HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Forum

Reference: Factors influencing the employment of young people

KALGOORLIE

Thursday, 1 May 1997

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

CANBERRA

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Members

Mr Charles (Chair)

Mr Peter Baldwin	Mrs Gash
Mr Barresi	Mr Marek
Mr Bradford	Mr Mossfield
Mr Brough	Mr Neville
Mr Dargavel	Mr Pyne
Mrs Elson	Mr Sawford
Mr Martin Ferguson	

Matter referred for inquiry into and report on:

Factors influencing the employment of young people.

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FORUM

Factors influencing the employment of young people

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Present

Mr Charles (Chair)

Mr Barresi Mr Mossfield

The forum met at 9.09 a.m.

Mr Charles took the chair.

Eastern Goldfields Senior High School

Gavin Atkinson
Matthew Barclay
Julie Brewster
Chester Clifford
Sky Croeser
Riahna Foxon
Ryan Huxtable
Corianne Knop
Sarah Ladiges
Adele Leask
Ben Murphy
Lorenzo Pacitti
Jodie Richardson
Claire Roberts
Marko Savic
Linda Sharpless
Grant Smith

Teacher: Sharynne Tonkin

Kambalda Senior High School

Sumarti Amirell
Suharti Arab
Kristy Bland
Asti Poole
Alissa Schwabe

Teacher: Debbie Ralston

CHAIR—Welcome. This is a school forum. While it looks a bit formal, our colleagues from Hansard are here to record what we say and to then transcribe it into written word so that we can have recollection of what we learnt at this session. Don't let that put you off. They have a job to do like everybody else.

We are not the government. We are a committee of parliamentarians, members of the House of Representatives. We report to the House of Representatives. When we finish our inquiry, which will be at the end of June, we will write a report and we will make recommendations. We hope that those will be accepted but it is then up to the minister to respond to our report.

We are an all-party committee, which means we reflect the views across the political spectrum. If you have ever watched question time, you will have seen how combative it is, but in these committees we all work well together. This inquiry is about trying to figure out how to make you more employable and how to encourage employers to make more jobs available for you when you finish at least the first part of your formal education.

The purpose of this inquiry is to consult widely and produce recommendations for government action that will help promote the employment prospects of our youth. The committee has conducted similar school forums in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and other parts of Western Australia.

Students and members of the committee have agreed that the forums are a valuable opportunity to share concerns and express views about this important issue. This school forum is one of a series with students in Darwin, Kununurra, Broome, Carnarvon and Kalgoorlie. The committee considers the school forums to be an important part of the inquiry process.

So far the committee has received over 100 submissions and conducted public hearings in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart, Alice Springs, Darwin and several regional centres in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. For the most part, the evidence collected has come through employers and government and non-government agencies. Through this school forum all of you will have the opportunity to voice your views and your opinions on this very important matter.

The agenda and issues for discussion have been sent to you and you have had prior opportunity to study the issues. Some of the issues that 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 wish to discuss.

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 your views on the matters under discussion. The first thing we would like to talk about is the education system. You are in it so you should have some idea of whether you think it is or is not preparing you for the future. If your teachers are here, don't let them intimidate you. We want to hear what you think and not what you think they want you to think.

We have heard from students around Australia, in some places more than others, that sometimes parents and teachers emphasise university as being the only option. They give indications that if you do not plan to go to university and get a degree there is not going to be much out there for you. It has been suggested to us by some students that schools basically say, 'A university education or the dole; here is how you fill out the dole form.' They did not think that that was very appropriate and we would interested in what you think about that.

One of the things that we have learned is that, over the last 20 years, as the education system itself has changed, as the world of work has changed very dramatically, young people seem to have less of an understanding of what careers there are around the country, how to get there, what career paths there are and what preparation and what skill acquisition they need in order to get into a career, if they even knew what careers were available. That is one of the things that we will concentrate on.

We would be very interested to hear your views about whether the school system is preparing you for the world of work, whether you think it is and whether you think you are being given the opportunity to understand and know what jobs you might have, what selection might be available and where you have to go to get that sort of employment. Can somebody tell us what they think about the school system and whether it is helping them to get where they think they might like to go?

JODIE RICHARDSON—I am in year 11 at Eastern Goldfields Senior High School. I do not think school prepares us for the outside world, as in everyday life. It teaches us more of the technical side—you have to know this and this—but whether they teach us that is a different story. In year 10, they give us teachers that come and tell you about different universities you can go to and what you need but I think it is told a bit too late. It would have been better to have been told a bit about it at the start of year 8 and a bit at the start of year 9. By the time you are in year 10, you have to have the grades up to go into the classes that you need. I was down one class and, while I got into the class that I wanted to, I could have done better. It did not really help me as much as it could have. In a way it does and in another way it doesn't.

CHAIR—Did anybody tell you about the careers you could look forward to with a university degree or what other careers were available without one?

JODIE RICHARDSON—Not really. With the grades that I got, they just told me

what I could get into and what university, but it did not really go on from there. It was like you can do this, this and this: choose.

CHAIR—They said you could not be a brain surgeon?

JODIE RICHARDSON—Yes, practically.

MATTHEW BARCLAY—I am in year 10 at Eastern Goldfields Senior High School. When I leave school I want to get into the Defence Force and I feel that it is too hard to get into the classes which they want you to get into. There are only a few students from each year that are chosen for those classes—the highest maths, the highest English and the highest science classes. It is really hard with the classes at the moment to get into the high classes in years 11 and 12 which the Defence Force and the universities want you to get into, to achieve the education standard that they want from you. I feel that the education standard that the school is providing is not getting us up high enough to get into the universities.

CHAIR—Can you expand on that a little?

MATTHEW BARCLAY—I feel that in year 10 we are not given enough choices for the classes that we want to get into. There are different types of maths and English and science that you need to get into the Defence Force, yet it is hard to get into the classes as there are only a few students. By the time that you have found out from the Defence Force, or wherever you want to go, what the standard is, it is already too late. You may have chosen your classes or you may not have had enough time to act on what you want to get into. So I just feel that we have not got enough choices.

CHAIR—So you think that you need information earlier about careers and about what you may need in order to enter that career?

MATTHEW BARCLAY—Yes, we need the information a lot earlier.

CHAIR—Who else has views on that?

LORENZO PACITTI—I am in year 12 at Eastern Goldfields Senior High School. I would agree with the year 10s who have just spoken but the thing I am finding hard is that this is year 12, and this is my final year, and the actual TE education system is something that is closing doors to me. You come out of year 11, and I did well in year 11, but the pressure was not there. It was like the dry run for year 12, and now this is year 12. Suddenly you have got teachers saying, 'This is it. If you do not do well, then you will have to do it again,' which gives you another year away from the work force, which is valuable because the younger you are the better able you are to get a job because an employer can mould you to what they want you to be, and the TE system is based upon your school moderation.

For example, my sister went through last year and her friend went to a private school and for the private school, because they only accept the really good students, their moderation is a lot more favourable whereas Eastern Goldfields moderation gets slightly dragged down. I think it is unfair how your intelligence or how well you do is linked to your group as well, and it can work in some ways favourably but in some ways it is a bit unfair. This is my last year and I want it to be fair if I am intelligent enough to get into my course, but because of the way the system is structured I could be denied doing what I want to do because it is the way it is. I think that could be changed a bit.

CHAIR—Do you know what you want to do?

LORENZO PACITTI—I would like to get into law. It is a high score, like 400 or whatever, and I am probably capable of getting that score, but there is also the exams as well. It is all based on 60 per cent of your exams. If you have a bad day, that is it, even though the intelligence is there. I am not boasting, but I think I have got it.

CHAIR—Then you do not want to have a bad day, do you?

LORENZO PACITTI—That is what I am saying. That is something they should tell you as well. Another thing, teachers always say, 'This is your final year,' but if you think about it, if I do not want to get into law, they really make it out as though it is a lot worse. I could go into something smaller and switch over if my grades are good in uni. The pressure is what I am feeling this year, which was not there before, and it is having an effect. Every time I get a bad mark I go, 'Oh no, that is it, I am finished.'

CHAIR—Do your teachers or your career adviser give you any alternatives? Do they tell you what you might do that might interest you other than the law?

LORENZO PACITTI—I really could not say. I have not had an open discussion about what I am going to do at university with the teachers. I have not really talked to someone about it. It is just the overall thing.

CHAIR—What do you think about that? Do you think you should have options? Do you think you should know what is available?

LORENZO PACITTI—I think there should be safety nets.

CHAIR—Did anybody tell you what it is like to work at the mines?

LORENZO PACITTI—My dad does, every night, and that is enough.

CHAIR—Does anybody in school ever tell you what it is like at the mines, what careers there are?

LORENZO PACITTI—Yes. Uni is not the only option here. You do not have to be a uni person to have a good job and all that, but that is what I want to do, and I really think that is what I should do. It is what I feel I want to do.

CHAIR—Good on you. Who is next? The rest of you must have views.

SKY CROESER—Every year more and more options are getting cut off to us because you have got to have prerequisites, and by the time you get career counselling a lot of the options might have already been cut off; so we really do get the career counselling too late.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What employment opportunities are there at the local level for young people leaving school? For example, what positions have the people who left school last year taken up? Do you know of any?

BEN MURPHY—In Kalgoorlie it is not so necessary to go to university because there are a lot of jobs in trade, probably more industry based. There are plenty of jobs for those with university training, but if you do not do well at school there are always other options in Kalgoorlie. I don't not about other towns.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Would a lot of young people that leave school take on apprenticeships in the town?

BEN MURPHY—Yes, about 50 per cent do. After year 10, when school is not compulsory, a lot of students leave to get apprenticeships, et cetera, because that is what suits them best.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What do people think about apprenticeships generally? Do you think that they are a good career opportunity? Out of interest, a number of people on this committee started their careers as apprentices in various trades. That might give you an indication that you can move from apprenticeships into other fields of occupation, if you are interested.

CHAIR—How many of you intend to go to university—the whole class? Could those of you who do not intend to go to university tell us what you think you would like to do and what help the school gives you?

SUMARTI AMIRELL—I am in year 12 and I want to be a flight attendant. To be that, you do not need any particular TE score but you have to finish year 12.

CHAIR—What encouraged you to turn in that direction?

SUMARTI AMIRELL—I have not been overseas, but I have been on a plane and I would like to go around the world. As a flight attendant, you can go around the world

for free, so you might as well take the opportunity.

CHAIR—And get paid for it, too!

SUMARTI AMIRELL—Yes.

SUHARTI ARAB—I am in year 12. At the moment, I am doing TE subjects at Kambalda Senior High School. I am not sure what I am going to do next year, but I do not plan on going to university. I suppose I am doing pretty well at school but I am not planning to do anything yet.

CHAIR—Does the school give you plenty of vocational options?

SUHARTI ARAB—Yes. At the moment, years 11 and 12 have the option of doing work experience for the whole year; and I am doing that at the moment. I am going to the *Kalgoorlie Miner* office on Tuesdays as an advertising account rep.

CHAIR—Do you enjoy that?

SUHARTI ARAB—Yes, it is all right.

RYAN HUXTABLE—I do not want to go to university, because I do not think I am smart enough and I hate studying. I want to get an apprenticeship and I am doing the Instep course at Eastern Goldfields Senior High School. I believe that is helping me in a lot of ways to get experience in the work force. Hopefully, at the end of the year, I may be able to get something, having gained that experience.

CHAIR—Who are you working with through Instep?

RYAN HUXTABLE—I found out yesterday that I will be with Goldfields Toyota. I organised that myself and, hopefully, I will have an apprenticeship there which will start in three or four months. I thought that I might as well do this in case that does not come off and there might be more things that I could do from it.

CHAIR—Do you want to be a mechanic?

RYAN HUXTABLE—Yes.

CHAIR—Good on you!

GRANT SMITH—I am in year 12 and I did the year 11 vocational program last year. Along with school, I think that program prepares us well for getting jobs.

CHAIR—Is the Instep program available in the three schools in this area?

SUMARTI AMIRELL—There is a vocational course at Kambalda Senior High School. Last year, I did a vocational course in hospitality and tourism. Every Tuesday we had work experience. I was situated in a travel agency and that did not really help me, but I did not mind doing it anyway. At the moment, I am at the Mercure Hotel and that is helping me heaps because, to be a flight attendant, you have to have worked in the hospitality area for two or three years. If I wanted to be a waitress in a few years, maybe the employers might employ me because I have got experience in the hospitality area.

CHESTER CLIFFORD—I am part of the Instep program, as Ryan is. We went to a two-day induction yesterday and Tuesday. I reckon it helps us to get good apprenticeships. It gives us experience with the work force. I am hoping to be a master builder at the moment. It helps us because we can go out and work with prospective employers and, hopefully, get an apprenticeship. We can see what it is like. We do not know much about it, so what we do now is go out and get experience. They can teach us what it is like; show us what a bit of hard work is like. But, for the other people that want to go to TEE and university, they can carry on and they will get what they want to do after their TEE exams, so they know what they are doing. They just follow on.

CORIANNE KNOP—I think the Instep program is good, but TEE students do not get enough work experience. I want to be a physiotherapist, but I have only been on one work experience program. Other than that, I have not done any work experience. If I do not get the marks to get into physiotherapy, I do not know what else I want to do because I have not had the experience.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Have any of you got part-time jobs? Would you like to tell us something about the part-time jobs that you have?

ADELE LEASK—I work during the holidays at the YMCA, with the holiday program. That is a really good experience because you work both with children and parents, so you know how to interact and communicate with children and parents, at the different levels.

LORENZO PACITTI—I have a job at K-Mart. It is pretty high stuff! The thing about having a job at K-Mart is that you have still got responsibilities and you are dealing with people, money and all of that. I am just a casual employee, a cashier, that sort of thing. Then, if you think about a real job, you think, 'How can I be prepared for this?' In your first few days at K-Mart you go, 'Oh God, this is terrible.' The first thing is that you are getting told what to do and then you have to do it. Then you think about what it will be like when you have a real job, the job that you want to do. How are you going to be prepared to do that if you have a bit of a struggle getting into K-Mart? When I am trying to be a corporate lawyer, dealing with all these sharks around that are trying to litigate me and everything, how am I supposed to do that if I cannot serve a couple of people in a stupid department store? That is an interesting point.

CHAIR—We had a young man yesterday tell us that he was a checkout chick!

LORENZO PACITTI—I have moved up from the checkout chick status. I am a lay-by chick.

CHAIR—Well done. Who else has a part-time job?

CORIANNE KNOP—What would you like me to say about it?

CHAIR—Just tell us what it is and what you do.

CORIANNE KNOP—I work at K-Mart as well. I am on the service desk. I deal with people, with customers. I do not find it too hard.

CHAIR—Do you like it?

CORIANNE KNOP—It is okay. I do it mainly for the money, not the love of the job.

CHAIR—Fair enough. But don't you also think that it will give you experience and help you to show an employer later, when you want a full-time job, that you are willing to work?

CORIANNE KNOP—Yes, I think of that side as well. It will look good on my resume that I have stayed there for a while and got experience.

CHAIR—Are there plenty of part-time jobs in Kalgoorlie? I see your general reaction is yes. Has anybody tried to get a job and been unable to find a job? Nobody. How about your friends? Have any of your friends or colleagues been unable to find work, if they wanted to work?

CORIANNE KNOP—One of my friends left last year. She is working at Red Rooster now, but she wants to get another job as a secretary or something, and she is finding that she hasn't got the training or the experience to do anything like that. She will have to go either to college or to TAFE to do something else and to get the experience.

Mr BARRESI—What colleges or TAFEs are available in Kalgoorlie? Most of you said that you want to go on to university. I imagine that means going on to Perth or to one of the other cities. What about non-university options? What is available here in Kalgoorlie? You've got a TAFE college.

CORIANNE KNOP—The School of Mines.

Mr BARRESI—So it is fairly limited in terms of post-secondary education?

CORIANNE KNOP—Yes.

CHAIR—Back on to part-time jobs, have any of you got friends or do any of you know of somebody who has left school early or who finished year 12 and did not go to university? Did they just leave school and go on the dole and not find jobs? Or is there no unemployment in Kalgoorlie?

JODIE RICHARDSON—You have to look in the right places. My friend did work experience last year and she got a job through that at one of the banks. In Kalgoorlie, you have to know people. If you don't know the right people, you don't get a job or a serious job. It's a bit of a worry, because I do have another friend who's looked for a job but I don't think has enough enthusiasm, and she is on the dole, and she laughs about it. I think it is sad because she needs a job and she can't stay on the dole. But, yes, you have to look in the right places, otherwise you just don't get a job. It is as simple as that.

CHAIR—Do most people stay on to the end of year 12 here or do a lot of kids leave early?

ASTI POOLE—I am not from Kambalda or Kalgoorlie; I am from Queensland. When I came to Kambalda or to Kalgoorlie I found a lot of year 10s were leaving after year 10 and going into trades, apprenticeships and stuff like that. I find it very male dominated. Because it is a mining town, you think that all the guys are miners. I don't think there's much chance for females in a town like this. There should go to the cities or something. I think it is very male dominated and the males have a bigger chance here than the females.

CHAIR—You do not want to be a miner.

ASTI POOLE—I wouldn't mind it, but I guess it wouldn't look too good a female being a miner.

CHAIR—Why not?

ASTI POOLE—Strengthability, I think.

CHAIR—Pardon.

ASTI POOLE—Strength.

CHAIR—The best builder's labourer I ever had was a female, and probably one of the best carpenters.

Mr BARRESI—But, in saying that, there are various occupations in the mining

industry.

ASTI POOLE—Sure, there are a lot of females doing a lot of male jobs now in the mining industry—truck driving and stuff like that. I don't know, I just always thought of miners having to lift big, heavy things.

Mr BARRESI—Are you aware of all the options within the mining industry? I would be surprised if you are not. You must be aware of all the various occupations and positions that are available in the mining industry. It is not all truck driving and digging rocks out by hand, is it?

ASTI POOLE—What is there—secretarial jobs? What else? Store labouring and all those sorts of jobs, I don't know.

Mr BARRESI—Geology, engineering, research, drafting.

ASTI POOLE—Okay.

CHAIR—Shall we give you a course on career options?

ASTI POOLE—Okay. It shows how much I know.

JODIE RICHARDSON—It is not so much that girls cannot get a job. It is more that they are not offered the jobs in mines. They are not offered apprenticeships and they are not offered different positions in the mines. It is more the males that do it because they think that males can do a better job. If a woman wanted to get the job and she hunted for it, yes, she would get it, but they are not offered it.

Mr BARRESI—Are there any females enrolled at the School of Mines? Are you aware of any? Have you friends that have gone on to the School of Mines?

LORENZO PACITTI—I know a girl who went on to do a mining engineering course at the School of Mines. She wanted to do civil engineering, but she never got the score. She did not really want to leave Kalgoorlie, so she just stayed on here and did a mining engineering course.

It is more like a stereotype. Your dad would say, 'Oh, I do not care. You can just work at the mines for $12 casual rates and you just work overtime, overtime, overtime.' But you would not see a girl go out and get a job in the mines and that is it. A boy would go out, get his V8, get a job in the mines and that is it—just earn money. It is not that they can't or they won't or no-one will offer them the job. It is just not something someone would think about. It is more a male job. It's not that I'm against equality or anything.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Do you have career days at school where local employers or industries come into the school and speak to you and tell you about what jobs are available? Could you tell us of some of those experiences?

ADELE LEASK—I think that every two years we get a careers night at the Town Hall to hear about different careers such as the Army and nursing.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Who organises that?

ADELE LEASK—I think the YEO, the youth education officer, at the school organises it. I think it is the same with JPC, John Paul College.

Mr BARRESI—Have all of you been to these career nights?

STUDENTS—Yes.

Mr BARRESI—How do you find them? Could you give us some of your views on whether it is an effective way of letting you know what jobs are available. We would like to get a view of how effective you feel those career nights are.

ADELE LEASK—They are good, because we can speak to the universities as well as all the different places. The college is there too, so we can learn about courses we can do if we do not want to go to university.

CHAIR—Why do we not change the topic just a little bit. Lots of employers have told us that young people today seem ill prepared for the workplace because of poor literacy skills, poor grammar, shocking spelling and even poor ability to add, subtract, multiply and divide despite the fact that you are taking complex maths in years 11 and 12. What are your views about that? Has the school system prepared you adequately? Have you got friends whose literacy is poor and will hold them back in finding a job or getting a career?

ADELE LEASK—A few of my friends have trouble with reading and writing skills, because it is not reiterated when we come into high school. In primary school we did spelling tests and we learnt the new words and how to spell them, but then when we got into high school I admit I couldn't do it. It took me half an hour to figure out how to spell 'aloud'. I knew 'allowed', but not the other one—'aloud'. I spent half an hour trying to figure that one out.

The maths that we learn we cannot relate to anything. We learn algebra, but we cannot exactly relate it to adding up money or adding up the bills or anything at home.

CHAIR—Do you still do your times tables?

ADELE LEASK—Yes, I can still do them, but other people I know can't do them

at all and have to use a calculator whereas my parents cannot use a calculator but they can add and subtract better than some people I know who are my age.

MATTHEW BARCLAY—I agree with the last speaker. They are teaching us stuff which we cannot apply in the work force. We are being taught, as she said, algebra and different ways of doing things in science, but we cannot relate it to the work force. We need to be taught stuff that we can use in everyday life because people just have not been taught that. We have people in my maths class who do not understand a thing the teacher is saying. They cannot even do their times tables and they are getting everything wrong, and yet the teachers are not doing anything about it.

When it comes to exams they fail, yet the teachers do not do anything about it then. The attitude to failure is just, 'Okay, fine, I am just not going to get a job.' Then they leave school and look for an apprenticeship because they think it is just going to come as easy as that, but it does not. They are ill prepared. They don't know how to spell half the time. They can't do their times tables. They are failing all their tests. There is no way to end it.

JODIE RICHARDSON—Matthew makes it sound really dramatic. We get taught all the technical stuff. We are not revising the simple stuff any more and we are using calculators all the time. We are taught all the technical stuff and that is our problem. We are forgetting all the simple stuff. Teachers are drumming all the technical stuff in and we are thinking, 'What is happening?' and our brain is getting all confused.

CHESTER CLIFFORD—I was born in Victoria, and from year 1 I was taught straightaway to write running writing, and then I came over to Western Australia and it is a lot different for me, it is a lot harder. I do my writing in my file at school, and my Dad goes off his head and says, 'How come you are not doing it like I write?' It is harder in Western Australia. They do not teach you to write properly. My writing used to flow perfectly, but now it is all over the place. I cannot do it.

I am not putting the teachers down in Western Australia, but education standards are different. A lot of my friends find it hard. Every now and then I find it hard, but most of my friends sit there and think and think and sit for an hour and still do not get it. The teachers do not give them help. I go up to the teacher and ask for help and get it straightaway. Sometimes it is different. Some people are shy, they do not come up and ask, but if you go and ask you learn. If you do not ask, then tough luck, you do not get a job in the work force.

JULIE BREWSTER—Are these employers that are phoning younger kids trying to find a job the people that employ the year 10 leavers or are they the people who employ the people coming from university?

CHAIR—The full range.

JULIE BREWSTER—A lot of my friends find themselves not passing maths and not liking English. They leave at year 10 because they are not smart enough to go to years 11 and 12 and so they go out and find a job.

CLAIRE ROBERTS—I find that a lot of the time the problem is that the teachers have a time line to stick to. So with maths they have to get this done in week 2, so they rush through it and, even if the kids do not understand, they go on to the next subject so that they get the whole unit crammed in. If in the second week you need the information that you learnt in the first week, but you do not understand that, then a lot of the time the kids think, 'Oh well, I do not understand that, I must be dumb, I will just go down a class.' It is left at that and the teachers do not really do anything about that.

In English, a lot of the time you have got very different styles of teaching. I had one teacher who taught us how to write essays, do letters and stuff, and now with the teacher I have got we are doing picture books. You really need a set thing that says that you have to do it this way so that everybody is on an equal level.

MATTHEW BARCLAY—Nowadays, if one person in the class understands it, it has to be that that is the sign for the teacher to go on to the next thing. The teachers are sticking to their programs and they are not attending to other people's needs in the class, I do not think. With maths, for instance—and this keeps popping up—it is very hard to understand some of the things, like the equations that we have got to do.

Last year the teacher in our class emphasised the point that if we did not get it that is too bad. We were being left behind because we had to make the grade to get into the top classes for next year, and if we wanted to get into university—tough. That was his approach to it all. He is not teaching here any more. He was making out that it was our fault that we did not learn it. He was saying that if we did not learn it in time that was too bad and we were not going to get a job. That is the general opinion of most of the teachers here: if we cannot learn it in time, that is too bad. It seems that is what it is like.

SKY CROESER—I think that we could learn more if they cut out some of the less relevant stuff in maths because we will not use a lot of it. Maybe a few people who go on to specialised careers in maths and science and stuff like that will use it. If they cut out all of the not so important stuff, then they could focus more on getting everybody to learn it.

CHAIR—When you have to write papers and hand in assignments, do your teachers correct your grammar and your spelling?

SKY CROESER—Yes.

CHAIR—Do they mark it when it is wrong?

SKY CROESER—Yes.

CHAIR—That is very good. There are heaps of places where they do not. I guess you are lucky.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I would like to ask a question about interviewing skills. How important do you feel interviewing skills are when you apply for a position? Are you given any experience or advice as to how to present yourself, how to write your resumes, how to present yourself when you go for an interview and what things to say? Are you given any advice in that area?

ADELE LEASK—We are given a chance in year 10 in vocational education, which is compulsory and where we do our work experience. We are taught how we are supposed to present ourselves and what sort of clothing we should wear. But then when you get into the class most of the kids treat it as a joke and they do not really want to be there. They say that vocational education is a vegie class, or they do not do any work because they don't get a grade for it, and they do not really care whether anyone else wants to learn. But when they get into year 11 and 12 I think they do care. They learn skills and they practice them properly. So the people who don't do the vocational course in year 11 and 12 do not really have the interviewing skills to be able to present themselves properly at interviews.

CORIANNE KNOP—I agree. Once again in TEE, we miss out because we do not get the vocational education that vocation students do.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Do you have public speaking and debating in your school?

CORIANNE KNOP—No.

Mr MOSSFIELD—That is surprising.

RYAN HUXTABLE—Last year at the end of year 10 I thought that I would leave school and go out and get a job. I applied for a couple of jobs and got a couple of interviews. I did not know what interviews were all about. I did not know what to wear—jeans and t-shirt or something. I walked in, I was sitting there and I did not know what to do. I was very nervous. I did not get the jobs.

In the first couple of weeks of the vocation course, we have been taught how to write our resumes properly and what to do in the interview. I have had a couple of interviews to get into Instep and now I feel a lot better when I go to an interview. I know how to act. So Instep has done a lot for me in that way, so I know what I am doing.

Mr MOSSFIELD—That is good.

Mr BARRESI—Is the careers counsellor at the school available to you, though, if you wanted to have some resume in interviewing skills on a one to one basis? Is that counsellor available for you?

RYAN HUXTABLE—Yes, he is. At the end of the year when I found out that I had not got a few jobs, I went and saw a careers counsellor. I went up and asked him a few questions and he helped me a lot. He gave me a book about how to write resumes and that. It was the last couple of days of school, so he did not really have much time to work with me. He gave me books and a few things to read over the holidays. So when I came back to school at the start of this year—I had applied for a few more jobs over the holidays—I had my resume practically fully done and everything was pretty good because I had gone and asked him about what options I had. So we do have the facilities here to ask whomever we want, really.

LINDA SHARPLESS—Last year we did not have vocational education and I learnt more from a social studies teacher that I had than I have during vocational education this year. We watch videos and things, but it is all about stuff that we already know. They interview people and they say that you really have to apply yourself in school, and stuff. We already know all that. It is up to the person themselves whether or not they try.

Mr BARRESI—What else would you like to know then?

LINDA SHARPLESS—I think that we should be given the choice to take the courses that we need. Most of the time when you get into year 10 you decide what you want to do and then you find out that you cannot take the course because you need a prerequisite which was the course that you needed to take last year—and you cannot do it because it is too late.

MATTHEW BARCLAY—I find that the vocational education program is just too brief. There are not enough opportunities around Kalgoorlie so people think that, because they are getting the jobs around Kalgoorlie to do their work experience, that is all there is and that there are no other jobs for them. If they do really badly at work experience, they seem to think, 'Oh, I can't make it at work experience, so how can I make it in the real world?' They take that sort of approach to jobs. The vocational education program is really stereotypical. It is telling girls to get secretarial jobs and teaching—that is what it seems like—and males to all be miners, to leave school at year 10 and become apprentices. That is what our class seems to be putting out. The males in our class think that they are going to be cabinetmakers, or something, when they all leave school and that all the girls are going to be teachers. They think that vocational education is all about going out and getting work experience for that, and that there are no other opportunities.

SKY CROESER—By the time we get career counselling in year 10, half of the school has already done vocational education. By the time we have got career counselling

and found out what sort of stuff we can do, it is a bit too late if we want to get experience.

Mr BARRESI—So you should move it to year 9, or year 8?

SKY CROESER—At least before we do the work experience.

CLAIRE ROBERTS—I think that one of the problems with the vocational education program is that the teachers that are doing it are like other teachers, such as physical education and social studies teachers. They do not really know what is going on at all. I have had to find stuff in our job guide for my teacher this year because she does not know where it is. I think that they should do training or be briefed on it before they actually come in to teach us. It is just like the blind leading the blind. They do not really know you. They cannot control the class a lot of the time and the students are all bored because they are not doing much.

ALISSA SCHWABE—With these interviews, I am doing structure work based learning at the hospital. When I went to the interview at the hospital I felt like a right idiot because I did not know what I was talking about. We do not get any information. All we had were examples of resumes and we just typed them up ourselves. We were told to wear formal clothes—no jeans and stuff like that—but we did not get any testing and were not told what to say. I kept saying 'um' all the time, which doesn't come across very well, so I thought we should have had some basic testing on what we should have said.

Mr BARRESI—Perhaps you could be put through a mini-interview.

ALISSA SCHWABE—Yes.

LINDA SHARPLESS—I am in year 10. I have found that we are not given choices. We decide what we want to do and we have to find out about that thing. We are not told what we could go on to do with our marks. We have chosen a certain job and we have to find out about that by ourselves in vocational education and all that. We are not told what we can do with our marks and that kind of thing. If you want to do something, you have to aim to get that. We are not given other choices besides what we have decided we want to do.

CHAIR—Do you think aptitude testing might be helpful?

LINDA SHARPLESS—I don't even know what that is.

CHAIR—A psychologist looks at the test answers and says, 'You have no interest in being a brain surgeon and, because of the way you answered the questions or played with the shapes or whatever, you probably wouldn't be very capable of doing that, but you might make a good nurse.'

LINDA SHARPLESS—I am not too sure, actually. I think it is whatever that person feels they would like to do. If they want to do it then maybe they can. They will never know.

Mr BARRESI—Can I just say, in terms of being told 'These are your marks and that is all you can do', to some extent, if that took place, that could be just as shattering, because then it does not open up other opportunities. There are ways of getting around your marks. Take for example the young lad here who wants to do law: if your marks are not good enough to do law straight off, there are other options such as getting into a commerce degree, perhaps, and getting top marks in your first year and then transferring across to the law faculty.

There are ways to get around having inferior marks at school by then having better marks when you finally get to university. You should know about those sorts of options as well. If you cannot get into a science course at university, I know students who become science teachers at a teachers college. They do very well at it, and then they transfer across to a science degree at a university. Whether or not that is available here in Perth I do not know. You do not want to be too limited by saying that, because you have only got a hard score of 300, you now cannot do the course you want.

LORENZO PACITTI—I am in year 12. I was never told that I could go for a lower degree and then switch over. I actually found that out only because my sister was going through all the relevant materials from her university. It was never actually told to us in vocational education or anything. I thought that, if you missed the TE, that was it and you would have to go for something else; you were finished. I was not even aware you could swap universities or that, if you wanted to go away from Murdoch, if your marks were good enough you could go.

I do not want to sound harsh but, when I was going through, vocational education was pathetic really. You would say, 'Great! I've got voc ed: veg out for 62 minutes of just sitting back.' In the classroom, you had to sit on a stool and you were given a book to read through to find out what do you wanted to do. Then they would give you a copy of a resume and you would go to a computer, type it up and throw it in your bag after you had finished, and that would be it.

Vocational education was designed for year 10 people leaving school; they were catered for. The teachers would try and do something, but the kids were not interested. You really cannot get a teacher to go head over heels when all the kids are sitting there chatting and saying, 'This is boring.' Later on, you realise that, if you had listened, you could have got somewhere. If it is to get better, you really need the staff to make it a bit more serious instead of just one period a week in a room with a teacher from some other subject. Make it a proper subject, even, instead of a fill-in, like a sports period or something.

Mr BARRESI—Do the universities in Perth offer summer holiday camps for students at the end of year 11 to go there for a couple of weeks and have a look around? How many of you have taken the opportunity to do that?

LORENZO PACITTI—My science teacher told me about a science camp, but I am not going to go and do it, though.

JODIE RICHARDSON—It costs money as well. It costs too much money for some people to go.

CLAIRE ROBERTS—Just going back to the grades thing, I think a lot of the time the problem is that we are not told what we are capable of doing. Say you are a C or a B student, a lot of the time people have a set course in their mind from their parents or from other teachers who say, 'This is the range that you can do.' But a vocational education teacher should sit down and say, 'With your grades you can do this, but you can improve this and these are the other paths you can take.' They do not really do that. They just say, 'You can do this, this and this.' That is it. They do not give you other options to explore.

MARCO SAVIC—I am in year 11. I do not know what to expect when I go to uni. I do not know what the studying is like and I have not been told. I do not know what the courses are like, what you actually study, and all those sorts of things. In vocational education, we did not learn anything about that; we just did resumes and interviews for if you were going to leave school in grade 10. As someone mentioned before, it does not really say what happens at uni, so I am just going to uni sort of blind.

Mr MOSSFIELD—How many career advisers are there in this school—people who are there specifically to advise you on careers, what subjects to take and what jobs are available? If there is no particular teacher in this school who is a career adviser, do you get your advice from all the teachers?

SHARYNNE TONKIN—I am a youth education officer at Eastern Goldfields Senior High School. I am it. But part of my job has been taken away and given to the career and vocational education coordinator who runs the Instep program and all the work experience. Previously it was the role of the youth education officer who organised all the career expos, and so on, and the work experience in lower school, but had absolutely nothing to do with the vocational education programs in the school. That has been very ad hoc here over the years and been taken on by different departments. If there happened to be a slack timetable for a staff member, they were the lucky ones who happened to do the vocational education.

In year 10 we have a team of 10 or 11 counsellors who are specially trained to advise year 10s as to where they can go, either post-year 10 at school or in the work force. It has not been taken very seriously at this school in particular. It has been very ad

hoc. Those teachers who are teaching the subjects are not trained to teach them in most cases, and the groupings of the students are such that they really do not want to be there and they do not listen anyway.

DEBBIE RALSTON—I have just finished university and this is my first year of teaching. I have been given the vocational education program for the year 10s. I admit that I have no idea, so it is like one of the kids said: the blind leading the blind.

CHAIR—I wrote that down.

DEBBIE RALSTON—That is what it is. Here I am and I am supposed to be able to teach it. I have gone straight through school and straight through uni, I had none of that given to me and now I have to go and give it to the kids. I am finding that really tough.

CHAIR—So you would not know what careers are available in the mines?

DEBBIE RALSTON—No; I am from Perth. I have to learn all that myself before I can help the kids. I do not think that is fair.

ASTI POOLE—I find that our future depends on our grades and our capacity, as in the level of knowledge, but I reckon that the work force also depends on hands-on experience. Sometimes people are much better at showing people how they do it—not the way they think they should do it. I am not sure if you understand.

CHAIR—You are talking about on-the-job training.

ASTI POOLE—Yes, on-the-job training. I think that is a lot better than trying to show your brain capacity. You can prove yourself in another way, other than how smart you are.

MATTHEW BARCLAY—Even if we know what we want to do as a career, the vocational education program does not tell us what courses we should pick in school. Say you want to get into the air force or something like that and you do not have any idea what you need, vocational education does not tell you what you need. They just give you other options and say, 'Are you sure you want to go into the air force? Why don't you go into this. It is a lot easier.' They have no idea what they are talking about. They just tell us, 'Go into this or go into that.' They are not saying, 'These are the courses that you should pick because this is what they want.' They are not organised for that sort of thing. We have not been told what courses we should be doing. We do not have any idea what the courses are.

Mr BARRESI—Does a representative from the universities come to the school during the year and do you have an opportunity to talk to them about careers?

CORIANNE KNOP—Sometimes there are meetings but after school hours.

Mr BARRESI—Those of you who are going to university, have you met with the representative from that university? If you haven't, why haven't you? That is a resource that is available for you.

ADELE LEASK—We have had one this year from UWA. The problem was that the date that they planned to come coincided with the basketball grand finals and the majority of kids who play basketball or sport, who want to go to uni or are interested in that, did not have the opportunity to speak to the people from UWA. We have to call them up and ask them questions about it. They can only come down once a year and it is the only chance we get from that university.

SUMARTI AMIRELL—Going back to the career adviser: last year, the teacher I had for careers in industry was very good. He would ask us what we wanted to be. He said, 'Are there any options you want?' With me, he knew that I very seriously wanted to be a flight attendant and he would look through the newspapers and give me all of the information. I thought that he was pretty good for a career adviser.

BEN MURPHY—I believe that work experience is pretty good but we need more of it. We only get the one opportunity to do work experience. If you go to work experience and you decide that you do not like that job, that is it, you do not have another chance. It is probably not only work experience; we need experience at university, at TAFE colleges and probably in the Defence Force. We need to have the opportunity to experience what it is like in those sorts of areas because we do not know what they would be like. As Mark said, we are going into university not knowing what to expect. We are going into TAFE not knowing what to expect. So experience in those areas would help as well.

JODIE RICHARDSON—Going back to the university thing: when they had the meeting night, I had to work that night so I had to find out everything myself. If I wanted to go to that university, I had to send away for the pamphlets. There is no help for us at all in dealing with universities. We have to find it ourselves. With the vocational education programs, it is just rubbish. I do not even know how to write a resume. It is a waste of time unless they are going to teach us properly.

MARKO SAVIC—Last year, in grade 10, they had a medicine camp at UWA and only 10 kids from the whole of Western Australia were chosen to go down to Perth for that. I was lucky enough to be chosen but I could not go and I have not had another opportunity to go there. I missed out on that and that is it.

ALISSA SCHWABE—We also had a UWA representative at our school but it was during school time. We had a huge number of people—four people—doing TE subjects. It was good because she could give us information on what we wanted to be. We

had a student who does not have a clue on what she wants to be but we all helped her. The representative gave her suggestions on what she could do at uni if she wanted to go to uni. I thought it was good that there was only a small number because we could all have an individual talk with her to find out what we could do.

SKY CROESER—Last year, there was a science camp at UWA but not very many people knew about it. Also, not very many people seemed to be interested. They thought that there would be too much competition to get in so they did not think there was much point in trying.

JODIE RICHARDSON—That science camp cost money and some of us do not have the money to go. You have to have the money.

Mr BARRESI—Distance is a problem; isn't it?

JODIE RICHARDSON—It is a big problem.

CHAIR—Let me change the topic slightly. You seem like a very positive bunch of young ladies and young men. We hear from many employers that too many young people have a very poor attitude towards work. They do not want to work. They do not want to show up on time. They want to leave early. They do not want to follow instructions. They do not want to do what they are told to do. What are your attitudes to that? Do you have any friends who meet that job description?

JODIE RICHARDSON—We do want to work. We want to have the opportunity but we want to learn properly. We want to know how to do things properly. I have a part-time job at Domino's. I started there 2½ years ago as a casual maker. I have moved up the ladder and I am a shift runner at 16 so I run the shift by myself. I like it; I enjoy being boss. We want to have a fair chance at doing it. We want to be trusted. Sure there are some people that do not. I am sure there are some lazy people around. I am also sure that there are lots of people out there who do want to work.

ADELE LEASK—I agree with what Jodie is saying. I started at the YMCA in 1995 and the experience I have had there has led on to another job with them as a coach for gymnastics. I started out with a few other people for the first time. We were all shy and we hardly said a word. Our boss, Sharon, kept talking to us and kept us going. We all started working and we had the opportunity to stay back late at work and we chose to do that. We were also given the responsibility to organise days and what the children were going to do on that day. I have found that I am the only person who started on that day who is still there. Everyone else has dropped out because they thought the kids were too noisy. We get approximately 100 children each holiday program in one room for lunch and they did not like that because they are all loud. The people who dropped out have gone and got jobs at Kmart where it is easier. They can just stand there and do what everyone else tells them to. They had to use their initiative at the other job.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Would any of you like to run your own business? I see that quite a lot of you would. What type of business would you like to be involved in?

JODIE RICHARDSON—I want to go to uni and do medicine and then I want to own my own medical practice.

Mr MOSSFIELD—That is a good ambition to have.

JODIE RICHARDSON—It is a long way off and I have to try really hard but I want to get there.

BEN MURPHY—I want to go to university and do a commerce degree. My father owns a liquor and beverage business wholesaling to the hospitality industry. He supplies all the pubs and clubs in Kalgoorlie. I am looking into owning a business like that.

ASTI POOLE—I can speak Japanese because I have lived in Japan for six months. Since then I have been wanting to get into the tourism industry. I would not mind one day owning a big hotel, or something like that, in Queensland.

CHAIR—Does daddy have lots of money?

ASTI POOLE—I don't know.

MATTHEW BARCLAY—I want to go to the Australian Defence Force Academy and get a degree in aeronautical technology, join the navy and when I come out I want to go into aircraft manufacturing, designing aircraft and building them for military or civil purposes.

Mr BARRESI—In your own business?

MATTHEW BARCLAY—Yes, in my own business. It is going to be pretty big!

Mr BARRESI—Another Howard Hughes coming up.

CHAIR—It's a long way from a checkout-chick to competing with Boeing, I can tell you. We have pretty well exhausted the list of topics that we sent you. When we got together early this morning I recall having some difficulty in getting one of you to stand up and say anything but since then we have had no difficulty whatsoever. You have participated very well.

We have covered the topics that we have wanted to and that other people have talked to us about and that adults have put forward as issues that they think are important. Are there other things that you can think of about employment for young people that we ought to know?

SKY CROESER—I am not sure if this is related to employment: year 10s at my school are a bit concerned—I am not trying to sound racist or anything—about the Aboriginal students who get extra resources. We don't want them to be taken away, but we think that the provision of these resources should be based on the need for them rather than on the race of people they are provided to.

Mr BARRESI—How many Aboriginal kids are in either school? There are none here today.

JODIE RICHARDSON—Ten per cent at Eastern Goldfields.

ALISSA SCHWABE—We have one.

Mr BARRESI—Are there any in year 12?

JODIE RICHARDSON—Yes, there are a couple. I think employees expect too much of us. We are only starting out. We have to be taught; we have to learn. When they say that we are lazy, we do not want to work, it is probably because we do not know. We need to be taught. The only way we are going to get anywhere, the only way we are going to learn, is to be taught.

CHAIR—Fair enough.

ADELE LEASK—I also think that in the lower school the class sizes need to be smaller because in year 8 we go into an English class and there are 30 or 35 kids in there. The teachers do not have enough time to talk to every student. If one student has a problem and it takes up half the lesson the other 25 kids who need help lose out. They do not get the help to finish the work off. This is so especially in maths. When you get into the higher maths you still have 30 kids in the class. The maths teacher is having an extremely hard time trying to help everyone understand what they are doing. It might take a different way to explain it to a different person or heaps of different ways to explain so that they understand it. That is when the kids start failing the tests and exams and the teachers cannot do anything about it. They do not have the time because there are too many to talk to.

SARAH LADIGES—I agree that the class sizes need to be smaller. I have been in classes where there are not enough chairs or desks for the students in the class. Every day we would have to go and get more chairs and desks and things and it takes a lot of time out of learning. It is hard to get on with your work when you are sitting off at some side desk with no chair and there are five other people on the same desk as you. It is hard to concentrate when there is just not enough room in your classroom.

Mr BARRESI—Can I just ask a general question and have a show of hands? How many of you feel fairly confident that next year you will be able to achieve what you are

planning to achieve, whether it be university or a job? How many of you are confident of that? There are some of you who have doubts, but that is good.

CHAIR—A confident bunch of young people. Thank you very much for sharing your views with us. It is an important part of this process. It is all part of the democratic process and—although nothing happens instantly, you understand—hopefully we can make some recommendations that will make a difference, if not in time for you, certainly in time for your younger brothers and sisters and other young people who follow you. We hope to finish the inquiry in June and we will be deliberating on a report in August and will bring it down in September. We will certainly send you a copy of the report and you can read what recommendations came out of this seminar and other ones like it.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Barresi):

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

Forum concluded at 10.27 a.m.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Factors influencing the employment of young people

KALGOORLIE

Thursday, 1 May 1997

Present

Mr Charles (Chair)

Mr Barresi Mr Mossfield

The committee met at 11.04 a.m.

Mr Charles took the chair.

CHAIR—I declare open this public hearing on the inquiry into factors influencing the employment of young people. The purpose of the inquiry is to consult widely and produce recommendations for government action that will help promote the employment prospects of our youth. The committee has received over 100 submissions, and conducted public hearings in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart, Darwin, Alice Springs and several regional centres in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia.

The committee has also conducted school forums, including one in Kalgoorlie today, in which young people discuss their views and opinions with the committee. The committee is now conducting public hearings in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. This meeting is the last of a series in Darwin, Kununurra, Broome, Carnarvon and Kalgoorlie which will give Australians outside the capital cities an opportunity to put their views and their concerns to the committee.

This is a very broad ranging inquiry. Matters raised in submissions so far include: the attitudes of young people; the work ethic of young people and their familiarity with the requirements of the workplace; the adequacy and relevance of the education and training systems; the importance of developing better linkages between schools and the business sector; the need for a more flexible industrial relations system, and the effectiveness and efficiency of government programs to assist young people to find employment. That is not meant to be an exhaustive list of issues the committee will consider, or which might be raised. We are entirely open to the views of everyone who wishes to make an input to the inquiry. We are here to listen, to learn and to help improve the prospects of young Australians.

PATRIZI, Mr Tony Marco, Area Manager, J.R. Engineering Services Pty Ltd, PO Box 1160, Kalgoorlie, Western Australia

CHAIR—Welcome. We are an all-party committee of the parliament. We report to the parliament, not to government, but the government will respond to our recommendations, hopefully positively. Would you like to make a statement about the issues we are here to discuss and, perhaps, some comments on what you heard from the young people today?

Mr Patrizi—I am a person who was born and bred in Kalgoorlie and has gone through the education system in Kalgoorlie and then to university in Perth. Sitting at the back of the audience listening to those young kids talk about prospects of employment, and so forth, and their education system and how they are undecided and are not getting the right information, it certainly brought back memories of when I was going through the same situation back in 1975, 1976 and 1977 before I went on to university. So I can probably say that not much has changed over those years, by the sounds of it.

CHAIR—Is it the education system's responsibility to, in a sense, tell young people what job opportunities there are, what career paths are available, what the world of work is like, or is it, in fact, your responsibility?

Mr Patrizi—I think that it is certainly a mixture of both. I certainly think that it is a big part of the responsibility of the education industry to direct young kids and to inform them about what is out there and what they can and cannot do. I think that they are in a better position than most people, including parents and so forth, to actually inform young kids about what is out there for them. If you look at it from the parents' point of view, if you are a parent who has gone to university, you can certainly inform your kids about what happens at university because you have been there and done that. If you are a parent that has gone through and selected a trade, you could certainly inform your kids about what a trade can do for you. Unfortunately, it might not necessarily be what the students are all about. You might give them an indication of what the university is about, but they might like to do a trade.

From an independent point of view, the education system, certainly, I believe, should bear the brunt of informing young kids when they come through school, with help from the parents, about what is available to them.

CHAIR—If you do not tell the careers advisers or the schools what your industry is all about and what career opportunities there are, how will they learn?

Mr Patrizi—You are talking about business, in general? Is that what you are saying?

CHAIR—And you, as an employer.

Mr Patrizi—Okay. That is a fair comment. But the people who are teaching young people nowadays are grown-ups. They are in industry. They should know—I would think they would know—what industry is about. Whether it is an engineering business, bakers, being a chef or whatever, they meet with people, they talk to people in everyday life and they know what industry is about out there. If they need help in telling students what industry is about, I am sure businesses will come forward and tell them. I do not think it would be very difficult to tell kids what is out there and available.

CHAIR—Is there any real unemployment in Kalgoorlie-Boulder?

Mr Patrizi—There is certainly unemployment in Kalgoorlie. There is real unemployment in Kalgoorlie. As far as our district goes, we are probably fairly well insulated from the rest of Australia. We are insulated with respect to unemployment and business. We are insulated in the sense that we have not had the recession that everyone was supposed to have. We have gone about our business and things have kept going. There has certainly been more opportunity for young people as far as employment goes than there probably is in most other country towns, and probably in a lot of other major cities.

Because that is the case, I do not honestly believe that we should be penalised for it. In saying that, what I mean is that because we have been so insulated over the last number of years, I think there are a lot of people from the cities that say, 'You guys are doing all right, you guys are being insulated'—when I say 'you guys', I mean businesses, students et cetera—'so do not grizzle about what you are getting. Your employment is a bit higher than everyone else's. You guys are doing better than the rest. So go down in the back corner and just stay there.' I do not understand why we should be penalised for that.

CHAIR—I understand that you employ a substantial number of young people here. Can you tell us about what occupations and what stage they are at—apprentices, trainees, et cetera?

Mr Patrizi—We employ about 180-plus people in the Kalgoorlie area directly. Of that, we have got 19 or 20 apprentices at various stages. When I say 19 or 20, I mean we have a couple that are there and then pull out. It is either 19 or 20 at today's date. They are at their various stages of being fitters and turners, or boilermaker welders, or hydraulic fitters—those sorts of mechanical type trades—whether they be in year 1, year 2, year 3 or year 4.

Mr BARRESI—How many would you take on each year?

Mr Patrizi—We take on roughly six to seven every year.

Mr BARRESI—How many of those see it right through to the end?

Mr Patrizi—Out of the seven, we probably end up with four that get through.

Mr BARRESI—Do you have any idea of why the other three pull out?

Mr Patrizi—The main reason the kids pull out is because when they get in there they say, 'This is not for me. I think I should try something else.'

Mr BARRESI—Why?

Mr Patrizi—Because they have made the wrong choice.

Mr BARRESI—So it is purely not fitting in with the job?

Mr Patrizi—Normally, they have made the wrong choice—they want to go from being a boilermaker to trying the building trade or the electrical trade. It is not pulling out, as in not doing another job, but usually pulling out to try another trade because the trade they have selected is probably not one that suits them.

Mr BARRESI—We have heard occasionally from various witnesses that one of the reasons why kids pull out or do not start to begin with is the length of time—the four-year commitment. Four years is a long time for some of them to see through and they cannot see the benefit at the end of the day. Are you experiencing that with those who pull out?

Mr Patrizi—I do not think that is an issue. What you have got to remember is that the kids are getting paid to do it. It is not as though they have got a four-year commitment and they are doing it off their own bat—they are getting paid to do it. We do not have any troubles with kids pulling out because it is a four-year commitment. That issue never really comes up—not with us, anyway.

CHAIR—There is a group training company in Kalgoorlie, isn't there?

Mr Patrizi—Yes.

CHAIR—Do you use them?

Mr Patrizi—Yes, we did at the start because it was a simpler way of doing it. We could take their apprentices on and if they did not like it we could give them back. It was simple for us. We are a fairly sizeable operation. We have got the facilities in manpower, as such, to look after our own people. That is what we basically do now.

CHAIR—The TAFE college here is good?

Mr Patrizi—I have not had a lot of experience with the TAFE college. Probably the only thing I can say is that they are as good as they are allowed to be. We get back to the situation again that we are in Kalgoorlie, 'You guys are in Kalgoorlie; look after yourselves. You guys are going well up there.' For instance, we were in a Chamber of Commerce meeting last year or the year before and the government put some scheme together via the chamber that they would commit X millions of dollars to retraining existing tradespeople. Everyone in this area is short of tradespeople; we just cannot get enough tradespeople. Basically the general consensus from business in Kalgoorlie was, 'Hang on, we are not interested in retraining tradespeople. Tradespeople are busy doing what they are doing and if you think you can retrain a fitter to be an electrician in three or four weeks, why do we have a four-year apprenticeship?' That is just not how it should be. They said, 'Oh no, we can retrain your tradespeople and do this and do that,' but really the bottom line was not there.

The college was there as well. We had had a pre-apprenticeship course at the college for a number of years prior to that. The kids out of school were doing their 12-month pre-apprenticeship course and then joining us and other companies in Kalgoorlie. They got a year knocked off their trade and came into the system with some basic knowledge. The guy from the college put his hand up and said, 'Just to let you all know, that has been knocked on the head because there are no funds.' The chamber said 'Here is this $2.5 million. Why do we not give it to the college and let them get the pre-apprenticeship scheme going again so these kids can get in and we will take them on board.' The answer was, 'It is a different department; we cannot do that.' We just wonder whether everyone is going on the same railway lines and pulling in the same direction. That is what this is about, I hope.

Mr MOSSFIELD—How many people do you employ all up in Kalgoorlie?

Mr Patrizi—Just over 180 directly. Indirectly there is quite a number of subcontractors, but directly about 180.

Mr MOSSFIELD—It seems from what you have said that, if there were more young people interested in taking on an apprenticeship, you would be able to employ them. You said there is a shortage of tradespeople.

Mr Patrizi—I think we have got around 20 on. Where we have to be careful is that, because there is a shortage of tradespeople in the industry at the moment, we have got to keep the numbers of apprentices tied to our tradespeople so the apprentices can learn. Otherwise you risk the situation where you have too many apprentices and they do not get the grounding or the supervision. We have to be very careful along those lines.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Do you address the schools? Do you come into the schools and tell the students what careers are available?

Mr Patrizi—I have been asked once and I have done that, but it is not a regular thing. It is not something we get asked on a regular basis. The schools know they can come down to our workshop whenever they want to, to go for a walk around and have a look.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Do they do that?

Mr Patrizi—Yes, that has happened on a few occasions.

Mr MOSSFIELD—One interesting issue that has arisen in our discussion with schools is the question of career advice and what year you should start giving young people career advice. Some young people say it would be better if they knew at year 8 or 9.

Mr Patrizi—From listening to those kids, the general consensus today is that they are not getting it early enough. I think that is probably the answer.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Say, in year 9 or 10?

Mr Patrizi—You probably cannot start early enough. Generally, it is just a matter of how hard you push it. I suppose you would start off in a small way early and then build up.

Mr BARRESI—Where do the apprentices that you do put on go for their classroom training? Is it all done here in Kalgoorlie at the TAFE?

Mr Patrizi—Yes. I think it is once a week for a certain number of weeks in the year.

Mr BARRESI—Are you happy with what the TAFE is providing to them? Is it meeting your specific industry needs?

Mr Patrizi—I have probably got to be careful how I answer that because I do not look after the apprentices directly. My workshop manager looks after them directly. As far as their school marks and so forth go and how they perform in school, I do not really see that on a regular basis.

Mr BARRESI—I was more concerned about the content, what they cover. We came across a group in Broome who send their apprentices to Perth. They say that half the course is totally irrelevant.

Mr Patrizi—I really could not answer that question, not being involved in what is actually taught at the school. I would have thought that, if someone is doing a fitter and

turning apprenticeship, the course would be structured around that. I have never really given it any thought that they might learn cooking or something. I would have thought it would have been fairly structured as far as the schooling system goes—not something fairly difficult to do.

CHAIR—Can you tell us about the range of work that your company does and who you work for?

Mr Patrizi—We are a heavy engineering maintenance orientated workshop and labour high division. We get into heavy fabrication, machining, hydraulic maintenance and construction in all of those facets. We have a fairly large maintenance orientated labour high division where we go to sites and do mine shutdowns and constructions and constructions of new plant and so forth. I am talking about Kalgoorlie here. We have got a professional engineering business as well, which gets into the design and project management side of things as well.

CHAIR—You work for most of the mines in the area?

Mr Patrizi—Yes, we do.

CHAIR—Do you have competitors?

Mr Patrizi—Yes, we do.

CHAIR—Do the mines do much of their own maintenance and rebuilding work any more?

Mr Patrizi—Yes. The mines do as much as they can handle. They tend to keep in-house what they can handle on a day-to-day basis. Any major works and major shutdown works et cetera they outsource.

CHAIR—Is there a lot of fly in and fly out?

Mr Patrizi—Yes, there is quite a number of that. If you talk about the region from Mount Keith to Norseman, yes, there is quite a bit of that.

CHAIR—But how about here in Kalgoorlie and Boulder?

Mr Patrizi—Within the town, no; not within the town.

Mr BARRESI—But you would cover the other sites?

Mr Patrizi—We cover the other sites as well.

Mr BARRESI—So your people fly in and fly out, do they?

Mr Patrizi—No. We normally travel out of Kalgoorlie.

CHAIR—That is interesting because Broken Hill has given up on mine sourcing or local shops and has gone almost totally to flying in and flying out from Adelaide.

Mr Patrizi—When you look at the Kalgoorlie region and you look at the Broken Hill region, I think they are poles apart. If you ever get an opportunity to have a look at a map of the Eastern Goldfields area from Mount Keith and Norseman to Southern Cross and have a look at the number of companies in that area and the number of companies mining in that area—10 years ago or 15 years ago we talked about Western Mining being in Kalgoorlie; Western Mining now is just another player in Kalgoorlie—you will see that there is any number of mining companies out there that you can work for. The marketplace is so much more diverse; whereas Broken Hill is just like basically a one-shop stop. You have got a couple of majors in there and that is it. That is not the case in the Kalgoorlie region; that is certainly not the case.

CHAIR—Don't you also have a different industrial relations situation here than they do in Broken Hill?

Mr Patrizi—Yes. Industrial relations in Kalgoorlie is very much one on one. There is not a lot of third party involvement. It certainly works. I think everyone is reasonably happy with that sort of situation. Third party involvement is not something that happens a lot in Kalgoorlie.

CHAIR—How do you make your selection on who you employ? Do you have plenty to choose from or do you pretty well take whoever comes along?

Mr Patrizi—The situation that we are in at the moment in this industry is that you basically take whoever you can get because there is not a lot around.

CHAIR—Shouldn't you be marketing yourself to the kids then?

Mr Patrizi—It is very difficult to market yourself to the kids when you do not believe that our schooling system has things in place to push kids into an apprenticeship type of arrangement. To market yourself to young people, you need avenues available to get to them. The avenues need to be there in the school system. The way I market myself to the young kids might be totally different from the way Joe Blow down the road does it. Everyone is then pulling in different directions.

The schooling system needs a system so people can focus on young kids going into trades—and not just the trades that we have been talking about, but all trades. I do not think there is that focus in the school system. Having been through the school system and

gone on to university, I think we go into the school system, we are taught what books are about, et cetera, and we go through. From hearing the kids talk earlier, I know that they do not think they are ready for university, but I think that they are better prepared for university than they are for the working side of things, because that is basically what they have been doing for the last 12 years.

Going on to university is not much different from what they are doing at school, even though they think it might be; but that is only because they have not been there, of course, because they are still in years 11 and 12. It is basically all they have been doing for the past 12 years, so they are better prepared to go that way than they are to go out into the work force. I do not think we should have that split. The kids going on to university get much better prepared than the kids going out into the work force do. Basically, they finish year 10 or year 11 or whatever and then they go off, and no-one except their employer wants to know anything more about them.

CHAIR—The committee probably agrees with you.

Mr BARRESI—Tony, have any of your apprentices actually gone through the Instep program?

Mr Patrizi—The first time I heard of the Instep program was today when people were talking. I have never heard of it before, so I cannot comment on that, either.

CHAIR—They do not come to you for employment?

Mr Patrizi—We do have kids who come in for vacation employment here and there.

Mr BARRESI—Do you have work experience students coming through?

Mr Patrizi—Yes.

Mr BARRESI—But not through the Instep program? I want to get your feeling as to whether Instep is valuable, but you cannot comment on that, can you?

Mr Patrizi—We may do so, but it is not a word that I have heard before.

CHAIR—Do you know what they do? Basically, the young person spends four days a week in school and one day a week at work. The day at work is just like a day at school. They do not get paid, and the education department picks up the workers compensation, insurance and all the rest of it.

Mr Patrizi—This might sound a bit like my not knowing what is going on in my own backyard, but it might be something that we are doing via my workshop manager. He

handles all those young kids. It is certainly not something that I have seen advertised or about which people have spoken to me.

CHAIR—I would think you would know about it, if you had a kid there every Friday or every Thursday.

Mr Patrizi—Yes. I am sure my workshop manager would say to me, 'That kid is here for such and such.'

Mr BARRESI—I do not think the program has been going for many years, actually.

Mr Patrizi—It is not something that has registered with me.

CHAIR—Do you have many Aboriginal employees?

Mr Patrizi—Yes; over the years we have had a number of Aboriginal employees who have come through and done apprenticeships. Some have been really good and some have been very average—nothing different from most young kids.

Mr BARRESI—Have any of them finished their apprenticeships?

Mr Patrizi—Yes.

Mr BARRESI—Do you know what they are doing now?

Mr Patrizi—No, I do not. Our policy normally is that, once kids have finished their apprenticeship, we like to push them on and let them go out and get other work to get better skilled. One guy, in particular, did his apprenticeship with us, went away, came back and worked for us for a couple of years, and then went on again.

Mr BARRESI—So you do not know whether any of them have gone off and set up their own shops?

Mr Patrizi—No, I do not know.

Mr MOSSFIELD—You indicated to us that you more or less take what you can get, but do you advertise for apprentices?

Mr Patrizi—Yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—How many would apply? You say that you take on six to 10 each year.

Mr Patrizi—Last year we probably would have got about 30 or 35 applications in.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Basically, what standard are they up to? If you had the vacancies to take more on than you actually do, could you take more on, based on their attitude, their educational standards and all that?

Mr Patrizi—There are a few things that affect that. My workshop manager, who employs our apprentices and sits down and interviews them, et cetera, has gone through and done his apprenticeship and he is a tradesman. But, again, it is the old school. People are saying nowadays that to take apprentices on, the schooling that they have got to go to is years 11 and 12. You need to be good at school to take on an apprenticeship. If you are not good at school and you do not know your maths, et cetera, you will go and do your schooling while you are doing your apprenticeship, you will not pass it and you will not get an apprenticeship. I have this discussion with him all the time.

Good tradespeople do not necessarily have to be good mathematicians, et cetera. But the argument is that they find it easier at school and they can get through school. Whether the school is too hard for them while they are doing their apprenticeship—if they do not get through their school, then they do not get through their apprenticeship.

People like my workshop manager tend to employ kids nowadays who are scholastically better. I do not necessarily agree with that, but that is one of the things that has been pushed into people. Whether being an apprentice or whether going on through school, you have got to have good marks. I do not necessarily think that is the right way to go. The other people who have not got good marks but are very good with their hands then get left out in the dark. That is where I reckon in the system—that is, one step removed in the education system, back in the school things—we have not got that area where we are putting these manual-type kids through the right channels.

CHAIR—You are saying you do not need calculus to know how to read a micrometer?

Mr Patrizi—I am saying that you can learn to read a micrometer without having calculus. Someone can show you that. But, unfortunately, when kids go for the apprenticeship and employers see that their maths marks are not very good, they will say, 'Hang on, I will push that kid aside. I will take the other because he has better marks and he will go through school easier.'

Mr BARRESI—The metals industry award over the last few years has been simplified somewhat. I think it is now down to about 12 classifications—I could be wrong—which enables one to start at the bottom basically as a trades assistant and go right through to degree level. Have any of your apprentices actually worked their way through the classification like that, perhaps to an engineering level?

Mr Patrizi—Not that I know of, no.

Mr BARRESI—Are the kids aware of that when they start with you—that that is an option available?

Mr Patrizi—I really do not know. Some may. I could not comment.

Mr BARRESI—I am thinking of the whole image of apprenticeships. To a number of kids, it is a dirty word, a dirty occupation.

Mr Patrizi—That is what I am saying.

Mr BARRESI—Yet there are options there which perhaps they are not aware of.

Mr Patrizi—That is exactly what I am saying. That is exactly my point. This business about an apprenticeship in our schooling system quite often is a dirty word. It stems probably from their parents because their parents have come up through the school, most of them are manual-type people—certainly in my era parents were manual-type people—and they have said, 'We don't want you to be a manual-type person like us. We want you to go on through school.' We have got to change that.

Mr BARRESI—I understand that, Tony, but as an industry leader in an area as defined as a goldfield, you have a role to play in that education process.

Mr Patrizi—That is why I am here today, because I do agree with that.

Mr BARRESI—As you have heard today from some of the careers counsellors, they have only just been out of college two minutes. They do not really know what is going on out there and they need that education.

Mr Patrizi—Yes. I certainly think business can play a part in educating these kids, but it has got to be within the school system because they are at school all the time. We can certainly come in and help out but in a program so that everyone is going down the right set of railway lines—so we are all pushing and pulling together.

CHAIR—By way of reference, what sorts of wages do you pay?

Mr Patrizi—For apprentices?

CHAIR—No, for tradesmen.

Mr Patrizi—That is a very difficult—

CHAIR—Compared to the award, for instance.

Mr Patrizi—In Kalgoorlie, I would say we would be 25 per cent over. If you paid award wages in Kalgoorlie, you would be working by yourself. It is as simple as that.

CHAIR—Is housing still hard to find?

Mr Patrizi—Housing is there, but it is expensive.

CHAIR—How expensive?

Mr Patrizi—Do you want to know a number, weekly?

CHAIR—Yes.

Mr Patrizi—If you wanted to rent an average house, you would probably pay $300 and upwards per week. If you wanted to buy an average house, not a new home, you would probably be paying between $180,000 and $200,000 in a reasonable area. That is certainly not expensive—this is where people probably lose the plot a little—when you talk about reasonable areas in the cities. But when you are talking about buying houses in the country, and in a town that in five years time everyone thinks may not be here, people start backing off. It is a big outlay for somewhere where people do not want to live for the rest of their lives and so forth. That is the sort of bridge that people have to jump.

CHAIR—If there is an excess of tradesmen in the capital cities, is there any particular reason why you cannot attract them here?

Mr Patrizi—They find that housing is very expensive. To buy a home for $180,000 or rent a home for $300 plus a week is expensive. There is no doubt about that. That is the problem.

CHAIR—So the wages do not really compensate for the cost of housing?

Mr Patrizi—I think they do, but people just do not realise that they do. You see the expense, not the return.

CHAIR—Do you want us to send you some tradesmen?

Mr Patrizi—Yes. The return is there for the tradesmen as far as their monetary thing goes, but they do not see that. You see expense before you see the money coming in. When you walk into a town, you see how much it is going to cost you, not how much you are going to earn. That is what people see; that is how people look at it.

CHAIR—By comparison, you pay $300 a week for rent. What do your average people take home a week?

Mr Patrizi—Between $1,200 and $1,500 a week.

CHAIR—Well, the $300 is not expensive then, is it? We will send you some tradesmen.

Mr MOSSFIELD—If this committee made a recommendation that we should encourage intelligent young people with the ability to learn to seek apprenticeships at year 10 and beyond, would that recommendation sit comfortably with your views?

Mr Patrizi—I do not think that is the right way—encouraging intelligent people to seek apprenticeships. I think we should elevate what people think about apprenticeships. There is this idea that if you go into an apprenticeship, you are taking the second choice, the worst choice, other than not get a job. The aim is to go on to university. I do not think we should encourage intelligent people to take on an apprenticeship; we should encourage people who are good and manual and who want to do apprenticeships, who want to go on and get a trade. We should have a line for those people to go into so they can explore the avenue they want to take.

There are two ways kids can go—they can go on to university or they can go on to an apprenticeship or a trade or some sort of training into a job. They are the two avenues. I think that right-hand side into that manual-type thing is not something that we promote as we should in the schooling system.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Yes, but I do feel that people are seeing apprenticeships as second-class occupations for kids who are not academically inclined. But I do not think we should give anyone the impression that you do not have to be intelligent and you do not have to have the ability to learn to become apprentices. I agree that it is not necessary for people who are going to go into trades to go to year 12 and get all those higher academic subjects. But I do think they have to have the ability to learn, because there are a lot of technical aspects of a trade. It was just a thought.

Mr Patrizi—I think you can probably use the word ‘intelligent’ another way. An intelligent person can be a person who is very good with his hands and is intelligent in his area.

Mr MOSSFIELD—That is right; he might not have the academic qualifications.

Mr Patrizi—Whereas academic intelligence is another sort of intelligence. An intelligent person can be a person who is good at what he does. He should be promoted into the apprenticeship if he is good with his hands. An intelligent person might be good mentally and he can go on to university, if that is what he wants to do, or he might want to take on a trade. There are a lot of capable people around who are mentally intelligent and take on trades.

CHAIR—I have just seen 5,000 Chinese peasant farmers producing differentials and universal couplings and growing at a rate of 50 per cent a year, so probably what you say has some real relevance.

Mr Patrizi—Exactly.

CHAIR—In fairness to the other people who have come to talk to us, we have to move on. Tony, thank you very much for coming. You have given us a lot of help in understanding the work environment and the living environment here and what is available for young people.

This committee would encourage you to get together with some of your colleagues in the Chamber of Commerce and business around town and visit the principals of your schools to see if you can blend the experience of listening to those young people here today with your experience of knowing the employment needs that you have here and perhaps you can help engender some change in the town too. Thank you very much.

Mr Patrizi—Thank you.

[11.41 a.m.]

LEE, Mrs Leonie, Senior Employee Relations Officer, Kalgoorlie Consolidated Gold Mines Pty Ltd, PMB 27, Kalgoorlie, Western Australia 6430

CHAIR—Welcome. Leonie, we are discussing employment, not unemployment. We are really trying to come to grips with two issues. Firstly, how we can help young people to become more employable and, secondly, how we can encourage all the employers—in business, industry, commerce and the public sector—to make more jobs available for young people so that we do not wind up helping to destroy their lives from the beginning.

We are an all-party committee of the parliament—we are not government. We will make recommendations and write a report on what we have learnt in the last year. We will submit that report to the parliament and ultimately the Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs will have to respond to each and every one of our recommendations. Do you have an opening statement?

Mrs Lee—No, not really. I am happy if you want to ask some questions. I guess a lot of what Tony said we would probably agree with. I believe there needs to be more interaction between business and the schooling system. There was a lot of talk about apprentices and I guess that is the main issue here, graduates or whatever. We find, especially in the apprentice area, that there are children applying for apprenticeships because they do not really think they are going to be able to go on to university. It is a second option for them, but in some cases they are not even suitable for an apprenticeship.

I do not think the information is getting out to the students about what an apprenticeship entails. I think they need to be informed better. That is partly the responsibility of industry and the education system. I think there is a breakdown there.

CHAIR—The inquiry is not just about apprenticeships, that is only a small part of it, except that we tended to concentrate on that with Tony because they are the young people he employs. One of things that we have heard all over the country—whether it be in the capital cities, in the regions or in the outback—is that, somehow, young people today seem to have less of an idea of what they want to do with their lives, what careers might be available, or what work there might be, than perhaps young people did 20 years ago. That is for a whole range of reasons, including the emphasis on tertiary education and the increasing retention rates to year 12 in high school. One of the things that we heard this morning in talking to the young people was that, except for those who had parents who worked in the mines, they seem to have absolutely no idea of what jobs there are on offer from the mines, what careers they might have, and what they might work up to—none of that whatsoever.

Mrs Lee—My first question would have to be: why do you have counsellors? If

you have children in the schooling system who do not know what they want to do, where do they get the advice from? If the advice is coming from the counsellors in the schooling system, either they need to come to industry to find out the information that is required or they need to liaise with industry and maybe get those children into that environment to have a look at what is available. I find it amazing that children are going through to year 12 and have not got a clue what they want to do. They have to make choices about what subjects they are doing at some stage, so who are they talking to? Where are they getting their direction from if they do not have any idea? Certainly industry can help if they are asked to participate and assist in advising children on what is available.

John Paul College and Eastern Goldfields Senior High School run a careers day at the town hall in Kalgoorlie. I have been down there and I may have had one inquiry from students. They just wander around; they do not seem to be interested. You are sitting there, you are a major mining company in the area, and they do not even come and ask you what jobs are available. Occasionally they will come up. It amazes me. I do not know what your answer is to that.

CHAIR—Can you tell us about the range of jobs that you have available? When we talk about young people, let's say we are talking about those between 16 and 24, and do not discard the tertiary entrance requirements because that is part of it too.

Mrs Lee—We employ apprentices. We have around 20 apprentices—prefabrication, mechanical and electrical. We do not have specifically junior programs or youth programs. Our apprentices are probably the only area where we recruit a high level of young people. However, we have process operators who work in the milling area; we can employ people from 18 through to whatever age. We have our surface operators, our geotechs who work in the open pit operation, who can be from age 18 upwards. We have a lot of clerical support staff in the administration area and site clerks. So there is an opportunity for a lot of youth employment, but it is whether the young people want to work in those areas. Sometimes the attitude and motivation are not good.

Mr BARRESI—Do you participate in the schools' work experience program?

Mrs Lee—Yes, we do.

Mr BARRESI—How many would you take on per year?

Mrs Lee—It varies. Sometimes we may take up to three or four throughout the operation at any one period.

Mr BARRESI—Are you part of the Instep program?

Mrs Lee—We have had one student, that I am aware of, who actually received an award. I am not quite sure whether he did go on to take on an apprenticeship, but

apparently it went very well. But that was only one that I am aware of that has been through our company.

Mr BARRESI—As an employer, do you think there is value in that program as a feeder into your apprenticeship program, or even as a screening process more than a feeder?

Mrs Lee—Possibly as a screening process, yes. I guess the big problem we have with our apprentices is attitude. They get into the system and they do not understand what is required. Tony made the comment about them coming out of the schooling system and going straight into the work environment. They are very young and some of them are fairly immature, especially if they come in after year 10. They have no idea what the work environment is like and that they have to make the commitment to turn up to work every day. Initially, it is a big shock to them. They go out there with tradespeople who are working a million miles an hour and expect them to come along with them. They do not cope very well with that in the first instance.

Some of them adjust—it takes some time—and others do not adjust. We then get absenteeism. We have to do counselling sessions and, in some cases, we have to let them go. But, certainly, I think they need to be more informed about it not being like going to school every day—'You are out there in the big wide world. You have made a commitment to work and there is an expectation from the employers that that is what you are there for.'

Mr BARRESI—Do you struggle each year to fill your available places for apprenticeships?

Mrs Lee—With good quality applicants, yes. In the last two to three years we have been very disappointed with our level of applications. In fact, we have discussed whether we should come into the schooling system and try to promote apprenticeships, show what they are really about, do a presentation from KCGM that this is what you do, show them the underground workshops and the surface workshops and what it is that they will be required to do, and try to encourage them to see it as a profession. At the moment some think that because they cannot go onto uni, they are not good enough for that, they will just go into an apprenticeship. We want to encourage them to treat it as a career and be proud that that is the choice that they have made.

Mr BARRESI—I think that would be a great idea. It relates back to what you were saying earlier about the careers night at the town hall, and the kids not coming up to you. Some of that could very well be immaturity and apprehension about talking to an adult. Some of them think that the responsibility is on the careers counsellors and that they are not getting information for them. But where else can they get it? I agree with you, there are obviously deficiencies in the school system if that is not done. On the other hand, you have a very defined area from which you can source labour, unless you are

flying people in from Perth or elsewhere. To some extent, there is the responsibility, as an employer, if one party is not doing it, to perhaps initiate the action. So if that is what you are contemplating, I reckon that would be an excellent strategy.

Mrs Lee—As I said, we have certainly been very disappointed with the calibre of applicants in the last two years. Out of the last lot of recruitment, we have certainly had to take a step back and look at why we are not getting the people that we need at the level that we need them at. We are finding that people are applying who will not get through the schooling system. Maybe there is a problem with the parity between the skills of the hands that are required and the level of theory that is required in apprentices. Certainly, if they have not come out with certain levels, they will not get through the theory of the apprenticeship. It is causing some concerns for us as well.

Mr MOSSFIELD—When the apprentice starts with you, what is the process? Do they go straight out into the workshop? Do they work with a tradesman immediately or is there a period where they are together and they get used to the new climate?

Mrs Lee—Generally, they do a two-day induction course. We try to start the new apprentices together. Generally, they would then be allocated to site straightaway. They do not have a bonding session for any period with the other apprentices. You start work like everybody else and, after your induction, you go straight out to a site. They would then be working very closely with a tradesperson.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Some major employers, on other occasions, would have a period where all of the apprentices work in a workshop together for a period of, say, six months until they acclimatise to the new environment. You have said that moving from school into the work environment is a major problem.

Mrs Lee—Unfortunately, unless you had a central workshop it would be very difficult. You have to have the right number of supervisors there in comparison to the apprentices. We have three or four sites where we allocate apprentices. Way back when we had a power station, we followed that sort of concept but at the moment we do not, we send them out. Business is very competitive today. If you are asking businesses to follow that sort of concept, I think you would have to put some sort of carrot up to them because they are certainly going to have to put on some extra people to supervise them.

Mr MOSSFIELD—We did hear in the school forum that some of the young ladies felt as though there was not any career for them in the mining industry, that it is a man's job. Are you doing anything to promote women into the non-traditional trade areas?

Mrs Lee—I don't suppose we stand up and be counted. We have a female apprentice, our first female apprentice.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What trade?

Mrs Lee—Mechanical. She is working at our Mount Charlotte operation. We had to be very careful about where we started her. Certainly the mining industry is still very male orientated and it is going to take a long time to break down those barriers. It is a slow process.

Mr BARRESI—What year is she in?

Mrs Lee—First year.

Mr BARRESI—It will be good to monitor how it all goes?

Mrs Lee—Yes. She is struggling a bit with the theory. I spoke to our apprentice master only the other day and she had passes. Because of the system now, where you do not know what the pass actually is percentage-wise, our apprentice master assumed that she was doing very well, but she said, 'I really need to put some work in because I am struggling with the theory side of the apprenticeship.'

CHAIR—How many young people did you interview for the most recent intake? You said you had problems?

Mrs Lee—For apprentices?

CHAIR—Yes, and the reasons for the rejections?

Mrs Lee—We are finding with the level of applications that the basic numerical, literacy, written skills are fairly basic. Once again, we are considering whether to start testing our apprentices because we are finding that they may get through the interview but when we get them out into the work environment they need some help. I guess it is just their basic skills.

CHAIR—Did you interview 30 to employ one?

Mrs Lee—No, we did not. With our first round of electrical interviews, we only received six applications for two positions. We readvertised and the next time our total applications were about 12 for our electrical. Our mechanical—this is not accurate but it is thereabouts—I would say there were about 15 or so. That seems to be the most popular of all of them. For fabrication, I think, we only got eight to 12 applications.

Mr BARRESI—Do you think that what you are going through is the general experience amongst the mining industry?

Mrs Lee—I think so. We did contact some of the other groups and they said that they had very low applications.

Mr BARRESI—What is the application rate for process workers and non-apprenticeship type positions where you put on young kids?

Mrs Lee—For our process operators, because it is unskilled labour, we tend to get people walking through the recruitment door every day. We recruit anyone from 18 right through—age does not matter. We do not monitor the number of young people who come through the door so it would be very difficult for me to say we have X number of young people walking through the door applying for those jobs.

Mr BARRESI—What would starting rates be for a process operator?

Mrs Lee—I would say—and this is off-the-cuff—that day workers would get around $1,000 a fortnight.

Mr BARRESI—Fairly attractive, compared to a first year apprentice?

Mrs Lee—Yes, extremely, and that is definitely another issue. That is an issue that we have come up against not only with our young people in non-skilled areas but also our graduates have a preconceived idea of what they should get paid when they come out of uni.

CHAIR—Tell us about the range of graduates that you employ.

Mrs Lee—We employ mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, metallurgists, geologists, mining engineers—they are primarily our graduate group. We generally have a very good response of applications from graduates; however, there is a bit of an attitude among a lot of them that we owe them, they do not owe us, and a very high expectation of salary, we find.

CHAIR—Such as, for example?

Mrs Lee—Our graduates probably start on about $36,000 to $38,000 for a first year graduate. Some of them perceive that that is pretty average.

Mr BARRESI—It is pretty good. What degree is that?

Mrs Lee—That would be geology, metallurgy. All our graduates start on the same basis. We have a professional salary scale which we employ our people on. It is a graduated scale based on postgrad experience, so if you come in with less than one it is a certain salary, and then you go up to four year, less than four year postgrad experience.

Mr BARRESI—No problems with filling those positions?

Mrs Lee—None at all, no. However, they do get into the system and fairly quickly

there is an expectation that the salary, after a couple of years, should be considerably more. So, yes, we have a bit of a problem in that area. Some are great—some come out and they are quite happy—but you get others that believe that they have done their time, done their degree and therefore they should get paid for it.

Mr BARRESI—What is your retention rate like for apprentices as well as for your graduates?

Mrs Lee—For our apprentices it is very good. We certainly have the odd one or two that we lose—that is mainly more because of disciplinary counselling reasons; we generally let them go. We just find that they cannot adapt to the discipline of the trade. Our graduates generally come in on a two-year program. KCGM is a little bit unique in that we are a management company; we do not have any other sister operations. Therefore, there is not a lot of opportunity to transfer. So we may lose our graduates after, probably, three years, I would say. If there is not a senior position looking at them, they will probably be looking at moving on. They have an expectation that they should be moving into senior roles after, probably, three to four years, which in some cases is pretty difficult.

Mr BARRESI—Most graduates do.

Mrs Lee—Yes.

CHAIR—What has created all this expectation?

Mrs Lee—I do not know. Maybe it is the mining industry—I really do not know.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Would it be the comparisons with other career opportunities, where graduates that have the same university education are getting a higher wage in other industries—medical, construction and so on?

Mrs Lee—I would say that the mining industry probably pays the highest graduate wages.

Mr MOSSFIELD—So it is not a wage thing?

Mrs Lee—I do not think even medical interns would get paid anywhere near the salary of a first year graduate mining engineer. I think that the mining industry pays very well in comparison with other disciplines.

Mr BARRESI—What else do you provide, apart from the salary? Do you provide anything else?

Mrs Lee—Also a housing allowance component or housing assistance component.

Mr BARRESI—A health scheme?

Mrs Lee—No. That is pretty well basically all it is.

Mr BARRESI—Travel costs to Perth or to home base?

Mrs Lee—No. Salary and housing assistance is the basis of most of our staff salaries or remuneration packages.

CHAIR—Do you have any more questions, Mr Barresi or Mr Mossfield?

Mr MOSSFIELD—I think we have covered most of the questions.

Mr BARRESI—I just want to know how it is that I did not find out about Kalgoorlie Consolidated when I graduated!

Mrs Lee—I do not think we are unique in what we pay. I think that would be fairly general for most of the mining companies around.

CHAIR—What is your total employment?

Mrs Lee—We employ around 600 award and staff—direct employees—and about 400 permanent contractors. It is about a thousand all up.

CHAIR—In what areas are the contractors?

Mrs Lee—Roche Brothers are our main contractor. They have the open pit mining contract; we also have a lot of trades contractors like J.R. Engineering, Monodelphous—basically trade and the open pit contract.

CHAIR—But you do some of your own maintenance?

Mrs Lee—Mainly supervisory. Most of our tradespeople are what we call staff employees, who have the supervisory, foremen type roles. The award are generally contractors—the blue-collar tradespeople, generally, although we do have some supervisory contractors as well, especially at our Fimiston plant and Gidji roaster.

CHAIR—With that high a percentage your internal training systems, other than apprenticeships, are not much?

Mrs Lee—Probably not significant, no. Certainly we have ongoing training programs, but they are more one-off, forklift type training, not ongoing. We do have an Aboriginal training program scheme in place which we are involved in, but that is not just for youth. That is for Aboriginal people.

CHAIR—Do you have many Aboriginal employees?

Mrs Lee—Not a great deal. We have probably got about 10 all up.

CHAIR—Out of 1,000?

Mrs Lee—Yes.

Mr BARRESI—Is that simply due to traditional cultural aspects, that the Aboriginals are perhaps more in tune with the pastoral industry rather than the mining industry?

Mrs Lee—Possibly. I guess we just do not get applications from Aboriginal people. Even with the training programs that we have had—I think this is the third one that we have actually run in conjunction with a couple of other companies—out of 30 or 35 people that we have put through the program I think we have only offered three permanent placements at the end of that program.

Mr BARRESI—Is there a local Aboriginal employment service in Kalgoorlie?

Mrs Lee—It is mainly done through the CES, as far as I am aware. Most of the employment is done through that.

Mr BARRESI—No Aboriginal group training company?

Mrs Lee—There is what used to be DEET.

Mr MOSSFIELD—It is DEETYA now.

Mrs Lee—Yes. So there are certainly some Aboriginal groups in town, and there is another group that is looking at trying to get Aboriginal employment into the mining industry. There have been a couple of meetings but I am not sure where they are at with that one at the moment.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Of the Aboriginal people that do go through your training program, how many would be in the younger group?

Mrs Lee—I would say maybe a third. I am talking probably up to 25 now—not a lot of really young Aboriginal people. Most of them, I would say, would be a minimum of 20; I do not think there would be any teenagers coming through in those groups at all.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Do you find that you have more success with the older group?

Mrs Lee—Yes, I would say so, because they actually decide that they want to do it. I think that if it is a young person they are generally pushed into doing it. It is not their decision, it is somebody saying, 'I think you should do this.' Once again, we go through an interview process, where they may interview 30 people and out of that you may get 10 people that are suitable for doing the program. Most of those would be more mature people rather than the young Aboriginal people.

Mr BARRESI—I will ask one last question, which I asked Tony also. How many of your apprentices, if any, have worked their way through the system to perhaps higher qualifications?

Mrs Lee—I am not aware of any of our apprentices that we have actually put through the system. A bit like Tony, I find that our people at the end of their four years move on. We encourage them to go out into another area. We have, though, employed two graduate people who have done a trade previously, and we have found them to be very, very good employees. That is because they have a very good grounding, understanding of the trade, and then they come in with their engineering degree. They probably have a better rapport with the trade people than somebody that has gone straight to university, comes out with their degree and tends to think they know more than the tradesperson.

Mr BARRESI—I would have thought those individuals would be great role models—

Mrs Lee—They are.

Mr BARRESI—In order to be able to sell to school kids here the fact that being an apprentice can be a valuable career path. You were both talking about the fact that it is hard to sell apprenticeships, but with those sorts of individuals, by putting them on a pedestal and saying this is what is also available, they would make it easier.

Mrs Lee—One of the fellows has addressed a group of year 12 students who came up to Kalgoorlie just recently. We asked him to go and address them. Certainly, you are right. The argument there is, 'I have done four years for my apprenticeship and now I have to go back and do another four years to get my degree, but I can go straight to uni and do my degree in four years and have the same qualification.'

Mr BARRESI—But it is aimed more to the kids who believe they are not smart enough to go to uni. They do not know whether they want to do an apprenticeship because of what they get at the end of the day. Maybe they can see that is an alternative—

Mrs Lee—That is right.

Mr BARRESI—And that they should not be pessimistic about their future.

Mrs Lee—Yes.

CHAIR—Could you tell us a bit about the School of Mines?

Mrs Lee—I probably cannot tell you much about the School of Mines, apart from the fact that we do employ a lot of vacation students from the School of Mines.

CHAIR—Is it a degree school, a diploma school or what?

Mrs Lee—It is a degree school. It is part of the faculty of the Curtin University of Western Australia. It was originally set up in Kalgoorlie because it is a mining area and they felt it was more appropriate to have the School of Mines here in Kalgoorlie.

CHAIR—Do you employ any of their graduates?

Mrs Lee—Yes, and KCGM sponsors up to a dozen student scholarships through the WA School of Mines. A number of our professional people also lecture at the WA School of Mines as well. We have a fairly close liaison with the WA School of Mines.

CHAIR—Is it all tertiary study?

Mrs Lee—Yes.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for coming. We appreciate your input. We will finish our inquiry in June. We will consider our report in August and table it in either in late August or early September. We will certainly send you a copy of the report and our recommendations.

Mrs Lee—Thank you.

CHAIR—Perhaps you and Tony and some others can get together to help the school system to help you improve your potential input. Thank you very much.

Mrs Lee—Thank you.

[12.14 p.m.]

GREENHILL, Mr Roger Milner, Managing Director, Greenhill Electrical Pty Ltd, PO Box 5522, Kalgoorlie, Western Australia 6430

CHAIR—Welcome. Were you here when we welcomed the last witness and heard me say all the basic information?

Mr Greenhill—Yes.

CHAIR—You have heard some of the issues we have been discussing. Do you have any comments you would like to make?

Mr Greenhill—Yes. We are a contract company that works for most of the builders and most of the mining companies around Kalgoorlie. I was born and bred in Kalgoorlie and I have lived here all my life. We do not directly employ apprentices but I do host apprentices through the group scheme.

I heard you talking about the Instep program, and I believe one of our apprentices is the apprentice that KCGM made the award to last year. He actually works for us through the group scheme. We employ all our apprentices through the group scheme, because I have found it to be a much more flexible working arrangement for a company of my size, although, in saying that, all the apprentices that we have at the moment have been with us for the full term of their apprenticeship, in as far as they have gone so far.

In the last 15 years I think I have trained about 12 apprentices, of which I still have two working for me as tradesmen. We do have female tradesmen working for us. Two female apprentice electricians have worked for us as well, but they came to us at a later stage from other companies—Western Mining in Kambalda. They did not see their apprenticeships through, basically because they were still living at home and their parents moved back to Perth, and away they went.

Because they were in the group scheme, they were able to transfer and they were placed with other companies in Perth. We find it very amicable to employ them that way, because you do not always have a one-on-one relationship with young kids when they are doing apprenticeships. There is always someone who has a conflict with some member of staff, or something like that, so rather than can their apprenticeship or have them walk out the door because they cannot work with somebody they can go back into the scheme and be redeployed somewhere else. That has happened on two occasions out of about 10 that we have had.

CHAIR—In 1995 we did an inquiry on the group training scheme. We came to Kalgoorlie, and we talked to the group training company here. Would you have any idea how many apprentices and trainees they have on their books at the moment?

Mr Greenhill—At the moment, about 130.

CHAIR—That would be up from two years ago, would it not?

Mr Greenhill—Yes.

CHAIR—Do you participate on the board of the group training company?

Mr Greenhill—Not directly, no. When we require apprentices, we go to them and say that we are interested in taking another first year on. They do the interviews, and then bring a selection to us, because I do not profess to be a human resources person.

CHAIR—Fair enough. When they advertise, for instance, to fill a job that they know you are going to have, do you know how many applicants they get?

Mr Greenhill—No.

CHAIR—For one job, how many would they give you to select from?

Mr Greenhill—Probably three or four.

CHAIR—And how have you found those?

Mr Greenhill—Quite suitable. Our first year this year actually did some work release from the high school here last year, and I think that was part of the Instep program. We find it a very good arrangement to see what the young fellows are like. I explained to him at that time that we employ our apprentices through the group scheme, and he went to the group scheme basically and we hosted him through the group scheme back to our company. So that is basically how we go about getting those people.

CHAIR—As an employer who has had one of these young people from the Instep program, can you tell us how it works from your perspective. How do you make use of them? How can you afford to spend the time training them? Do you get any value out of having them for one day a week? We would really be fascinated in your assessment of the program.

Mr Greenhill—To be honest, I was not aware until about two months ago that he was part of Instep, because I was not made aware of it; he was just another number from the high school that came down. We will find it very hard to put any more on through the Instep program because Work Safe in Western Australia now requires everyone to have a green card to work on a construction site. If you have not got a green card, you just do not go there, and that is our principal place of work, so we cannot take these children into these places.

CHAIR—What is a green card?

Mr Greenhill—It is to say that you have been instructed in all aspects of safety and work procedures on a construction or a mining site. It is the same with most mines: you need an induction course. So we really cannot take apprentices or students from the schools and give them work experience because they are not entitled to go into some of these workplaces—which is principally our workplace.

CHAIR—How long does that course take?

Mr Greenhill—It is a full-day course for most of them.

CHAIR—To get the green card?

Mr Greenhill—I think it is about a six-hour course.

CHAIR—So it is only one day?

Mr Greenhill—Yes. It lasts for two years.

CHAIR—So those students who wanted to participate in Instep could go and take the six-hour course during the holiday before school started?

Mr Greenhill—When Work Safe comes to Kalgoorlie and does the courses, yes. This has only just happened recently; I have just had to put my whole work force through it. That was at the end of last month. We were approached to take a student from the high school for work experience and we could not do it because we could not take him onto these sites.

CHAIR—So Work Safe does not make the course available at random?

Mr Greenhill—No, it has to come from Perth for it to be done. They have put through about 300 tradesmen in the last month in this area. You can run the gauntlet if you want, but if you get caught with someone on site or someone has an accident on site without a green card you have breached Work Safe practices. There are pretty hefty fines.

Mr BARRESI—I would have thought Kalgoorlie would have been big enough on its own to have a permanent officer stationed there.

Mr Greenhill—I would have thought so as well. We were not aware of this green card until we were approached.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Are there any qualifications for young people or anyone to go and do that six-hour course?

Mr Greenhill—No, because it applies to labourers and the whole lot.

Mr MOSSFIELD—So, theoretically, could a student who is pretty close to leaving school do it?

Mr Greenhill—Most certainly. I brought this up with the school here when it happened, that this was the situation now.

Mr MOSSFIELD—If it is virtually a theoretical course, there would be some value in getting the young people to do that course before they left school.

Mr Greenhill—Yes, and it certainly is a good training tool for them because it is basically aimed around safety and some of the hazards that are in the workplace.

Mr MOSSFIELD—So you have raised that with the school?

Mr Greenhill—Yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What was the response from the school?

Mr Greenhill—They were going to have a look into it and see whether there was any avenue for these people to come in and run that course for the students who are registering an interest in going out into the workplace to get experience.

CHAIR—It is our understanding that the way Instep operates—and, mind you, we are just new to this too; we heard about it only during our tour around regional and outback Western Australia—the Education Department is responsible totally for occupational health and safety matters, that is, workers compensation insurance. So, if a young person is hurt, the Education Department is responsible for those costs. Whether or not you can get the school system or the department to support training the young people remains to be seen, but we would think that ought to be pretty logical.

Mr Greenhill—Yes. It is the same in the mining industry as well. There are induction courses and a thing now called a Marcstar induction course. That is required for all people who go on mine sites, that they be instructed in the safety aspects of that site so that they know what to do in emergencies and what have you. Of course, business is money orientated as well, and if you have to keep paying to train these people in all these courses it can become a quite expensive exercise.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Do you have a skills shortage at all?

Mr Greenhill—Yes, most certainly.

Mr MOSSFIELD—We are getting the impression that with the changing nature of

industry, with contracting work, the competitive nature of it, and the profit margin being reduced, industry is not training sufficient people to fill the skills gap. Do you have any other suggestions as to how—

Mr Greenhill—l support what Tony said earlier. I feel that the school system is channelling young people into getting through to year 12 and TEE. I have found that we have had applications for apprentices come direct to us and we have redirected them through the group scheme. A lot of them have done their TEE and then found that they have not made the grade, and then they come back to the apprenticeship and apply for an apprenticeship as a second option.

I myself left school at year 10, I think they call it now, and went off to do an apprenticeship when I was fairly young. I think there are a lot of people out there that have got a lot of skills, and the skills can be taught to them outside of the school environment here, when they go to the tech schools and what have you. There should be a lot of encouragement going down that track of encouraging kids to look at trades as not a second-class job.

CHAIR—Not a second-class job for second-class kids?

Mr Greenhill—No, definitely not. When you look around Kalgoorlie you see that a lot of the very successful businesses are run by tradespeople who have started a business and expanded on it to the point where they employ numerous people, and they do not have any academic qualification other than experience.

CHAIR—Absolutely.

Mr BARRESI—What type of electrical work do you do? Is it domestic or industrial?

Mr Greenhill—We do a lot of industrial work for the Shell oil company, ICI Explosives, a lot of work for the mining companies, commercial work and domestic work.

Mr BARRESI—The full range?

Mr Greenhill—The full range.

Mr BARRESI—So an apprentice joining you really gets exposed to just about everything?

Mr Greenhill—Everything, yes. Some of the mining companies send their apprentices to us to give them exposure to some of that experience, because they cannot provide it. What is happening in the trade is that you take on, say, an electrician who does houses and at the end of the day you produce an electrician who can do houses. He gets a

ticket to say that he is an electrician and he comes to me for a job and he says, 'I am an electrician.' I say, 'Can you work on flameproof gear or do you know how to wire up gear underground or anything like that?' and they have not got a clue. So they are now trying to address a full range of subjects or—what is the word?—facets of the electrical trade that they must achieve—

CHAIR—Skill areas?

Mr Greenhill—Skill areas that they must achieve through their apprenticeship, and I find that sometimes four years is really not enough.

Mr BARRESI—Does the local TAFE college provide all the necessary course structure for you?

Mr Greenhill—Yes, they do. I think the college here is quite well equipped on the electrical side of things, and they do quite a few field trips to different companies around the place who have got electrical equipment that is good for the students to learn on. So they take them out there and show them and demonstrate it. They get a good grounding in their schooling here.

CHAIR—What sort of money do your tradesmen take home?

Mr Greenhill—Most of my guys would gross about $1,200 to $1,300 a week.

CHAIR—Before tax?

Mr Greenhill—Before tax. Their circumstances are all different. In saying that, it is very difficult for young people to look at going into an apprenticeship where they start on $200 a week when their mates go out and work on a drill rig and get $200 a day.

Mr BARRESI—Or as a process worker?

Mr Greenhill—Yes. Also, in apprenticeships we do see a lot of the young kids turning 17 and getting a motor car, they turn 18 and the girls look even better, and they go through a stage in their apprenticeships where they become a bit of a handful sometimes. To keep them focused on where they are going in their trade is sometimes hard.

CHAIR—It is, isn't it? Many of us have lived through that.

Mr Greenhill—Haven't we all.

CHAIR—Absolutely.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I have just one more question. Do you take part in any career days or do you address the students here at the school?

Mr Greenhill—I have been down to the school, once.

Mr MOSSFIELD—By invitation by the school?

Mr Greenhill—Yes.

Mr BARRESI—What about those career days in the Town Hall?

Mr Greenhill—I have been there. I have a 15-year-old son at the moment and I take him along to them, so I know what it is—

Mr BARRESI—You do not actually have a stand yourself?

Mr Greenhill—No. We only employ 17 people, so we are very focused on where we are going. I have not got a lot of peripheral people around me, but in saying what I just said about having a young son I can see where a lot of the problems are coming from with young people making up their mind as to what they are going to do when they leave school or what career path they are going to take. There are a lot of options out there for them.

CHAIR—But how about the poor kids that only have one parent or have two parents and neither of them working and perhaps the grandparents have not worked either?

Mr BARRESI—Does your son go to this school?

Mr Greenhill—Yes, he does. He goes to the school here. They get shown a lot of the things at the school here, different disciplines: home workshop, machine shop, carpentry, tech drawing and those sorts of things. But they do not seem to put as much time into them as I did when I went to school. They only get a semester at each discipline.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Did you say they have a machine shop and carpentry shop here?

Mr Greenfield—Yes.

Mr MOSSFIELD—I did not quite pick that up before, but that is good.

Mr BARRESI—That would be a part of most schools in Western Australia at the

junior levels.

Mr Greenhill—They have a motor mechanical workshop here as well, and boilermaking.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Just as a matter of interest, when you did speak to the school children what grade were you speaking to?

Mr Greenfield—First year high school. Basically it was to try to get them to focus on what work was like out there, what employers expect of people when they start in the work force and what is expected of them.

Mr MOSSFIELD—What age would that group be?

Mr Greenfield—Thirteen—fairly young.

Mr MOSSFIELD—Would you recommend that that would be the best age?

Mr Greenfield—I think that is where you have got to start formulating it and it has got to be carried through. Some of the attitudes of the young people today are that, once they are into an apprenticeship, they think they are in a contract: 'I am here for the four years and if I mess up they can't kick me out because it's a contract.'

Mr BARRESI—Some employers have made submissions saying the IR legislation inhibits them taking the risk of putting someone on they are not sure will work out, such as a young kid. What is your experience with that? Is that a problem for you?

Mr Greenhill—I have not had any problems with it, but that is one of the reasons we probably go through with the group training scheme as well. If we have any problem with an apprentice, it can be addressed in a fairly amicable way by having them removed and not necessarily having his apprenticeship cancelled or anything like that. We place him somewhere else where a different environment might suit him better. With all my tradesmen, most of them are on a workplace agreement.

CHAIR—Thank you very much for coming and talking to us. Today's total session in Kalgoorlie has been very valuable.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Barresi):

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 12.34 p.m.