAFE and learning the theoretical side. One person out of a class of 30 ended up with an apprenticeship because the people that were going to apprentice them pulled out right before they got their apprenticeships. A lot of the time, they are the ones that are not making the commitment.

ACTING CHAIR—Do you have any idea as to why they pulled out?

Mr Nugent—It is just the cost. They have got them for four years—

ACTING CHAIR—Too big a commitment for a business to make, four years, is that what we are saying?

Mr Nugent—Yes.

Mrs ELSON—This is not my opinion, but people we have had before the inquiry think it is a bit of a risk and that the young kids will not stay with them. Then there is the unfair dismissal law where, if they have made a bad choice, they cannot do anything about it. I think when a few things like that have changed it may change their attitude also.

Mr Warne—As Mr Brough was saying with the workplace apprenticeships in the school, I think that would help a lot of people, probably not—as he was also saying—the people in this room but a lot of people that I know at school. They are not into school work and that sort of thing. They are in an academic stream because they do not want to be in a fully vocational environment but they let their academic work slip. Perhaps part of their time at school, and other times, should spent on an apprenticeship. I would fully agree with that.

ACTING CHAIR—Let us move to an area which came up yesterday. We took evidence from the Secondary Principal's Association and they referred to the mini-wage. Apparently, the mini-wage means the dole in the schools that the association was referring to. That is just what young people refer to it as, unemployment benefits—the mini-wage. The point was that they felt that a lot of young people were not interested in going into first-year apprenticeships because the wages are low. Young people look at the

difference between that and the unemployment benefits and say, 'Well, what's the point?' Do you and others within the schools feel that there is a disincentive because the wages for first year apprentices are so low?

Ms Levings—Jethro and I have a friend, Craig, who left at the end of grade 10 for a tiling apprenticeship. He did not want to be on the dole. The apprenticeship money he is getting is probably lower but at the end he is probably guaranteed a job. What is the point of going on the dole when there is nothing at the end for you? There might be a bit more money but there is nothing at the end for you. With people who say, 'We don't take on apprentices because we think they are going to pull out', I think that is a bit dumb because people who go for apprenticeships, that is all they can do. They do not feel they are academic and they do not want to go back to school. They feel that their only option is to become an apprentice of some sort. They want to stick with it so that they can get the skills to actually do something.

Ms Payne—When people say that it is better on the dole because you get the same amount or more money than a first year apprentice, I think that is a load of rubbish. It is true in a way but, as you get into your second, third and fourth years of an apprenticeship you are getting more money. If you put that money away then you can just get more money again. Once you do get your proper job, after the apprenticeship, you are probably going to be getting a lot more money than a person on the dole would be, no matter how much income they get on benefits and everything.

ACTING CHAIR—So is the fact that apprenticeship wages are low in the first year a concern to you or the people you know? Does it act as a disincentive or do people look further down the track? Do you believe they are going to have a career and that sort of thing?

Mr Bywater—I think the fact that you are going to have a job at the end of your apprenticeship is not highlighted enough. I am not aware of someone that I know who is disheartened by the fact that the first year apprenticeship wages are low, but I am also—

Mr BROUGH—Sorry, did you say you do not know anyone that is disheartened?

Mr Bywater—I do not know anyone exactly who is put off by the fact that the apprenticeship wage is low. But I think that more young people would be inclined to take up an apprenticeship, fight for an apprenticeship, rather than take the dole if they had the goal there that, at the end of their four years or however long their apprenticeship is, they are going to have a solid job and they are going to have skills. I do not think a lot of people realise that from the apprenticeship they are going to gain skills and not just money.

Mrs ELSON—As I say, I have eight children. Five are university graduates and two are apprentices, so I can speak from either side. It amazes me now that my two apprentices who have finished their time are earning \$1,500 a week and the university students are not. So there is always an alternative and, when you are looking at your career, if you cannot get to one, try another. I am not saying that everyone should give up their university degree, because the ones that have got that are getting satisfaction out of their job. I think that is the bottom line, to do something you really want to do.

ACTING CHAIR—There is also a move now to make apprenticeships more relevant so, instead of taking four years, you could perhaps complete your apprenticeship, whatever it happens to be—and it does not

have to be in mechanical work or plumbing, electrical or traditional things, but into computing and whatever else—in a much shorter period of time. Perhaps you complete your apprenticeship in two years and have a trade at the end of that time. Is that something which you believe would make you or your friends more interested in taking up such an option?

Mr Bell—I do not think it is really a matter of the time. If they think they needed four years to teach them all of those skills, if they can fit all those skills in that two-year period then that is all right. But if they do not have enough time to teach them or enough skills to be able to do a full-time job, then it should stay at four years. If they can teach them all the skills needed in the two-year period, then that is probably better.

ACTING CHAIR—Any there any other comments on that area at all?

Ms Harris—I think a shorter time period would be much better. In education, students look towards the future, their job, but when they go out into the work force they want to be successful straightaway. They want to earn the big bucks straightaway. Maybe if you speed up the time of training it would give them something to work for, to work harder and consequently have a better attitude towards.

ACTING CHAIR—Do we have much of an understanding of what is available with traineeships and what is meant by a traineeship? Would anyone like to explain to us what it is or just give a show of hands if they understand what traineeships are. If you feel you have a pretty reasonable understanding of traineeships, could you just put your hand up for us? Now, if you really do not have much of a clue at all? Okay, that says a lot, thank you. We took evidence yesterday from the retailers association and it is a lady's job just to go around to explain to business people how they can benefit from a traineeship. I think that just highlights the problem that, if you do not have that knowledge—we will not bother going into it now—we need to get that into the schools so that people understand how that can be of assistance to you.

Mrs ELSON—I have another question on that. Has anybody come into the schools here to let you know what is available in the apprentice field and what you could go for? Could I have a show of hands? I see it is just a couple again.

Mr Lyons—Jethro Lyons, Bribie High, 17. I will comment on that. At Bribie High, most of the apprenticeships are not really told to the students generally. If you are in a manual arts subject or home economics or something like that, and one of the teachers happens to hear through their connections, then you will be told. I know I have been told of a couple when I was doing manual arts. Other than that, they are not really advertised around the school.

Mrs ELSON—Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR—We will move on to youth wages and the idea of a low wage. There are two pushes on. One is that you get paid by your age from 15 onwards and the other one is that you get paid on a competency based regime, which means that if I, as a 34-year-old, and you, as a 15-year-old, go for the same job—let us say it is working at McDonald's—we both are going to get paid the same because neither of us have done this work before. Do you feel that that would disadvantage you or advantage you unfairly or unnecessarily? What are your general opinions on the level of wages for young people?

Mr Bell—The way the age and wage thing goes is more important for part-time work than for full-time work because with the casual wages it usually goes up with your age. At the supermarket I work at, if you are 17 or nearly 18, they say that they do not need people, but if you are 15 it is nearly \$3 an hour cheaper you work for them, so they usually just keep on the younger people. If you get older while you are working there they do not sack you, but if you are looking for a new job as a casual and you are nearly 18, it is a lot harder.

Ms Robinson—If you and I were to go for the same job and if the wages were the same then I really think that, based on what we were talking about before, the employer's attitude is that you would probably get it because they would think that you, being more mature and older than me, would have a better attitude towards working and they would probably think that you would work harder and get there on time, basically because you are older and they tend to have a poor view of younger workers.

So I think it is really important that we do have a different wage because it sort of enables us to just get our nose into the work force by being young. Employers do look for people who are young because they are cheaper, so that is kind of how we get our nose in because we are younger and we can get the cheaper wages.

ACTING CHAIR—Can I have a show of hands of whether we have a problem with that. It is seen in some quarters, and maybe rightly so, as discrimination. Do you think that the fact that you attract a lower wage is a good thing or a bad thing? If you think it is a bad thing and that you should not attract a lower wage simply because you are 15 or 16, who would support the retention of the system as it currently is then? So if you are 15 or 16 you get paid and as your age goes up your wage goes up. Who supports that system? That was about 60 per cent.

Who would then prefer to see a system based simply on your ability? So if you are 15 and you can do the job as well as an adult, you will get paid more—let us look at it the positive way, you might get paid \$500 a week but of course then an older person can compete equally for that job. Who would rather see it go that way?

Mr Bywater—I believe the age system is a lot better than the skill related thing, mainly because we have got a secure environment there. We know that we are going to get paid a certain amount and employers cannot really abuse us and say that we are not skilled even if we are. For example, in the supermarket environment I am trained to do pretty much what there was there, but they could say that I am just not very good or something like that and pay me the lowest rate purely to save money and that way they would get away with having their entire work force on the same low wage.

Whereas with the age based things, I think a lot of young people out here start part-time employment at about 15. They usually stay in that job for about two or three years and they are gaining experience and as they are gaining that experience it is pretty much related to their age. So, as they get older, their pay increases with their age and thus it fairly well reflects the amount of skill they have developed as well.

ACTING CHAIR—Are there other comments on this area?

Ms Levings—I think, anyway we go, we are disadvantaged. So, who cares what the wage thing is?

Like that girl over there said—I am sorry, I have forgotten your name—if we both went for the same job, you would get it because they have a low opinion of teenagers; whereas, if it was with the age thing, we would still get less than you because we are younger. So, either way, we miss out on all the benefits and stuff. So, I think we should just accept what we have got and be happy with it.

ACTING CHAIR—Let me just turn it around for you. We visited a factory in Victoria which makes packing cases. They do not care how old you are—whether you are 18 or 40. If you start there, you start on the same wage. In that instance, if they were doing it on the basis of your age, you would actually get less. That does not influence any of you at all to think that it should change?

Mr Colbran—Basically, what you have got here is the choice between a 15-year-old and a 23-year-old. You have got the stereotypical 15-year-old, who has had no previous job experience, just coming in, and you have got the 23-year-old who is more trustworthy, more experienced and stronger. He is going to do the better job. So, with the destruction of youth wages, you are going to get the death of youth employment.

ACTING CHAIR—What about the actual level of wage just to sustain yourselves, to live? You are all starting on fairly low wages. What sort of a problem does that create for you in simply being able to live and perhaps move out of home and the like? How big a problem is that creating for people?

Mr Bell—For those people who want to move out of home at a young age, like 16 or 17, if they go to the supermarket, they get a lot less than the casuals of the same age. So, they find it even harder to survive. A 16-year-old might be only getting \$5 an hour, where if you are a casual you are getting nearly \$1 or \$2 more than what the permanent person is. So, it is a lot harder, because they are leaving school and trying to find full-time work and they are only getting as much as a part-time person is because their wage is lower.

ACTING CHAIR—Are there any other comments on this area? If not, we will just touch on Austudy. Is there anyone in the room receiving Austudy? I would just like to get your opinion of it, to start with; whether or not you believe, as a general comment, it is well used throughout the school; the other students that you know who access youth Austudy; whether it is abused; whether it should be changed in any way; whether it is adequate—all those sorts of things. I do not just want to hear from those four students who actually receive it themselves, but the others obviously have contact with young people who have it.

Mr Warne—From my knowledge of a lot of people that I know who actually have Austudy, there is a fair proportion of them that do actually need Austudy and use it for its correct benefits and purposes and so on. It is correctly appropriated. But then again there are other people that I do know of that might use Austudy to buy something that is completely unrelated to school, like buying new sports equipment so they can use it in their extracurricular activities and not even use it for school sports or something like that. I just feel that perhaps Austudy needs to be looked and perhaps even stricter guidelines need to be introduced—not to lower or raise the so-called benchmark for receiving Austudy, but just to be sure that Austudy is going for its correct uses.

ACTING CHAIR—Compliance, in other words, so that it is applied better, you feel?

Mr Warne—Absolutely.

ACTING CHAIR—Are there any other comments on this area? Any comment at all on Austudy is what we are after.

Mr Borg—I do not know much about Austudy. I just wanted to ask: could you give me a bit of background info on Austudy, like how old you have to be to receive it and what requirements you need to have to get it?

ACTING CHAIR—Austudy is there to assist people in higher education or high schools and tertiary education, or a TAFE. If they are single people and supporting themselves, it is there to assist them while they are undergoing their study or, if their parents are low income earners or for a variety of other reasons, they need to have some assistance. The money is means tested as opposed to having any requirements. We have heard a variety of views on it—and I do not want to taint that with anything—to hear what you have to say. But that is the reason behind it. It is to help people to be able to maintain their studies when perhaps, under other circumstances, they would not be able to.

Mrs ELSON—And they have to be over 16.

ACTING CHAIR—Yes, you have to be over 16. We will keep working back, if we can.

Mr Bell—I get Austudy, but I do not use it myself. It is more for my mum because she is a single parent and she used to get social security for me. But when I turned 16, that stopped. So now the Austudy sort of takes the place of that. It is not necessarily for all my school things. I still use it, but you do not use all of it. It is more for the stuff that social security was for and it helps her out as well as me.

Mrs ELSON—If I may comment on that, Austudy was first introduced for that very reason. If there were parents on low incomes, rather than forcing their children to leave in grades 11 and 12 they were encouraged by giving them a supplement to keep their children at school. That was the original use of Austudy. Is there anybody in the room that knows of anybody that Austudy has encouraged to leave home and go and flat with another group of people? No? We have had a few comments that Austudy has encouraged young people to leave home.

Mr Barron—I have noticed that for a lot of people who receive Austudy it is the only reason why they even bother going to school. If you took it away, they probably would not even bother going to school. They end up using it to buy totally irrelevant things. Generally, the lower achievers might use it to buy cigarettes or something like that.

ACTING CHAIR—You are on Austudy, you said, didn't you?

Mr Barron—Yes, I am on Austudy.

ACTING CHAIR—Is this a common view, or not? Put your hand up if you know people that are on Austudy, to start with—if they are friends of yours. It is not just that you know them, but you are good friends. So about 50 per cent of you have a friend or a close friend that are on Austudy or you are on it yourselves. Put your hand up if you feel that person is using it correctly. I can hear some comments on that,

so we had better correct it. In any social security system there are going to be people who abuse it, and you do not make the rules for the few that abuse things. You are there to try and help the majority.

All of those people that said that they know people who are on Austudy, could you comment, perhaps, or just give us a show of hands if the majority of the people that you come in contact with use it correctly—in your opinion? How many of you feel that they do not use it correctly? I can see that there are only a few of you that feel that the majority do not use it correctly. What about those that do not use it correctly at all, that you feel really just abuse it and, as you said, just turn up to school? What percentage of you are in contact with people like that? Do you all know of somebody like that? So only about half do.

I am asking because we get these perceptions and we need to get it from you who are in contact with them all the time. We hear that Austudy is being abused everywhere and that they only show up to school, as you said. That is obviously some of the case, but you do not feel by any stretch of the imagination that it is the majority—true? Okay.

Mrs ELSON—Austudy, if you are over 16, can be paid into your account rather than your parents' account or your mother's or father's account. Do you think that if you are still at school it should be paid directly to your parents?

Mr Bell—When I first started getting Austudy they told me that it could not go in my account. It has to go into my mother's account, they told me, until I was 18 years of age for me to have direct access to my Austudy payments. Until then, it is all in my mother's bank account so I can't touch it.

Mrs ELSON—If you decide to go next door and live, and you are over 16, you can direct it straight to your account?

Mr Bell—Yes.

Mrs ELSON—Would that be an enticement for you to leave home, if you wanted to get that Austudy money into your bank account?

Mr Bell—It is not really that much to leave home over, I do not think. It is not really worth it, I do not think.

ACTING CHAIR—Are there any other comments that you would like to make on unemployment benefits or other social security benefits that you will be eligible to receive now as students or that you will be eligible for as you leave school?

Ms Levings—My parents' income was just over the limit and so they were not able to receive Austudy for me, although they are not very well off. I do not know if everyone knows this but if you are in that predicament then your parents are eligible to keep the social security payment. That stops at 16 but if you are just over the limit and not getting Austudy they can keep giving that to you until you are 18.

ACTING CHAIR—You will have to come and work in our office and start passing this information on to people.

Ms Levings—I thought that would be helpful.

ACTING CHAIR—Thanks very much.

Ms Payne—My mum was on a low wage and she has just lost hours on her job so now she is down to \$120 a week. She has a de facto husband but he does not pay money towards us as in a two-income family arrangement, he only pays \$50 a week for board and for his part of the telephone, electricity and everything. But because she has a de facto we are not allowed to get Austudy for me for next year, if I am still at school, since they say their income is too high. I think that there should be people to look into such matters further and see that he does not give us more money than a normal boarder would.

ACTING CHAIR—We are just about ready to wrap it up so are there any other issues which we have not broached that any of you would like to bring up at this point? It does not matter how obscure they are, we would be happy to hear any comments you would like to make.

Mrs ELSON—As there are no further questions, I just wish you all the best in the future and ask that you accept every experience in life. We were talking about schooling before and not taking anything you learn here on to later life. Just learn something from each day and you never know what your direction is going to be in the future. I would never have believed that I was going to be a member of parliament, it is just one of those things.

I started in a factory and that is why I was asking if anyone had that interest. I started in a factory because there was no alternative and then, each day, you take that as a learning experience. It is not a disadvantage to work anywhere. Once you get into the job process you just move further on. So I wish you all the best in the future.

Mr Warne—I would just like to thank the committee for giving us the opportunity to participate in this forum. I think it has been beneficial for you and for us and not only will it be beneficial to us in the long run but it has given everyone here an idea of the thoughts of everyone around us in the local community. Thank you very much.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you. Can I just summarise the points which I have jotted down. We take everything into account but one of the major issues of concern with you was the numeracy and literacy issues. You felt that you would like to have that grounding continued on through. There was the issue of the perception of employers being adversely affected by a small group of young people, not the majority. The perception of long hair or whatever else is not necessarily the correct one of young people as well. You also believe that there is not sufficient information provided to you on job opportunities in the school and how you go about getting that other than just being streamed through higher education. I know there are a lot of other things but are you happy that they were some of the major factors that we focused on today?

I went to Beenleigh High and when I finished Senior I went and pumped petrol. There are not too many jobs pumping petrol these days. I had the problem of being told that I was over qualified and asked why I wanted the job. I simply said that it was because I did not intend to be unemployed. That was the easiest thing for me, to get a job and get started. The best piece of advice, and I know we are not here to give advice

and I do appreciate what you have said, but the easiest way to get work is actually to be in work. No matter where you start, I know from personal experience and from everyone else that we have spoken to, you find the opportunities because you are already there. If there is one little bit of advice, it is that you can get yourself into a job of some kind. I think it is very encouraging that the majority of you have done some work part time which gives you a work history, it does help you. The one comment that has been made by employers right across Australia is they do look to people that have worked at McDonald's and other fast food chains because they say that if they have been there for twelve months, and I think this would apply to most jobs, if you have been there for 12 months on a part-time basis at least you understand what they see is required by an employer.

We found today very stimulating and extremely interesting. We have taken a lot of evidence and none of it has been as good as what we have received from you. We are definitely going to go to other schools now throughout Australia. As one of your teachers said and a few of you pointed out, a lot of you are the top academic achievers or in the top bunch within your schools. We also want to speak to those who perhaps have no idea where they are going and are not interested in going on to higher education to gain from them their perceptions. As I said to one of your teachers earlier, perception is actually reality because if you perceive things, that is the way it is, and we have to ensure that you as students are given the best opportunity in what is a very tough market.

We will be bringing in this report in May or June of next year and we will certainly get it back to the schools here, all four schools that have participated. We thank you very much for your time today, your honesty and your frankness. Be aware that it is not just a talkfest, we are taking this back and we will be making hard recommendations to government. Even though the education system is based in each of the states, I am sure that they will also want to take up some of the information that we have had here.

All the very best for the end of this school year, and for those have got more school years to come, or whatever you choose to do, I hope that it is fruitful for you. Thank you very much, students and teachers, and thank you very much Caboolture High School, I should add, for having us here today. We do appreciate that.

Resolved (on motion by Mrs Elson):

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

Committee adjourned at 12.23 p.m.