



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

**HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**Reference: Combining study and work**

WEDNESDAY, 8 APRIL 2009

PERTH

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**Wednesday, 8 April 2009**

**Members:** Ms Bird, (*Chair*), Dr Jensen (*Deputy Chair*), Mr Clare, Ms Collins, Mrs D'Ath, Mr Irons, Mr Oakeshott, Mr Sidebottom, Dr Southcott and Mr Zappia

**Members in attendance:** Ms Bird, Dr Jensen and Mr Irons

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

The impact of combined study and work on the success of youth transitions and Year 12 attainment, with a focus on:

- providing opportunities to recognise and accredit the employability and career development skills gained through students' part time or casual work;
- identifying more flexible, innovative and/or alternative approaches to attaining a senior secondary certificate which support students to combine work and study;
- support that may be required to assist young people combining work and study to stay engaged in their learning, especially where work and study intersects with income support;
- the potential impact on educational attainment (including the prospects for post-compulsory qualifications and workforce productivity); and
- the effectiveness of school-based training pathways and their impact on successful transitions, including opportunities for improvement (particularly in relation to pathways to employment for disadvantaged young people).

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**Committee met at 9.17 am**

**ATHERTON, Ms Louise, Senior Policy Officer, Commissioner for Children and Young People**

**DJULBIC, Miss Sarah, Business Development Assistant, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia/Apprenticeships Australia**

**EASTWOOD, Mr Lawrence Anthony (Laurie), Secretary and Executive Director, Parents and Friends Federation of Western Australia Inc.**

**GRIFFITHS, Ms Anne, Policy Adviser, Education and Training, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia**

**IOANNIDIS, Ms Suzana, Western Australia and Northern Territory Traineeship Manager, Hungry Jack's Pty Ltd**

**JONES, Mr Peter Kenneth, Program Manager, Department of Education and Training, Western Australia**

**PARER, Ms Shirley, Principal Consultant, Secondary Directorate, Department of Education and Training, Western Australia**

**SHURVEN, Ms Helen, Manager Legal, Policy and Research, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Western Australia**

**CHAIR (Ms Bird)**—I thank principal Ross Morecombe and the school for hosting the committee today and for allowing us to conduct our proceedings here. We look forward to holding discussions with staff and students from the school later today.

This inquiry into combining study and work was referred by the Minister for Education, the Hon. Julia Gillard MP. The committee has received 51 submissions to date from various parts of Australia and from a broad cross-section of interested parties. Copies of the submissions are available on the committee's website for anyone who wants to look at them. I remind participants that in order to maintain the structure of proceedings, it is important to address your comments through the chair. I also remind participants that although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, this is a legal proceeding of the parliament and warrants the same respect as proceedings of the house itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of the parliament. The evidence given today will be recorded by Hansard and attracts parliamentary privilege.

The principal has indicated to me that some of the students may come in during the day to observe democracy in action, which is a great initiative. Please understand that they will come in for short periods and then head off again. We normally ask each group to make a short statement. Most of you have made written submissions, but if you have not it is not a problem. I invite you to make a short statement of your organisation's views about the issue we are dealing with, which is the challenge facing increasing numbers of young people who are working whilst studying for their matriculation at high school and the fact that they are working longer and more

irregular hours. We are looking at how we can best support them to work and successfully compete their studies and to integrate meaningful work experience, skills and knowledge development during their school years to better position themselves for when they leave school for either further study or employment.

**Ms Shurven**—I will talk broadly about the Commissioner for Children and Young People's role and then hand over to my colleague Louise Atherton to talk specifically about the issues. The commissioner was set up in December 2007 under the Commissioner for Children and Young People Act. Her role is to meet children and young people in their communities and to talk, listen and consult with them. She has that representative role for the 500,000 children in Western Australia. She is also charged with developing an understanding of their views and concerns. She uses that understanding to speak on behalf of children and young people, including in forums like this, and to make recommendations on laws, policies, programs and services affecting them. That is directly from her functions under the act. She also works in partnership with children and young people, their families, government and non-government agencies and industry for their benefit. That is the context in which we appear here today and in which we made the submission that Louise Atherton drafted for the commissioner.

**CHAIR**—What age group is the commissioner responsible for?

**Ms Shurven**—Up to 18 years of age.

**CHAIR**—Ms Atherton, do you wish to speak to the broad issues of the submission?

**Ms Atherton**—As you know, we do not provide a service; we advocate for children and young people. Our submission is really based on pointing the committee in the right direction to look at past research and evidence in this area and to see what children and young people think of these issues. The key issues we found from our research, evidence that has been provided and what the commissioner has seen and heard on her regional visits around Western Australia—I think she has travelled nearly 30,000 kilometres in a year—are that young people are the most vulnerable group of workers. They are predominantly in low-skilled occupations and they work part-time or casual in the retail and small business sectors. They experience difficulty negotiating with employers because of this and they have minimal bargaining powers. They often lack job security and have lower expectations about their treatment at work. They currently have fewer protections, lower pay, fewer conditions and are subjected to increased bullying, harassment and exploitation. That is what these surveys and opinion polls have been telling us.

Specifically in Western Australia, the commissioner has found that young people have fewer choices and opportunities, particularly in regional, rural and isolated parts of the state. That is particularly true for Aboriginal young people. The important factor here is the level of availability of local work and training opportunities. It is clearly obvious that those in metropolitan areas have greater access to these opportunities. Lack of public transport in these areas has also been cited as an issue with regard to training and employment. A key factor is that young people lack knowledge about and understanding of their employment rights, conditions and responsibilities and where to go for advice and information. Another concern for the commissioner is the impact of the current economic downturn on job availability, hours of work, pay, and even the impact of parents' unemployment on children and young people. A lack of

balance between work and study has an impact on their health and wellbeing and their educational performance.

Some of the key areas of action that the commissioner is advocating for include improving child-specific employment rights, working with partners on raising awareness of the employment services that are available, because there are many. There is a lot of information and a lot of agencies provide these services, but it is ad hoc and not coordinated as such. The commissioner is also advocating to increase participation and retention rates, whether that is in study and/or employment, and looking at new ways of engaging young people, such as combining schooling and apprenticeships. As stated in our submission, Australia does not do well compared with other OECD countries in terms of participation.

Whatever the topic area, the commissioner advocates about three main issues. One is that any initiatives and programs should be based on evidence and best practice. They should also be coordinated and collaborative, especially with agencies within the local community, young people should participate in key decision-making and services should be based on need. I commend the committee for its online poll during this inquiry. It is the first I have seen and it is really fantastic. Thank you.

The commissioner is also advocating for local employment programs given the regional issues we face in Western Australia. That encourages greater collaboration between the local communities, businesses and the education sectors to increase local opportunities for young people. Young people have told us during our regional visits that they have to follow a course of training or employment because of the limited choice that is available or they have to move away from home to the metropolitan area. Again, that presents a different set of transition issues. They also asked for flexibility in school timetabling to help with the balance of work and study and a range of culturally appropriate and indigenous programs to provide a mix of job experience with mentoring and training.

The systems and processes for employers could be simplified. A lot of vocational accreditation is voluntary. Simplifying that for employees would obviously be advantageous. We should involve and support parents in their children's future with advice and support in combining work and study. The commissioner is also advocating for a national approach and regulations and an examination of what each state is doing. There are a lot of programs and initiatives out there and we should take on board what is best practice and what has been evaluated so there are some national standards for children and young people. I note that other commissioners for children are advocating for the same things in their submissions. Also other services that are provided by agencies such as Centrelink or Job Network should take a youth-friendly approach. We should continue in this process of encouraging young people's participation. They are the main areas about which the commissioner advocates.

**CHAIR**—Is that a particular survey that you are referring to, or is it a result of the travelling and information gathering?

**Ms Atherton**—The points and the messages that I have mentioned are all taken from the examples I gave you in our submission and from the commissioner's travels.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. We might just get an overview from everyone and then come back. Otherwise we will be repeating questions to each of you. Ms Ioannidis, would you like to give us your view as an employer who works with young people?

**Ms Ioannidis**—I represent Hungry Jack's Pty Ltd in Western Australia at this hearing today. I appear as an employer and a representative of an enterprise-based RTO. Hungry Jack's operates 43 restaurants in Western Australia and we currently employ approximately 2,300 crew members and 190 managers in this state. The average age of our crew members is 21.5 years and we offer employment to a diverse group of applicants, including high school students, uni students, international students, school leavers and mature aged workers. The status of employment varies for our employees. Approximately 60 per cent hold part-time positions, approximately 20 per cent are casuals and 20 per cent hold full-time positions.

Hungry Jack's is an equal opportunity employer and provides a safe working environment. We also provide on-the-job training, orientation sessions, traineeships and career path opportunities for all of our employees. Hungry Jack's is an enterprise-based RTO and we place many of our employees in a traineeship. We believe this is a great opportunity for our staff to gain nationally recognised qualifications whilst working at Hungry Jacks. The benefits for an employee enrolled in a traineeship include increased knowledge and skills that they can apply whilst going about their daily work at Hungry Jack's and skills that they can transfer to any future employer. Having their skills formally recognised in the form of a qualification gives them greater confidence to work effectively in their chosen field.

Many of our crew members have progressed into Hungry Jack's management and are developing their skills through add-on experience, management traineeships and in-house training. Hungry Jack's RTO has school-based, part-time and full-time traineeship enrolments and they are completing qualifications in retail and business. As an employer of high school students, Hungry Jack's is flexible about the study requirements of our employees and we understand the importance of balancing the demands of work and study. Parents of students are required to sign employment application forms and agree to the shift availability stated on this form. This assures the manager that the student has parent consent to work these hours whilst studying. During exam time throughout the school year, student employees may request to reduce their shift availability due to their increased study load. Hungry Jacks, being a large employer with an average of 55 staff members per store, can easily accommodate these requests for reduced hours because we have enough staff to cover the students' shifts. Our peak business is over the school holidays and many of our employees who are high school students enjoy working extra shifts and earning more money during that period. We believe it is good business sense to be flexible to the needs of our employees, to maintain a positive work environment, to increase retention rates and to reduce the costs associated with staff turnover.

**CHAIR**—Thank you.

**Miss Djulbic**—Apprenticeships Australia employees apprentices and trainees and hosts them out to companies throughout Western Australia and more recently in the Northern Territory. At the moment we have just over 800 apprentices and trainees throughout the state across a range of occupational and industrial areas. We work closely with the host companies to tailor training programs that will best suit their needs. We also offer a lot of support and mentoring for the apprentices and trainees in those positions to ensure that they are getting the quality of training

they need to become tradespeople at the end of their training. We also ensure that the safety standards of the workplaces they enter meet our requirements. We will not place apprentices and trainees in with host companies that will not comply with our safety standards. We look after the apprentices' and trainees' rights in their workplace and make sure they are being met.

In recruiting for apprentices and trainees we look favourably at work experience either during school or post school. But at the same time it is evenly balanced with their results at school as well. We find it is important that some students get that balance between their work experience and their schooling. School-based traineeships are great as well. Apprenticeships Australia does not deal with them primarily, but we do have a few school-based trainees or pre-apprenticeship programs. They are a great way to enter into an apprenticeship or traineeship program at the end of schooling.

**CHAIR**—Thank you.

**Ms Griffiths**—I will provide a little bit of history. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry became involved with the school sectors about 23 years ago—I have been with the chamber for 22 years. We were approached by a group of teachers who said, 'Schools really work in isolation and business is operating in isolation. We really need to get together to achieve outcomes.' My first boss started work the same week that I did. It was Colin Barnett. He also had a very strong interest in education. Our position has always been that we will not tell you what to teach because we are not the experts in that field. However, we will tell you what we need and we will work with you to try to achieve that.

We have strong relationships with the three school sector systems and with the universities. We have an education and training committee, which looks at policy. That comprises HR or training managers of businesses and includes the Australian petroleum producers and Engineers Australia, and big and small companies. We run Apprenticeships Australia and the Retail Traders Association and we have a small and medium business forum. We are represented on the Curriculum Council and a number of advisory committees from universities down. I also sit on the board of the Career Advice Australia initiative the Swan Alliance. That involves 54 schools and it is one of the largest partnership programs. We also have the largest number of indigenous students in the metropolitan area, the largest number of refugees, the largest number of students with special needs and the largest number of students involved in the juvenile justice system.

We are also involved with the Career Education Association of Western Australia, Business Educators of Western Australia and the Economic Teachers Association of Western Australia. Over the years we have also been involved with the Red Cross First Steps initiative, which was a program designed to keep indigenous young people at school. It was an employment program and we worked with employers to try to ensure its success. Unfortunately it no longer operates because it was not funded and it required quite intensive attention. We needed to work with parents and guardians as well as the students. As far as it went, it was highly successful. It just did not produce big number outcomes, I suppose. The Swan Alliance has developed the Spice for Life program. I think I stated in the submission that Woolworths is involved in that program. It takes disabled young children and provides a training program over three years to try to prepare them for employment.

The committee would be aware of the Employability Skills program. This was developed through the Department of Education, Science and Training, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of Australia. Employers were sending a lot of different messages to schools. So a wide survey was done throughout Australia in regional and urban centres involving small, medium and large businesses to find a consistent message that we would provide. They came up with the skills framework. Also important in that—just as important as the competencies and skills that were listed—were the personal attributes.

I still have a lot of connections with schools and with programs that prepare young people for the workplace and we also provide teacher development. We find that overwhelmingly most of the kids that have had part-time or casual jobs have developed employability skills, are able to demonstrate them and are eminently more employable after they finish school. It has even been mentioned that university students who have been employed during their studies also demonstrate these skills. Those university students are who have not been employed are lacking. We have found that when employers are looking to employ someone they look at their resume or CV, and first of all they will look at their educational achievement and how well they have done. However, they then turn to see if they have had a part-time or casual job, because that in itself tells a big story.

**CHAIR**—Thank you.

**Mr Eastwood**—I would like to highlight a few points in our submission. We said that one of the important aspects of the school-to-work setup is the need to balance support and security of school life with the experience of workplace settings. We suggested that perhaps more could be done to ensure the fuller participation of parents and carers in the overall process so they get more involved than they are at present, in some areas at least. We have also noted that where schools offer a mix of part-time study and part-time work there are sometimes difficulties in ensuring the student's full-time participation in the academic, spiritual and community aspects of school life.

In the non-government sector there are also implications for state and federal government funding when students are attending school only part time. Some schools in rural and remote areas, or those with a reengagement mission, often adopt a four day a week study timetable, using the fifth day for part-time work or student appointments, visiting speakers and so on. Of course, that sort of engagement is much more difficult in rural and remote areas. I have a particular interest in that being a member of the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council for the past 10 or 12 years. Although I am a certified practising accountant by profession, I am also a parent member of the Western Australian College of Teaching Board, which provides interesting views of life in school and so on.

Rural and remote education is something that interests me particularly, having spent 10 years working in country areas. One of the aspects that impacts on that is better access to information technology in rural areas. It would be useful. I note the government's new broadband rollout will be implemented only in towns with more than 1,000 residents. That is a bit of a pity because many of those smaller towns have tended to die over the years and they need all the connection they can get with business and information technology.

These issues are being constantly pursued by the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council and also the Isolated Children's Parent's Association, as you probably know. I have attended a number of their conferences over the years and have been very impressed with their single-minded approach to getting some benefits for people in really remote areas, which are pretty sadly lacking at the moment in a lot of those areas.

One of the other things that the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council has encouraged and sponsored to some extent is school community education programs in some areas where people in the local community, including teachers, parents, students, businesses, shire councils and so on, have got together and provided training programs for young people who might otherwise not be either in school or training. Although in WA we have a government policy that students need to be in school or training until they are 17, it is sometimes not easy to facilitate that. Those sorts of programs help. The support of business in those sorts of programs is vital if they can provide some work for students.

Most senior colleges have more flexible timetables to allow an effective mix of study and work. It may also be advisable to consider spreading secondary studies over more than the normal two years—for example, to implement a year 13—to enable students to complete study and work requirements. Many schools have developed effective programs to assist those students who generally benefit from a combination of school and work and who are more likely to need significant support in the areas of literacy, numeracy, study skills and habits. If work is to be encouraged as a legitimate aspect of education then government legislation in the areas of work and income support may have to be changed to ensure that there are no unintended disincentives. Often people work and lose government support because of that. I think I might leave it at that.

**CHAIR**—That is great. Mr Jones, would you like to say something?

**Mr Jones**—I will talk about the regulatory framework at this stage and we may explore some of those other issues later on. The department clearly supports the idea of part-time work and has put in place a range of measures to recognise and support it. However, as you would be aware from going around the country, beneath that there are quite a few issues that need to be teased out to support young people.

The area I work in is called the Participation Directorate. We deal with all 16 and 17-year-olds across Western Australia, no matter where they are, if they are in non-government schools or government schools, if they are in apprenticeships, traineeships, work, community-based programs and so on. The regulatory or legislative framework around that is that they need to be in education, training or employment until the end of their seventeenth year at this stage. The issue is that it must be approved by the Minister for Education. We have a network of 100 participation managers and participation coordinators who actually support young people and families to get those processes through.

They submit a Notice of Arrangements, or an application for employment in the case of full-time employment, which still comes under the School Education Act. Then a participation coordinator will work with the employer, the young person and the family to see if that is, as you said earlier, 'meaningful'—we also say 'prospective'—and there is a career pathway attached to

it. Sometimes we will use it as an engagement tool for really alienated young people as a way of getting them back into some sort of mainstream activity.

More pertinent to this inquiry is the combination of options where a young person could do part-time schooling and part-time work and have that approved by the minister, or the minister's delegate, obviously. That is a problematic area for us; we do not have a lot of combinations, primarily because schools and TAFE colleges, particularly, are not really set up to allow that sort of flexibility. I think that is an area where we need to do a lot more work. That is for that group of young people. Then there is the other group of young people who are 14, 15 and so on who are full time at school and engaged in some sort of casual or part-time employment. As all of the other members have indicated, there is a range of issues. I do not think anything in my list will add to that. I am sure we will get an opportunity to talk about those. But we have put into place a range of measures to try to recognise some of that activity.

**CHAIR**—Thank you

**Ms Parer**—The main role of the Secondary Directorate, which I work for, is in supporting schools to implement new courses and endorsed programs for the Western Australian Certificate of Education, which we call WACE. New arrangements in the WACE have enabled students to be able to get recognition for part-time and casual work through the Work Skills endorsed program. That will give credit up to a maximum of two units out of 20. Schools are putting in place strategies to be able to support students in this. It does require a fair bit of work on the school's part and it is over and above what is usually required as part of the staffing ratios. Some schools are working with that at the moment trying to get it in place. It is suggested that this can be handled by parents and students. But I really believe there is a teaching and learning component in it that needs to be supported through the school.

There are other opportunities for workplace learning. I come from a background of being a VET and workplace learning coordinator in secondary schools for many years where students have been offered the opportunity to do workplace learning at school and supported by many of the other organisations that are represented here today. I think that the opportunity to be able to include part-time and casual work has introduced a whole new level of engagement in that we have students who are on a university pathway who are able to get credit for those two units as well rather than feeling that they are sacrificing some of their curriculum time to be able to do a workplace learning program.

Laurie mentioned needing more time to be able to achieve what a student needs to in the time they are at school. It is really good now that the WACE can be achieved by accumulating units from year 10 as well as in years 11 and 12. We now have schools that are getting their students enrolled into the endorsed program of Work Skills so that they can start to accumulate units towards their WACE at a much earlier stage. We also provide support for students who are undertaking school-based traineeships and apprenticeships. Some of these models provide an opportunity for students to earn a trainee wage while they are at school. This is very helpful for students in certain situations. I think that is probably all for the moment.

**CHAIR**—Let us start with the positive side. It is clear to the committee from the evidence we have received that there is value in young people having a work experience of one sort or another during their school years. That has come through very strongly. Many of you have

mentioned their confidence, self-esteem, independence and maturity and also their direct employability skills. I think mention was made of a list of skills and knowledge that they pick up that was perhaps undervalued in the past around personal organisational skills, personal communication skills and so forth. We accept that there is an inherent value in undertaking some work. The challenge for the committee is to determine at what point that turns from a benefit into a negative.

The other side of the evidence is that at some point—and we do not yet have a number of hours or anything like that—it actually becomes a hindrance and students start to sacrifice their learning and school performance because of their work demands. That is the sort of dynamic we are trying to work through. I would like to hear first about the positives and what contributes to making it a positive experience. One of the difficulties we have in this process is then putting pressure back on employers and saying, ‘Students are actually achieving something worthwhile while they are with you. Can you document, record and provide information on that?’ I am interested to know how you manage that and how integrated the qualifications you are providing might be with the school experience, and any barriers you might see to achieving that.

**Ms Ioannidis**—There are systems and procedures in place at Hungry Jack’s for orientation and training of staff. There are recordkeeping procedures dealing with what workstations they have learnt and been accredited on, the various materials they have been handed and so forth. That is all recorded. Training after that is basically on the job from the initial orientation session with the trainer. We normally buddy them with a more experienced staff member as well. Basically, the experience and skills are gained through on-the-job practice. We also offer traineeships to our part-time and full-time staff.

**CHAIR**—You talked about the part-time/casual split. Can you explain how you determine what is part-time and what is casual?

**Ms Ioannidis**—Information I have received from the state operations manager, Jacqui Hansen, who receives various payroll records from our departments—

**CHAIR**—So the classification of part time is someone with a set number of hours.

**Ms Ioannidis**—A minimum of nine hours a week under the award agreement and a maximum of 30 hours. Casual is a contract shift-by-shift basis and full time is a guaranteed 38 hours a week. If they are enrolled in a school based traineeship or part-time or full-time traineeship, of course, we record all the evidence for assessment and training and they maintain a training record book in conjunction with the employer. That is updated regularly according to the department’s requirements. That is basically how we monitor and maintain the training at Hungry Jacks, not only in the traineeship program but also at store level for non-traineeship employees.

**CHAIR**—Putting aside school based traineeships and apprenticeships, as an organisation do you seek to interact with your young employees’ schools at all about what they are learning on the job and how that might be integrated in the classroom experience?

**Ms Ioannidis**—Generally not, unless they are enrolled in a workplace program, like work experience or an In-step program or so forth.

**CHAIR**—I ask because it is one of the areas that is of interest to the committee. We have had young people say, ‘I’m doing a VET course in school and I have to go and do work experience for two weeks as part of that and I already work part time. I have to get all those generic employability the skills. Aren’t I getting them now?’ It would seem logical to ask their employers to document that and provide that as their employability skills rather than expect the young person to double up. Organisations like yours would manage that quite well.

**Ms Ioannidis**—I believe there are examples of that happening in the workplace at Hungary Jacks.

**CHAIR**—What about the situation more broadly for employers? A lot of them are not larger organisations that have those HR capacities. How do you think that would work?

**Ms Griffiths**—Employers by and large do pretty well in providing what was structured workplace learning as part of the curriculum and now as workplace learning in full modes as well as the other programs that come in, including programs for the disabled, the long-term unemployed and so on. Obviously it varies and bigger organisations are better able to deal with it—they have the HR resources, training resources and the background. You have to remember that when young people come into the workplace for the first time they are totally unskilled. They need to learn it all. Increased documentation for smaller employers and medium employers is difficult.

As Sue has just said, when they come in for workplace learning they have logbooks and their skills and competencies have to be ticked off, hours recorded and so on. Increased documentation is going to be a bit off putting unless it is simplified as much as possible. That is another thing we try to do—to make it as simple as possible. The other thing we could do is to provide examples of best practice and circulate them. It is then up to the employer whether or not they pick it up. To a lot of employers it is an add-on that they do; they accept it because this is their workforce of the future. In addition, most employers are mums, dads, grandparents and so on.

**CHAIR**—The other side of it that we are very conscious of is that you put more burden onto the employers. The other issue is that the quality of what you get out can decrease. Another employer might say, ‘I don’t trust these statements because I know people are just ticking them off and passing them through.’ In terms of the credibility and portability—moving it from one employer to another—I think employers will want to know there is actually a reasonable quality of assessment and reporting if they are going to rely on it as well. I am interested in what the department is doing. It is not something we have come across before in terms of formally providing some credit point recognition of young people’s part-time and casual work. Can you explain more fully what that does? I am assuming it is very early days.

**Ms Parer**—Yes. The program is in place. However, it is up to schools to go through the organisational processes to get it up and running and to find staff to supervise it. That is a different matter. However, the endorsed program allows students to record a minimum of 180 hours in the workplace in part-time work or a casual job. An evidence journal must also be kept. Apart from hours in that evidence journal, they need to keep a record of some of the sorts of things they do in the workplace that meet each of the employability skills. There is a page for

each. It is not as laborious as the logbook that is required for workplace learning or any of the school apprenticeship or traineeship models.

However, it does require the employer to sign off on it and it would require a parent, I suppose, to ensure these things are being done. That is the reason for my comment earlier about the fact that I think this needs to be coordinated from the school, even though in the documentation it does say that the responsibility lies with the student and the parents. I think that students who have not had an introduction to employability skills before would need to be coached through this process. They might need to have explained what sorts of things they do in the workplace that meet those skills. The recording has to be done. They will not get credit for that particular program if they do not have the evidence journal.

**CHAIR**—So it is driven by the student recording the experience themselves?

**Ms Griffiths**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—But for it to be accredited and recognised the employer has to look at it and say that he or she agrees that that is accurate.

**Ms Parer**—That is right.

**CHAIR**—That seems a reasonably good model for not putting it all back on the employer. What about the actual capacity to assess what the student is claiming? If the student is claiming money handling skills and so on, you do not have to see them in the workplace, you can do some level of assessment of that in another environment. Is there capacity for that sort of double-checking to maintain that quality?

**Ms Parer**—The evidence journal will need to be checked at the school level. But, basically, it requires the employer to have signed off that the things that have been claimed have been done in the workplace.

**CHAIR**—It would be interesting to know. We have been underway for a while, so we may come back to you for some further evidence about that.

**Dr JENSEN**—Ms Griffiths, you said that the CCI has adopted a cooperative approach in terms of work after school and, indeed, sometimes within school hours. What is the extent of that involvement and cooperation? Is it just the headline bodies? How many of the individual schools or individual businesses are getting involved and communicating and taking that cooperative approach and is the information at the level it needs to be?

**Ms Griffiths**—The schools develop a relationship with business. As a major employer body, we look at policy. As I have said, we have a commitment to young people for those two reasons. So, it is beholden on us to take this interest and to make it as easy as possible for employers to become involved.

**Dr JENSEN**—So you act as a facilitator in effect?

**Ms Griffiths**—Not really, only at the macro level. We will in some individual cases. For example, I said in the submission that our members in the private health sector were concerned about the attrition rate of nurses after they had graduated. They were leaving saying, ‘I did not know nursing was going to be like this.’ Schools were having difficulty in getting placements so that students could test their career assumptions. We got together and a partnership developed between three school sector systems, between Curtin University of Technology and now with St John Ambulance as well. Students are recruited in year 11 and go through a selection process. We accept up to 35 and we open it up to the regions as well now. It is an unfunded program, so we do not take responsibility for the cost of travel and accommodation. However, we work with the regions where we can to try to accommodate student placements there. They undergo a training program where they also achieve four units of competence towards certificate III in aged care. They have a placement that fits in with the requirements of the Curriculum Council. They do a 55-hour placement in an acute hospital environment with logbooks signed off by the employer and the same in the aged care sector.

Because they are tertiary entry pathway students, they need to do most of this in their school holidays. They also have two days out at Curtin—orientation day and another special day. They need to be studying at least four tertiary entry subjects. Of course, one must be English and, although it is not a requirement, human biology or an integrated science subject and a maths subject is preferred. If on the school-based assessment at the end of year 12 they have achieved at least a minimum of a C in those four subjects and they have completed all elements of the program they get direct entry to Curtin University Bachelor of Science (Nursing) without having to sit the examination. They are encouraged to sit, but they do not have to. Once they are accepted, we make recommendations to Curtin based on their school results and completion of the program.

**Dr JENSEN**—‘Flexibility’ was mentioned at yesterday’s hearings in Adelaide and it has been mentioned here. In some ways that raises alarm bells for me. If you go overboard with flexibility you end up damaging the very thing you want to achieve—that is, a good education outcome. Being too flexible can almost devalue education. You are in effect providing a backdoor where more kids will drop out prior to finishing high school. What are your views on that? Where should the lines of flexibility be drawn? Of course, the other aspect is that there is only a certain amount that a school can hope to achieve in terms of flexibility before the education process is damaged.

**CHAIR**—Is that a question to the panel?

**Dr JENSEN**—Yes it is.

**Mr Jones**—Until the end of the fifteenth year I would argue that the option should be school, or school, or school. The schools should accommodate kids who are doing part-time work to the extent that they can. It is really in the sixteenth and seventeenth years that we begin to explore much more flexible options. We do have schools that have radically changed their timetables and structure to accommodate very flexible arrangements for senior school students without endangering what we call the TEE, or the tertiary entrance pathway. In fact, some would argue that those flexible arrangements in many cases have enhanced the TEE pathway by having block classes instead of simply having subjects timetabled through the grid. It has given big chunks of

time for senior school students to run workshops, laboratories and those sorts of things, which are more difficult on a fixed grid.

**Dr JENSEN**—Is there any data about both retention and the effect on TEE scores with those schools where they have quite radically changed the flexibility arrangements?

**Ms Parer**—I do not know that there is data available on that at this point in time.

**Dr JENSEN**—That is something that the committee would very much like to see. Despite the anecdotal nature of some of the discussion, albeit that it is very interesting, we really need to see evidence to support taking policy decisions one way or another.

**CHAIR**—Can you take that on notice and perhaps the department can look at some of that data and provide it to the committee?

**Ms Griffiths**—We are quite firm that a good education is the grounding for everything else that comes after. We would lean in that direction. Sitting on the Senior Secondary Education Committee of the Curriculum Council, we do have some concerns that there has been a drop—and we are not identifying any reasons—in the number of students taking the more challenging maths and science subjects and also languages.

**Dr JENSEN**—Peter, had you finished? I butted in there and cut you off mid flight.

**Mr Jones**—No, that is probably essentially the point that I wanted to make. The other point I would make while I have the microphone is the additional challenge of the economic downturn, which I note is in a lot of the committee's papers anyway. Our evidence has it that we have 50 per cent fewer 16 and 17-year-olds in employment. Our start-ups for apprenticeships are about 50 per cent down as well. So we are getting a lot more young people coming back to school.

**Dr JENSEN**—One of the interesting things that came out of hearings yesterday was that in Europe and Asia they are actually quite stunned about the employment of kids who are at school. How much of that is an issue with economic circumstances as they were then when we had very high job take-up by students and effectively full employment, particularly in Western Australia, and businesses recruiting students to fill places that otherwise would be unfilled? How much of it is the drive of students wanting to get involved and how much is in effect top down?

**Mr Jones**—I take on board what Anne was saying about CCI and other organisations and the very positive work they do. However, by and large, employers have not had to do a lot. I think the motivation has come from young people out there looking for work, wanting and income to buy the next iPod, the independence that brings and so on.

**CHAIR**—Does anyone else want to make a comment about that?

**Mr Eastwood**—We stated in our submission that for TAFE and employment-bound students any authentic workplace experience obviously adds value to the training program and the student's broader education. Literacy and numeracy experiences are often specific to the workplace environment. Whereas for university-bound students, part-time work can adversely affect university entry prospects, especially for the higher tertiary entrance rank courses where

there is a fair bit of competition for places, such as medicine, law, medical-related courses and so on. Excessive work hours can then impact pretty heavily on their achievement levels at years 11 and 12. On the other hand, even a limited exposure to a range of workplace experiences will also be useful in pursuing later job opportunities.

There is clear evidence to suggest—and I have some information from the Catholic Education Office—that many students are undertaking far too much work and this has adversely affected their school studies. One Catholic school in a lower socioeconomic area—which I think Dennis referred to—found that some students in this category exceeded 35 hours per week in casual work, yet they were attending school for 28 hours a week. Their attendance at school was spasmodic and their results were fairly poor. The average in that particular area was 12 to 15 hours of work a week, whereas the conventional wisdom seems to be that any more than about six hours or eight hours a week can often have adverse effects on the achievements of these students in years 11 and 12.

**CHAIR**—Is that the position held by the Catholic Education Office? Is there a broader subset of data that fed into your submission that you are able to provide to us?

**Mr Eastwood**—No, I do not have access to it. You would need to contact the Catholic Education Office for that. That is just taking some comments from information I have had from various committees and things I have worked on there. I suppose a lot of that is driven by the lower socioeconomic circumstances of some of those people in those areas who need to work to pay their school fees and all that sort of thing.

**Dr JENSEN**—You also raised the issue of work and income support, legislation and so on. I think it is fair to say that we were quite staggered by the way in which students at school are not given information about income support. We had one student who had finished year 12 last year but she had been absolutely unfunded by her family since she was 15. The income support she was entitled to was going to her parents. She was fully supporting herself in her own accommodation and not getting any income support at all—it was going to her parents. She was unaware of it. That leads into how we can get better information to students and employer versus employee responsibilities. A number of students said that they would phone their employer and say, ‘I’m sorry, I can’t work a shift on Thursday.’ The employer would say, ‘Okay, but you organise your replacement.’ That is very different from what most of us would expect in the workplace.

**CHAIR**—Every student said it and they thought it was the norm.

**Dr JENSEN**—How do we get that sort of information out there and also make it clear to employers that that additional responsibility on students is unjustified?

**Mr Eastwood**—I think it is a matter of more information going out through schools, employers and parents being encouraged and so on. It is a matter of how far it gets. Communication is always difficult. We can send out mountains of information, whether people read it and do something about it is another matter, I guess.

**Ms Atherton**—As we mentioned in our submission, it goes back to that coordinated approach. There are a lot of services and a lot of agencies that provide advice, but it is ad hoc. It

might be dependent on a particular skill or agency in an area. What we are planning to do over the next few months is to undertake a huge consultation process with young people in Western Australia to find out some of the issues and to get answers to some of the questions that you have asked as part of your inquiry. We will also ask questions about the current economic situation and what the impact is on young people.

As part of that consultation we will be working with other agencies like consumer protection, labour relations, and hopefully education departments, to conduct an awareness raising campaign. What you suggested in one of your newsletters is that there is at the local level a coordinated service that is a one-stop shop for children and young people that has this information and they can get advice. When we have spoken with young people they have also asked for counselling. They have found the transition might be hard for them, they might experience bullying or they have left home to undertake employment and education. That one-stop shop is what we would advocate.

**Dr JENSEN**—Someone yesterday suggested what they referred to as a ‘navigator’. Perhaps that is something the education system can take on board in terms of perhaps feeding a navigator into schools. It could be a teacher or someone from outside who has the requisite knowledge and who can actually speak to students within the school so that they know exactly where to go. Going to a body like Centrelink or whatever can be very daunting for most people, never mind students.

**CHAIR**—We are moving into the challenges area. On the positive side, I would like to come back to Louise and Helen. If we accept that there is intrinsic value in students getting work experience while they are studying, clearly it is a real issue for students in areas where there is much less likely to be work opportunities. One of the things that was raised with the committee by the Australian National Schools Network was the equity issue that a lot of young people in isolated places—it does not have to be that isolated—do not get that opportunity. The other side of it is often that they are doing an awful lot of work, but it is unpaid. It might be family farm work or family caring responsibilities. To some extent they are getting those generic workplace skills, but not in a paid environment. Did you see a real issue for young people in more isolated areas in trying to get those sorts of skills together or getting them recognised?

**Ms Atherton**—The commissioner has observed in a few areas that a lot of funding has been put into communities and they have built new facilities for young people, such as swimming pools, but they are closed because there is no trained staff to operate them. The commissioner is advocating a collaborative approach in looking at local need and working with the education sector and businesses in training young people in those areas perhaps to run some of those facilities. That was just one example. The Hedland youth group has taken on training for young people so they can actually teach some of the children to swim. It is just that there is a lot of funding and facilities, but there is no staff to man them. It is really looking at local need.

In terms of the other issue in regard to unpaid work, I think there is some evidence. We do not know the full picture of that and hopefully we can address some of that in the survey we want to undertake. Having met with the Curriculum Council of Western Australia I know that they really want to look at this voluntary work and incorporate that into the WACE certificate as well. That is another positive.

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**Mr Eastwood**—I want to comment on the issue of equity in country areas in particular. One of the points that has come to light in recent years has been that in some rural and remote areas there are not enough students to run a particular subject. Students in government schools can access the School of Isolated and Distance Education courses at very little cost. If you are in a Catholic or non-government school, the cost can be up to \$2,000 per subject per year.

**CHAIR**—So even when we provide opportunities, sometimes the cost is prohibitive?

**Mr Eastwood**—Yes. If we are talking about equity, those courses should be available to all students in country areas, whether they are in government or non-government schools. It is a particular case of disadvantage as a result of being in a rural area.

**CHAIR**—We are trying to focus on the positive side, but we are now moving into the challenges. You identified our online survey, which was a real experiment. It is a challenge to find it. The parliament is not exactly good at doing this stuff. Our secretariat has done a sterling job in breaking down the barriers to this sort of participation on the web. The address is [www.aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au), which is the Australian parliament website. Click on ‘committees’, and find our committee, which is the education and training committee, and you will find the student survey. It is a challenge to get to it. Close to 2,000 young people have taken the opportunity to provide us with information on that website.

**Dr JENSEN**—Quite a few from this school.

**CHAIR**—Yes. It is clearly a big issue for young people. With all due respect, we did it because we have a view and our experience, but often we hear about a very different reality from young people. Some of that reality is quite shocking. I would say that far and away the majority of young people who are doing casual or part-time work—probably eight to 12 hours a week—love it. They are often working for large employers, like Hungry Jacks, with good structures in place and support. However, where it goes wrong, it is pretty disastrous. There are employers whose view is ‘your work is your priority’, and they are not very well equipped to negotiate. On the other hand if the young people approach their school the response is, ‘You should not be working. You should be studying and doing schoolwork. That is not our problem.’ They are trying to navigate. With the best will in the world, parents want to intervene, negotiate and advocate, and young people say, ‘Get your nose out. Don’t say anything to the boss because I won’t get another shift. Don’t be a pain in the neck.’ It is clear there are some real issues bubbling away about how that is managed. That is the other side of the challenges. We are trying to find effective ways to work through them.

**Mr IRONS**—It is great to see someone from Hungry Jack’s here. That obviously means you are concerned about young people. It was disappointing listening to some of the evidence we heard from young people yesterday. The commitment that they have outside their education program is to their working life. One boy was leaving school at 2.00 pm because of his work commitments. The employer might not know that he is in year 11 or year 12, but I wonder about that situation. There were people talking about their stress levels because they were working so many hours—they were actually working more hours than they were going to school. I would like some feedback on that, particularly from Hungry Jacks. The kids were all well trained.

Anyone who worked in a fast food outlet called it the ‘hospitality industry’; they did not refer to it as a fast food outlet. Because you are here you must be concerned. What are your thoughts? I am an employer myself. Would an employer go to the trouble of finding out the situation and say, ‘Our shift starts at 2.00 pm, what time do you finish school?’ Or would they say, ‘That is the shift, bad luck. You have to work if you want the job.’

**Ms Ioannidis**—The managers at Hungry Jack’s discuss the situation with the student and the parents and decide what time they can get to work after school. That is negotiated on an application form as well. Of course, we understand the study requirements of the students and try to accommodate that. I spoke to three restaurant managers this morning about how they effectively support their employees in study and work. They have some really good strategies in place to support that in the store.

**Mr IRONS**—That is good. The worry was that some kids were working two shifts in a day. They were scheduled to work an afternoon shift and because someone else did not turn up they were called in early and the ended up working two shifts in a day.

**Ms Ioannidis**—We would not support that.

**Ms Griffiths**—There are two sides to that coin. I have interviewed students for an In-Step program and I said, ‘Gee, you are working a lot of hours.’ They have responded, ‘Yes, I am buying a car.’ They do not have to work those hours. Of course, there are instances of the employer imposing pressure. That is where the examples of best practice come in.

**CHAIR**—One of the problems is that sometimes their manager is another student. There is the dynamic of an 18-year-old supervising a 16-year-old, both students and the 18-year-old is going, ‘Yeah mate, no problems, but you solve the problem. You find somebody else. You bother your mates who work here to get someone to do the shift.’ To some extent it is about the training of management and the support of management when we are often dealing with young people supervising young people.

**Ms Ioannidis**—I agree. There are many up and coming talented young managers in our system. Yes, the maturity level varies, as does the educational background. There is a point of reference or a mentor in every store. It is usually the restaurant manager or the district manager. They provide support to the young managers and crew members of the store. It would be expected that if the young manager is confronted with issues that they perhaps do not have the skills to handle, they would know whom they need to refer that situation to. There are open lines of communication between the restaurant manager and their young assistant managers in the stores.

**Dr JENSEN**—Not one of them said that they did not like working there. They just spoke about the hours they worked and their lack of social life. But that is coming into the real world and becoming an adult. You talk about the pressures of cars as well. I was amazed that in South Australia they can get their licence at 16. One girl was actually paying off a debt resulting from a car accident she had. She was working 35 hours a week purely to pay off an insurance debt and trying to do year 12 and qualify for further education. There are always pigeonholes that we cannot always put people into and they slip through the cracks. That is something that we as

employers and government must look at to try to solve those problems and to stop people becoming stressed, particularly young people.

**Ms Griffiths**—One of the key employability skills attributes is the ability to balance work and life.

**CHAIR**—Those who were doing more than 25 hours work a week were adamant that they were managing fine and that they had it all under control. I suppose the problem for us is that we are actually dealing with a part of the work force that you have a responsibility to beyond the normal worker responsibility. I am not saying that they are not best placed to make judgements for themselves, but they do need guided decision making at that age. To some extent the concern is that they block out parents because they quite like all the money they are bringing in. It is not until after they do their exams that they realise that perhaps they were not studying as much as they needed to. As employers and parents we have to say, 'You may think you are managing this, but you need to put the brakes on a bit. It is not a sustainable lifestyle.' One young man who was getting home at 12.00 am or 12.30 am and doing two hours study and getting up to go to school assured us there was no problem with that. That is one of the issues.

More broadly, we really appreciate your contribution to work-school balance issue. The Australian National School Network is talking about community compacts; that is, getting communities together with schools, employers and parents and asking what is going on in workplaces in our community and how we can all support each other to make it more effective. We are hoping that by doing this we are also raising that and encouraging people as much as we can to try to find out from young people directly what is really going on. Sometimes the stories are far different from what is reported in more open forums. We very much appreciate your contribution today. Thank you all for your attendance. If you have been asked to provide additional material, please forward it to the secretariat. You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence to which you can make corrections of grammar and fact. Thank you again for your participation today. It was an excellent forum and we really appreciate your contributions.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.33 am to 11.15 am**

[11.15 am]

**FLETCHER, Mrs Jo-Anne, Private capacity**

**GUTHRIE, Mr Rod, Deputy Principal, Leeming Senior High School**

**HILL, Mrs Marie Alma, Private capacity**

**MORCOMBE, Mr Ross, Principal, Leeming Senior High School**

**MURRAY, Mrs Elaine, Executive Officer, Parents and Citizens Executive, Leeming Senior High School**

**POBJOY, Mrs Carolyn, Business Manager, Leeming Senior High School**

**PURDY, Mr Christopher, Private capacity**

**PURDY, Mrs Joanne Marie, Private capacity**

**RICHARDSON, Mrs Deborah Anne, President, Parents and Citizens Committee, Leeming Senior High School**

**SEMPLE, Ms Judith Pamela Jane, Deputy Principal, Leeming Senior High School**

**STATES, Mr Ian, Deputy Principal, Leeming Senior High School**

**WRIGHT, Mr Steve, VET Coordinator, Leeming Senior High School**

**CHAIR**—I welcome to today's hearing representatives from Leeming Senior High School. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that this hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore warrants the same respect as the proceedings of both houses.

I thank everyone for taking the time to be with us today and ask you all to bear with us as we go through the committee's processes. As I said earlier, these hearings are an official part of the parliamentary process and there has to be a full Hansard record of everything that is said. We will attempt to assist Hansard by making sure that we identify ourselves by name before making any comment. That will help us to ensure that we attribute the comments that are made to the correct person. We are inquiring into the ability of students to combine and balance their work and study.

The minister referred this matter to us because it became quite clear from data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics that an increasing percentage of young people are working while they at school. Ten years ago the figure was around 31 per cent or 32 per cent, but today it has risen to 52 per cent, which represents a significant number of young people who are engaged in work. The other side to that is that the nature of the work has changed, because much of it is in

the hospitality and the retail industries, and the hours that are worked are much more extensive than they might once have been. I use as an example when I was a student at high school. I remember that nearly everybody had a part-time job, but that was done on a Thursday night or on a Saturday morning as that was the only time that work was available.

Students that are now working, for example, at a fast food outlet, might be doing five night shifts and that is having a clear impact on their ability to manage successfully work and their schoolwork. Clearly there is value in the ability of a student to gain work experience. We have received a significant amount of evidence relating to the skills that are gained—a student might not want to have a career in hospitality—such as confidence building, independence, self-management skills and a range of other skills. We do not want to treat work as a problem; we want to work out how to better integrate work with a student's qualifications and experience at school.

That will give you a broad overview of what this committee is looking at. We are pleased that we are able to talk directly with parents and with teachers who are dealing with students every day. All the members of this committee are parents. We have observed that one of the great challenges for young people in this area is that parents often are the last people that they want engaged in managing their lives. That presents a real challenge for parents as well as employers. This morning we talked to some employers and we established that even those employers with the best will in the world often do not know what is going on at the shift level and do not know what issues have come up.

Thank you very much for coming along today. We might commence by addressing the problems that you have experienced as a result of young people attempting to balance work with school and study. When you heard about this inquiry you might have observed something in particular and you might have thought that it was a real issue. Carolyn is ready to start. Thanks, Carolyn.

**Mrs Pobjoy**—Last year my daughter finished year 12. As a parent I watched her start a part-time job and the money became a big thing for her. She was working in a restaurant and her studies started falling because the money became more of a thing for her. As much as you try to say to them, 'Your studies have to come first', all their friends have part-time jobs and it becomes a peer thing with them. I found that I had to step in and say, 'You cannot work until 11.30 pm on a week night because you have to go to school the next morning', or, 'You have swimming training', or something else.

**CHAIR**—It is not so much a question of her being offered that much work; she was keen to be doing that work?

**Mrs Pobjoy**—Yes. Her work would say, 'We need someone for Tuesdays so we will get someone else', and she would say, 'I can do that.' At first it was the money and then she bought the clothes. If she had to go to a party she had to get a new dress. Money is now a real thing for her and her group of friends.

**CHAIR**—I think we underestimate how significant that is in their lives. There are many more things on which young people can spend their money these days.

**Mrs Pobjoy**—Yes. You said earlier that when you were younger you worked on Thursday nights or on Saturdays. Now a lot of places offer work on every night of the week if they want to do it, for example, from Sunday night until 1 o'clock in the morning.

**CHAIR**—Did you look at the option of talking to her employer yourself?

**Mrs Pobjoy**—I wanted to put it back on her a little because she needed to be responsible. She ended up figuring it out and she resigned because she said she was getting tired. She found a job that she did only on Thursday nights and on Saturdays.

**CHAIR**—She needed to learn a lesson?

**Mrs Pobjoy**—She did and she did not, but money is still a thing for her. She is in her first year of university this year and money is still a thing for her; she still wants to earn money.

**Dr JENSEN**—When she was working at the restaurant did she try to negotiate her hours with her employer? You said that she found other work on Thursday nights and on Saturday morning. Were the hours that she was working at the restaurant an issue for her because the restaurant was not prepared to negotiate with her?

**Mrs Pobjoy**—In a way, yes. On a Tuesday night she would ask, 'Can I finish at 10 o'clock?' and they would say, 'No, we need you until 11.00 pm', or they would say, 'Yes, that is fine.' At the time she did not have her licence so I would have to go and pick her up at 10.45 on a Tuesday night. She would come straight home from school and then go to work, so no homework was done, her studies were affected, and she was tired and everything else. Her current employers are not as demanding but she is no longer working in a restaurant.

**Dr JENSEN**—Is she now working in a larger organisation where there is more slack for those working shift hours?

**Mrs Pobjoy**—I think there is more slack in a large organisation.

**Dr JENSEN**—Was this the case here?

**Mrs Pobjoy**—No. This was a privately owned restaurant. It was just a little restaurant but it was always busy.

**Dr JENSEN**—I am asking about the employer that she is working for now?

**Mrs Pobjoy**—She went to a sports shop so she works Thursday nights and Saturdays. If she works during the week she finishes by 5.30 pm. I think a lot of students go for hospitality jobs because they are easier jobs to get.

**CHAIR**—Would anybody else like to say anything?

**Mrs Fletcher**—I have two daughters. One is in a similar situation to Carolyn's daughter in that she is at university this year. But last year she worked as well and she has been working since she was 13. As much as we tried to convince her to cut back her workload because she was

doing TEE, as Carolyn said, the money is important to them and she kept doing it. As a result she did not get the TEE that she had hoped for. She got into university but did not—

**Dr JENSEN**—But not into the course that she wanted?

**Mrs Fletcher**—She got into the course but she did not get the TEE that she could have got if she had not worked so much and she had concentrated more on her studies. She is working with Eagle Boys and they do not finish until midnight. Even now she is still there at midnight and she goes to university at 8 o'clock the next morning. However, because she wants the money she will not stop working. She has been applying for other jobs since November. She has had five years experience but she is finding it difficult to find something to fit in with university.

My other daughter, who is in year 11, is also working. Where she works and the shifts that she works are fine but there are two problems. First, she gets homework from school that is due the next day. If that is the night she is working, she works from 4.00 pm until 8.30 pm and she then comes home and does two or three hours homework to get it done for the next day. There is probably not much that can be done about it from the school side. From the employer's side she has had nights when she has had so much homework that she has rung her boss and said, 'I cannot come in. Can someone else work the shift because I have heaps of homework?' and her work will not let her have the night off and she has to go to work.

I understand that they have a business to run but she is stuck in the middle. 'Do I do the homework and lose my job, or do I go to work and then have to sit up until midnight to do the homework?' It is a bit of a battle for them, but they do it for the experience as well as for the money. They are also learning what is out there.

**CHAIR**—Jo-Anne you encapsulated the dilemma that we are facing in this inquiry. When we talk to employers they say to us, 'We are good at understanding.' They sincerely believe that they are understanding. When we talk to schools they say, 'We are flexible and we try to manage all this.' The problem is that the young people, who are sitting in the middle, often do not tell both sides what challenges they are facing. When we asked students whether they told the teacher they said no. They would not have thought to tell the teacher because they do not think it is legitimate. It is their choice to be at work and if they cannot do the homework it is their problem.

**Mrs Fletcher**—Exactly. It looks like a cop-out because they have not done their homework.

**Dr JENSEN**—Ross, I refer to the issue of homework. How much coordination is there between teachers and students and how much coordination is there between teachers themselves in relation to a student's homework workload? There is a potential for clashes with homework and work and there is also a potential for clashes with the homework that is allocated by different teachers.

**Mr Morcombe**—Most teachers would be putting homework and assessment work on a schedule and students should have that schedule. What Jo-Anne has mentioned happens from time to time but it should not be the norm. It should not happen very often and it might be a completion of work. Chris might be able to correct me as he is the only student here. In reality in most cases there is a schedule for assessment, assignments or whatever, and they should run over

a week, two weeks or thereabouts. That enables students to plan how they work towards it. It does not solve the issue when some of the assignments are major assignments, and they will take a lot of time to work on.

Students might be on what we would call a six-subject load. They might all be university entry subjects and they might add to that music or something of that kind. It is well nigh impossible to try to fit anything else around it and to succeed or do well. With their lives becoming so full I am concerned that they are missing out on sports and joining with groups and community groups. It seems to me that everything now is focused around school and work. A lot of these other things that are an important part of their lives are now being sidelined.

**Dr JENSEN**—Over the years have you become aware of how a student's workload outside school—and I am talking about paid work—impacts on his or her school work? Are you aware of greater problems such as socialisation, obesity or anything like that as a result of their lack of participation in extra curricula activities that they might have undertaken previously?

**Mr Morcombe**—I have not done any research into it to determine whether there has been an increase in obesity.

**Dr JENSEN**—I am asking anecdotally.

**Mr Morcombe**—Not anecdotally either. I know that not so many of them are engaged in sporting activities. The sporting clubs do not have the same number of people that would normally be participating. If we conducted a survey of students I am sure we would find that it has changed dramatically over the years.

**CHAIR**—Chris, do you want to comment on the homework management issue? You can be completely honest as you are protected by parliamentary privilege.

**Mr Purdy**—I always found that most of the teachers I have had usually are very lenient with it. If I have work one night and I say, 'I have to work tonight' they understand that and they come back to me and say, 'You can work on it during the weekend.' Usually homework that is given on a Thursday is due on a Friday. However, I do not get that amount of homework. I have to study, but I do not get the amount of homework that some other school students might have.

**CHAIR**—It would depend on the subjects?

**Mr Purdy**—Yes, it depends on the subjects quite a bit.

**Mr IRONS**—How many assignments do you get?

**Mr Purdy**—Overnight? I do not get many.

**Mr IRONS**—I am going back to what you said earlier.

**Mr Purdy**—The latest assignment I got was an eight-week assignment. It was a big assignment and it was worth 80 per cent of my marks. If they give us an assignment for after school they give us a few days to work on it during class, which helps.

**CHAIR**—The teacher-parent part of me now comes to the fore. My son said to me, ‘I have an assignment that is due tomorrow. I do not have time to do it because I have to go to work. Can you write me a note for school?’ Often a bit of investigation indicates that it had been waiting in the basket for quite a while. The teacher part of me realises that there will be some form of cynicism about whether or not it is legitimate when students call for a balance. Chris, I am picking up from you that your organisation has set shifts. However if someone from work rings you up and says, ‘You need to come in now’ there is no flexibility about it. However, as you have set assignment times and frameworks you can work around that?

**Mr Purdy**—It also depends on the company you work for. If I were rostered for one night at my job I would know about it at least two weeks in advance. I would then have time to cancel that shift if I thought something was going to happen. If we are called up to work because it is going to be a busy day, they give me the option and say, ‘Can you or can you not work?’ I am never put in a position where they say, ‘We need you to come in right now.’

**Dr JENSEN**—How much pressure is put on you when you are asked to work a shift? Do you feel pressured to work because you believe that if you say no you will probably not be offered another shift?

**Mr Purdy**—There is always that pressure. I have talked to people in my year and in the year below who have that same dilemma. Some of them feel pressured. They believe that if they say no one time they will not be asked again. I understand that but I think it depends on the relationship between you and your manager. If you say to them on the phone, ‘I cannot work tonight because I have homework but if it was any other situation I could’, they would be very understanding. I am friends with my manager and my supervisors, so they would understand. I let them know whether I have any assignments that are due in the next few weeks. I think it depends on the relationship between you and your employer.

**CHAIR**—How old is your manager, Chris?

**Mr Purdy**—She is 50 but she has two kids.

**CHAIR**—One of the big problems is that when young people are being managed by someone a year or two older than them the dynamics are much less likely to work effectively.

**Mr Purdy**—I work in a company that employs people from 15 to however old you can get.

**CHAIR**—That is yet to be determined!

**Mr Purdy**—One of my supervisors is a year older than me. She is capable of ringing me up and asking me to work, but once again I have known her since I started there, so she would understand. I supervise myself because sometimes I also supervise people. It really depends on the relationship. Luckily I have not had to call up anybody and ask them to work. Usually that task is given to the higher-ranking staff. I think it depends on your relationship.

**Mr IRONS**—I go back to what Jo-Anne said about her second daughter who had a homework problem. Steve might be able to answer this question. Yesterday in Adelaide I asked one of the boys a question. He did not seem to understand the consequences, the responsibilities and the

duties that go with getting a job. If you put yourself out there to work there are issues and responsibilities that you have to meet. If you do not meet them you will face other issues. I do not know whether or not you have experienced that. Do you think that kids do not know what is entailed, or what will be their duties and responsibilities when they start working part time or full time?

**Mr Wright**—As is the case in schools, students are learning as they are experiencing life. This is just another experience for them. I think it is a steep learning curve. I listened to the conversation earlier. I teach an economics class and I have students in that class with homework issues. I find that different students can manage it more efficiently than others. I think it is a management and an employability skill. They are managing their time correctly. That is the issue here. Some students can manage casual work very well but others cannot. I think it is the old cliché of providing strategies for students to manage their time. How do you manage your time efficiently? That is something at which we should look.

**CHAIR**—One of the things that extends from that and around which we have been engaged—the comment was made by the panel this morning—is the recognition that these are young adults learning to make independent decisions. However, they are learning. Adults in their lives—parents, teachers and employers—must be a part of that. Some employers have said to us, ‘There is no pressure on them.’ That is probably what you saw with your daughters, Jo-Anne.

Employers tell us, ‘There is no pressure on them to take the additional shifts. They are willing to take them, or they are asking for them.’ They are involved in those circumstances. Do you assess how many shifts they are doing that week and make the call yourself? For occupational health and safety reasons and all sorts of other reasons it is not reasonable to have a student who is doing a 30-hour week at school and also doing a 20-hour to 25-hour week in the workplace. You have touched perfectly on these issues. They are learning how to make decisions.

**Mr Wright**—I believe it is a valuable experience for them. It is a first-hand reality check and they need to do something about it if it is not working.

**CHAIR**—Does anybody else have experiences to relate?

**Mr States**—From the point of view of students and their assessable tasks, the schools have a policy and those policies are based on the authority that runs the curriculum in the schools, for example, the Curriculum Council in Western Australia. It has a policy about assessment tasks, when they have to be done, et cetera, and what students are expected to get. All students get a schedule for the year’s assessment task, when things are due, and on what grounds they can get an extension, for example. Usually it is illness or some other serious circumstance. Are employers aware that the year 11 and year 12 students that they are employing are subject to an authority that goes beyond the school?

All that the school is doing is implementing the authority’s policy. That could be one way of advising and informing employers that students at schools are subject to these requirements, and they cannot get out of them. This might enable students to exercise some negotiation rights with them, as they do with their teachers if they there are exceptional circumstances. They can negotiate with teachers and say, ‘We need an extension’, and similarly with their employers. Perhaps that is one approach that can be taken.

**CHAIR**—That is interesting. Those employers who try to manage this responsibly say that when young people sign up to work with them they get an agreed shift pattern. They will agree to how many shifts and what shifts they are doing in a week, and they require their parents to look at that and sign off on it. The problem with that is that it does not allow for assessment and testing, which is not done weekly but in block groups. As you said, perhaps some dialogue is needed. The Australian National Schools Network referred in evidence to a community compact—communities getting together with schools, parents and employers and having a conversation about how they are managing this.

Everybody is so busy that they are not talking to each other; they are talking through the students all the time. Everything is channelled through student information and to an extent students are struggling to manage and understand that. Chris talked earlier about the fact that he is confident engaging with his supervisors, but we have spoken to other young people who would not dream of saying no and who are terrified that they will not get any more work if they do. That might not be the case, but they feel that way. I think school participation is a worthwhile thing.

**Mr States**—It becomes apparent to us when we identify students in years 11 and 12 at educational risk. One of the conversations we have with those students is, ‘How much part-time work are you doing and how much control do you have about how much part-time work you are doing?’ Often it is the case that they are working too much, which is what puts them at educational risk. It happens when a crisis occurs, the school becomes aware of it, and decisions have to be made in crisis mode about a reduction in workload. Again, parents and students are put in a position of saying, ‘We have a problem.’ I think you are right: the problem must be dealt with. Everybody needs to be made aware of what happens when things break down.

**CHAIR**—Exactly.

**Mrs Hill**—My students do not go to this school but we are definitely at the crossroads. We have a son in year 12 and a son in year 9. The son in year 9 is desperate to get a job because everybody else in his class wants a job. The year 12 boy has been working since year 11 and we have been looking at his currency. Why does he want to work? Students in years 11 and 12 are faced with driving lessons, they have university looming with textbooks, fees, et cetera, so they want to get ahead of things.

Even in this economic climate my son has a really good job, but we ask him, ‘Do you really need that job or should you be studying?’ His father is an accountant and we are fairly well informed about things. It is important for a lot of kids to keep that stability, to have references and all those sorts of things behind them, and experience for when they go off to university and they are looking for further employment. It is very valuable.

**CHAIR**—What sort of work is he doing?

**Mrs Hill**—Can I mention the name of the company?

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**Mrs Hill**—He works with the Hoyts corporation. He works with money through the selling of tickets, lollies and all those sorts of things that they do. They have to balance tills, check cinemas and close up at the end of the night, which is another issue. I had a conversation with Jo-Anne Fletcher, another parent, about the level of work that is expected of a 16-year-old. What 16-year-old would be able to maintain security in a cinema if there were a fight? For example, the other day a drunken Aboriginal woman made it into the cinemas and they were there until 1.30 am. They then have to go to school the next morning. Kids are faced with those types of issues. He also had a problem in that he had to do three shifts a week.

**CHAIR**—On three evenings?

**Mrs Hill**—Yes, three shifts. Or it could be on Saturdays or Sundays, or whatever. We said to him, ‘That is too much in year 12’, so he negotiated with his employer. It is a company rule that the employees have to be available to work three shifts a week, but he negotiated it down. They were willing to listen to him. I take up another point: you talked earlier about side effects, such as obesity and things like that. Does that come into play? I think the kids are losing lots of sleep. Adolescents grow when they sleep. They have heavy homework or assignment loads and some nights they will be up past 12 o’clock doing that sort of thing anyway.

If you add a couple of nights of work in that mid-week it can be devastating for them. There is quite a lot of pressure, in particular, for students in year 12. I have spoken to a number of parents and they say that this is the worst year of their life. So far it is the worst year of our family life because of all the conflicts that are going along with it and we are trying to balance it.

**CHAIR**—Marie, is your son on regular shifts or is it a changing pattern during the week?

**Mrs Hill**—It is a changing pattern.

**CHAIR**—Is that more challenging than if they had something that was—

**Mrs Hill**—Definitely. He has a great spreadsheet in an attempt to organise himself. As Steve Wright the VET coordinator said, more time should be spent in school teaching a child time management. Schools need to teach them those skills rather than just saying, ‘You must focus. You must organise yourself.’ How do you organise yourself?

**CHAIR**—They have all mastered the ‘just in time’ technique, that is, prioritising by urgency what is due. But you are right: it is important to learn those other skills.

**Mrs Hill**—I used to work for Telstra. They went through a huge time management training program with all senior staff. I do not know whether you remember the old organisational program. They, as adults, all had to be taught how to time manage. I am sure lots of adults still have to be taught. I think it would be fantastic for students in year 8 to be taught time management.

**CHAIR**—Judy, do you want to add anything?

**Ms Semple**—Yes. I think that is very interesting. I have heard a number of people speak about the educational value of the work that kids do and the skills that they learn, which are lifelong

skills. But is there some way to bring those two together so that education sits over the top of the whole lot? We do not want a separation between school and work. We hear that the motivation for the vast majority of students to work is to get cash so that they can do a whole range of things. If you are put in a position where you need to make a choice about a traditional education and opportunities to earn money, we are already setting up a challenge for our future generation.

I am glad that Ian mentioned the Curriculum Council because sometimes tensions are created by these organisations. The Curriculum Council in Western Australia should look at a broader definition of the sorts of things that are seen as legitimate learning curricula. Earlier Marie made a point about time management. We would all agree that that is a vital skill for students to live successful and fulfilled lives, whether it is at work, at play, or whatever. In the broader sense we need to look more at work and school issues to establish whether there is a way of legitimising work in a traditional education forum.

If we extend the leaving age from school, the older our students get the more demands they have. They want a car and they will be socialising much more and they will want money for clothing and what have you. Federal funds should be available for the education of students in senior years. I was present earlier when you talked about students not being aware of the sorts of funds that are available and they sometimes go to their parents or to their main caregivers. The next stage of education is tertiary and it is pay-as-you-go. If you want to do this course you have a HECS fee, which is hefty.

We make a huge jump between a government education that costs nothing, but you get paid nothing to do it. If you then want to go to the next step you need to pay quite considerably to do that. Kids need to put themselves in a financial position where they are able to take that next step. In some ways we are creating these tensions because of the expectations of the Curriculum Council, university enrolment, and high school graduation.

**CHAIR**—You referred to an issue about which we have heard no evidence from the department. I need to get the terminology right, but I think there are 20 credit points in the Western Australian Certificate of Education that can come from an assessment of paid work. I am interested in the school's experience. Steve?

**Mr Wright**—There is an endorsed program called Work Studies that links part-time work and students receive credit for their part-time work. You have to record 180 hours and you receive a two-unit equivalent, subject-wise, for that completion. From the school's point of view we run three workplace learning modes at the school. In the one about which we are talking at the moment we do not use work skills mainly due to administrative restrictions. We do not have the time.

**CHAIR**—To be fair, the department did say that there were real issues around the resourcing of these schools.

**Mr Wright**—That is right. We do not use it. It is there if we think that a student may not graduate, and it might be caused due to too much work outside school. We can then access those hours and use them to make up their graduation.

**CHAIR**—But it is mainly the administrative side of it that is prohibitive for schools?

**Mr Wright**—It is. We could have every student registered with work skills, but we choose not to because of the administrative load that is required. It is similar to community service—you need someone to monitor it and make sure that they complete the skills. There is also a skill component and students have to demonstrate skills in the workplace, mainly employability skills such as teamwork, occupational health and safety, and those sorts of things. Due to those restrictions we do not use it.

**CHAIR**—We were interested in it. One of the things that students have said to us is that work experience, in its old form, persists in schools—a straight two-week block doing work experience in something in which they are interested, or work placements within VET courses. Sometimes they express frustration about it and they say, ‘I have a part-time job.’ People say to me, ‘Is the VET placement relevant to the industry at which you are looking?’

In reality, students are put in a certain environment and they perform base level tasks, even if it is an industry in which they are interested in working. Students are expressing some frustration about the multiple occasions on which they are doing work placement work experience and so forth. They are frustrated because they have a part-time job and they are doing all these hours and they want to know why that does not count.

**Mr Wright**—The ideal mode is the school-based traineeship where students are in a VET program that is relevant to their job. They are in the workplace; they are trained in the workplace; they are evaluated in the workplace; and that obviously counts towards their WACE certificate. That is the ideal mode.

**CHAIR**—Is there any attempt to say to students who are doing part-time work, ‘Why do you not just take this information to your employer and suggest to them that they might now want to look at you as a trainee’, or do the employers come to the school and ask?

**Mr Wright**—The biggest constraint is finding a compassionate employer who is willing to take on a trainee. Obviously they have to be paid, they have to be trained and they have to liaise with a registered training organisation. Logistically, it becomes quite a complex exercise for employers to take them on.

**CHAIR**—It does for some of the big grocery and movie chains and things like that, but my impression is that the fast food area does it quite extensively?

**Mr Wright**—They do, but there is one big but. Students do not see themselves in retail; they dream of other jobs.

**CHAIR**—Of course. I think the mistake we make is assuming that if they are working in fast food they want to be in hospitality. Of course they do not, but I am sure that every one of them would like to walk away not only with the money for the shift but also with a qualification that states, ‘You have generic work skills.’ Is the way to achieve that to say to those employers, ‘Put them on as a trainee, retail and not a trainee, hospitality. They do not want a career in hospitality.’ Is a good way to go the sorts of things you were talking about with your students—customer service, money handling and those sorts of things?

**Mr Wright**—You would be putting an old head on young shoulders if you were to convince a 15-year-old or a 16-year-old that that was the plan and that that would do them the world of good, experience-wise. Sometimes it is a different story when they are sitting in the seat.

**CHAIR**—I can well imagine the conversation: ‘Butt out, Mum, I just want to go and get some money. I do not want to be doing anything else.’

**Mr Wright**—It is hard to push that long-term view to some students.

**CHAIR**—Yes. The other argument is that if you are putting in all those hours it does not hurt to have an extra subject up your sleeve if the end result does not turn out as well as you want. Students are always balancing things off. They might say, ‘I have these subjects. I have added something so I have a bit of backup protection’, and things like that. They are doing the hours anyway, so surely they should add it to their certificates?

**Mr Wright**—They are. Work skills would cover the component that you just described, so they could do that as an add on.

**CHAIR**—We need to resource you properly to do that?

**Mr Wright**—That is right. Give us the resources and we can do it.

**CHAIR**—Okay.

**Dr JENSEN**—How aware would teachers be of the number of hours that students are working in the work force?

**Mr States**—Let me give you a specific answer to your question. I cannot tell you exactly whether the teachers would be aware, but I am sure that teachers are more aware of it than they have been in the past. When a result has suddenly gone on a downward trend they will ask those kinds of questions. They are aware that students are working and a lot of work is going on. Specifically from my perspective, when year 12 students have asked to go to a five-subject load I ask them to fill in a study planner, in which they also specify what time they are working, et cetera.

If there is not enough study time on that planner I say, ‘Could you please do something about it?’ If the work issue has not arisen it will arise then and they will ask, ‘Where do I fit this in?’ The 60 or 65 students who have applied for the study plan are doing about 15 hours of work a week. Ten or 12 hours a week is around about the average. It seems to be reasonable but I am wondering whether only a particular group of students is looking at doing that and not the rest. Generally, students in that group are saying, ‘I need the extra time so that I can improve my results to get into university.’ Maybe that is a different kind of student.

**Dr JENSEN**—Are we being too reactive—something goes wrong and we realise that there is a problem and it is likely to be work—rather than being aware upfront of the work commitment of those students so we can head problems off at the pass before they eventuate?

**CHAIR**—One of the problems that is coming through from students does not apply to the set shifts. They put down on a work study sheet that they can work 12 hours but sometimes their mates ring up and say, ‘I cannot go to work tonight. Can you do the shift?’ We have raised this issue of peer pressure with employers. A mate rings up and says, ‘Can you go in and do my shift for me?’ That is how they manage shift changes. However, it often means that they end up doing significantly more anyway. The other dilemma is that the students who feel the highest sense of work responsibility will not say no if their employer rings up and says, ‘I am really stuck. I need someone to do a shift tonight.’ They will say, ‘Yes, of course I will come in.’ It is not always a question of them being afraid to say no.

In some ways the very students about whom we worry least because we think they are highly skilled are the ones who are feeling the pressure of responsibility and say, ‘Yes, of course I will come in and help out.’ You might look at their pattern but, as you said, they might be doing the average, but how much are they picking up beyond that? Some of the parents are nodding in agreement. I might get each parent to comment.

**Mrs Purdy**—I do not have a problem. I have two children. One of them is Chris who is sitting in the panel. Chris is working and my other son wants to work. In fact today I rang up and organised a possible interview for him. Christopher does not have a problem at all with work. He knows his hours, he can negotiate with his employers, so I do not have a problem.

**CHAIR**—The structured employer who does the right thing clearly is really important?

**Mrs Purdy**—Absolutely. Going way back, as a mother I have trained my children to prioritise their work and to know what is important. School is important and work comes second. When he looked for a job we made sure he got a position where there were a lot of older supervisors who would be there to look after him as well as to do all the hard work. I knew he was never going to be put in a position where he would have to keep working because school is important. Working on Saturdays and on the occasional Thursday night is fine, thank you very much!

**CHAIR**—You obviously succeeded where I failed. You have brought him up in such a way that he does not say, ‘Butt out, Mum, and do not interfere in my life.’

**Mrs Purdy**—We get that occasionally. With regard to work he knows what to do. He knows his schoolwork and he knows his work hours. He has been taught how to do his workload and I think he does it well.

**Mrs Pobjoy**—I am also a parent. My daughter had issues in year 11. She was a very stubborn 16-year-old. I said to her, ‘You have to make the decision’, which is not something 16-year-old girls do readily. When she started year 12 we said to her, ‘Your studies have to come first. You have to get through it if the career path you want to take is the one you want to continue with.’ She wants to be a primary schoolteacher. We said, ‘You have to do it.’ She buckled down. She still had her social life but we had to make a few stipulations. The peer thing is still a big issue. She is now at the University of Notre Dame and—

**CHAIR**—And you are still worried?

**Mrs Pobjoy**—Yes, I still worry. I have an older child. I listened to what Steve was talking about earlier. In year 11 my son did work experience at Austal Ships and he is now a fourth-year apprentice. He loves it. When he was doing his work experience they thought he was an adult because he is six feet six inches tall. They were getting him to do jobs that tradies were doing. So there are two aspects that relate to my two sons. My daughter has just started another job and she is very happy with it. The people for whom she works say, ‘These are your shifts for the week.’ They are working in and out of her university times. She does not work past 5.30 pm and not past 9.00 pm on a Thursday night. It took her a while but she had to do it because she was the one who was doing the work.

**Mrs Richardson**—I have a son in year 12 who works on a Sunday. Originally he wanted to work at Hoyts. We said no because of the late hours and because of the fact that we would have to go out to pick him up because he did not have transport, so it was not all one-sided.

**CHAIR**—Having done that, their shift finish times are a bit of a myth. You sit in the car park waiting because they cannot leave until the clean up or whatever has been done.

**Mrs Richardson**—He now works on a Sunday from 9.00 am until 5.00 pm or 5.30 pm. The hours are great, and we like them. I think the main issue is time management. I think that is a life experience that students have to learn. For my children it is not just academic; it is also social and emotional. I am happy for him to work but I also want him to have a social life, to see his friends and to be involved in physical activities. He plays sport and he sees his friends. We would like him to spend more time doing his homework, but we cannot push him. We cannot make him do things; he has to learn time management. That is a life skill and that is something that will come with experience.

He gets an awful lot out of his work—responsibility and dealing with customers—and he is on the tills. He also advises customers. He thinks he knows more than my husband, who is a four-year trade mechanic. The responsibility is fantastic. I think he would find it hard to give that up. They do get a little arrogant but they also build self-esteem, which is very positive. Financially, he is paid \$100 for working on a Sunday, which is a huge amount but, of course, Xbox games cost \$100. Materialistically it is fantastic for him. He can afford to go to the movies with his friends, he can afford to hire the basketball courts, and he can afford what he wants and when he wants it.

He wants to go to university but it is a long-term thing. We cannot say to him, ‘Do not do extra shifts in the holidays; you need to study’ because he is looking at the hundreds of dollars that build up. After they have done their university degree you are looking at the thousands of dollars that they could possibly earn. They are excited about Easter and Christmas and that is far as they can see. It is a huge hurdle to get through the long-term planning with them. As parents we have to have a lot of talks with them. Obviously we can only help and advise him; we cannot push our views and our experience on him because he has to gain that experience.

**CHAIR**—Elaine?

**Mrs Murray**—My son also works. I do not have to say where he works, do I?

**CHAIR**—No, that is fine.

**CHAIR**—Just give us a sector.

**Mrs Murray**—He is a docket dude, which is the equivalent of a checkout chick.

**CHAIR**—What is the term, ‘docket dude’?

**Mrs Murray**—That is the term for a boy. Last year he started work off his own bat. He said, ‘I would like to get a job.’ He does not play sport because he does not like sport so he needed an outlet and that is what he wanted. We backed him all the way. We said, ‘Do whatever you need to do.’ He has built up his confidence and his self-esteem which comes from dealing with the public, seeing people who are really nice and some people who are not so nice. As I said, he started last year and he had all these shifts. We said to him, ‘School comes first’ and he said, ‘I know.’

They have a roster system. He would write on the roster, ‘Not available.’ He would have his assignments and assessments. As Ian was saying, he knew when his assignments were due and he would say to work, ‘I am not available on these days.’ Because he worked for them he never said no to them but he was not under pressure for that. When exam time came he said, ‘I am not available for two weeks or even three weeks’, and they said that was fine because he had brownie points with them. This year, year 12, is a very hard year. He wants to go to university and he knows what he wants to do. He has his goal and he knows that in order to achieve that goal he will have to cut down on his shifts. He went to work and he said, ‘I need a maximum of two shifts a week. That includes Saturday and that is it.’ He goes in every week and he writes on the roster or in his diary, ‘Not available.’

**CHAIR**—Elaine, what do you think he would have done if work had said to him, ‘If you are unavailable we will not have any work for you?’

**Mrs Murray**—I am a merchandiser and that is my job so I knew some of these people and I talked to them. I would ask, ‘How is he going?’ They gave him priority when extra work came up because he was so reliable and responsible. I said, ‘That is fine but you realise that he is now in upper school. He might not be so available.’ They said, ‘No, that is fine because when he is available he is very good.’ He built up a rapport with the supervisors, very much like Chris, and he could then go to them and say, ‘This is happening’ and they would say, ‘That is fine.’

**CHAIR**—It is the relationship building that Chris was talking about?

**Mrs Murray**—Yes. It is very important. As Deborah said earlier, they need to learn time management. I am the same as Jo-Anne: I have brought them up to realise that school takes priority and work comes second. Personal responsibility is another big thing in our house.

**CHAIR**—You have also outlined the positive sides of work?

**Mrs Murray**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—You are saying the same thing. You can tell which students have done part-time work. When they go for their first job interview they are much more confident and they are able to engage with adults outside the school environment.

**Mrs Murray**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Does anybody want to add anything more to this issue?

**Mrs Fletcher**—You were referring to them as being loyal workers, which is a catch 22. Both my daughters are really good workers and they are loyal to the companies for whom they are working. However, there is a catch. My daughter, who is in year 12, put on the list that she was unavailable because of examinations and stuff. But they know that she is a good worker and they know that if they ring her they can rely on her to work. They were still calling her during her examinations to go to work, which is the catch. Both of them are respectful kids. If an adult rings up and says, ‘Can you come and work for me’, I do not know whether it is out of fear or respect but they go and work for them. They are almost too scared to say no.

**CHAIR**—They would presume that because they wrote down that they were not available because they had examinations their workplace would not ring them up unless it was really urgent and they were really needed?

**Mrs Fletcher**—Exactly. It is out of responsibility or respect—I do not know what it is—but it is a catch 22. It is a great thing to have on one hand, but on the other hand it can bite them on the backside.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. Your evidence has been tremendous. Parents who come before us are engaged and interested parents. To some extent what we are hearing is the best version of the stories from you guys because you are engaged with your young people and you are interested in what is happening in their lives. Some of the worst cases are young people without that level of adult interest and involvement in their lives. We do not want this portrayed as an issue only for vulnerable students. Responsible kids are caught up in this and they are exploited for a range of other reasons. Schoolteachers, parents and employers must make sure that they have a good experience and not a bad experience at the end of the day and they come out better for it.

Your evidence has been invaluable and I thank you all for that. Thank you all for your attendance today. If you have been asked to provide additional material would you please forward it to the secretary? You will be sent a copy of the transcript of your evidence to which you can make corrections of grammar and fact. The Hansard reporters may wish to check some details concerning your evidence if you have used a name or something that they did not catch. Could you check with reporters to establish whether they have any questions before you leave? Once again, thank you very much.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.11 pm to 2.05 pm**

[2.05 pm]

**Gerard**

**Ben**

**Jackson**

**Emily**

**Chris**

**Luke**

**Brianna**

**Lauren**

**Alexander (Alex)**

**Laura**

**Claudia**

**Rachel**

**Michelle**

**Lachlan**

**Hannah**

**Sanja**

**Marnie**

**Tara**

**CHAIR**—I now welcome all students to today's hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training. As you are aware, the committee is conducting an inquiry into how students combine school with part-time work. We are interested to hear about your experiences and any views that you might have about how we can improve the situation for students trying to balance study and work commitments. We have been receiving feedback on these issues from students across the country via the committee's student survey on

the website. I know that some students from Western Australia have already completed that student survey.

Many students are telling us that they are coping fine and that their employers and teachers understand their needs, but others are telling us that they are doing it tough—working late hours on week nights—and that they do not feel comfortable asking employers for time off. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I advise you that this hearing is a legal proceeding of the parliament and therefore has the same standing as proceedings in the respective houses. Hansard is recording proceedings today so it is important for you to direct all your comments through the chair rather than having a conversation amongst yourselves.

Each time you make a contribution could you state your first name so that Hansard can correctly identify the person who is making the comments? I will start off by asking you to give us a brief understanding of your own situation, whether you have part-time work, what that part-time work might be, how many hours you might be working, and what is your study load at school. I will start with Tara. Would you like to give us an idea of your situation?

**Tara**—I am a full-time dancer so I work and dance professionally and that takes up about 25 to 30 hours of my week. I do non-TEE so I do not have to worry about the stress of having examinations or anything like that. I find studying quite easy and I organise and manage everything pretty well.

**CHAIR**—Do those 20 to 30 hours involve some work and some rehearsal?

**Tara**—Yes. I teach, and I have rehearsals. I have my own classes where students learn the routines, so it is pretty full on.

**CHAIR**—Thanks Tara. Marnie, would you like to tell us your situation?

**Marnie**—I work only eight hours a week at a little bakery. I do TEE subjects and all my classes are TEE. It is not that complicated.

**Dr JENSEN**—How many days a week do you work?

**Marnie**—One day a week.

**Dr JENSEN**—Do you work a solid eight-hour day? Is that on Saturday?

**Marnie**—On Sunday.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Marnie. Sanja?

**Sanja**—I work part-time as a receptionist at Just Cuts, the hairdressers in Garden City, and I am also a TEE student. I do not find it that complicated either.

**CHAIR**—How many hours would you work?

**Sanja**—I work about 15 hours, so I work two days a week—on Thursdays after school and all day Saturday.

**CHAIR**—And those hours are permanent, so it does not change?

**Sanja**—No, it does not change.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Sanja. Hannah?

**Hannah**—I work at Venture World on the weekends. It is about six hours to 15 hours a week. I do TEE subjects. Usually I am good at studying.

**CHAIR**—Why do you say ‘usually’, Hannah?

**Hannah**—Sometimes I need to stay up a bit later to do my homework and all that.

**CHAIR**—What would be your normal shift hours?

**Hannah**—Usually either 11.00 am to 6.00 pm, or 12.00 pm to 6.00 pm, or 10.30 am to 6.00 pm. It just depends on Saturday and Sunday.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Hannah. Lachlan?

**Lachlan**—I have a few jobs. I am a bow jumper and I do a number of other different things. Sometimes I work about 32 hours a week.

**CHAIR**—What are all these other things, Lachlan?

**Lachlan**—Sometimes I work at Hungry Jack’s, that is, if they put me on for the roster. I also work at Big W and stuff like that.

**CHAIR**—They are on-call jobs, is that what you are saying?

**Lachlan**—Yes. I do two TEE subjects, but to cope with that and all the work that I do I have a study period in the school, which helps me a lot.

**CHAIR**—How are you finding balancing your school commitments? Is it a bit of a challenge?

**Lachlan**—Yes, sometimes, but most of the time it is pretty easy because of the study period.

**CHAIR**—Why are you doing so much work, Lachlan?

**Lachlan**—Mainly because I have a lot of commitments outside school.

**CHAIR**—So you are funding yourself?

**Lachlan**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Lachlan. Michelle?

**Michelle**—I work at two jobs. I teach modelling. I have been doing modelling for about 11 years, so I started teaching and I do four hours a week. I work at Farmer Jack's and I work about 12 hours there. I also do two TEE subjects.

**CHAIR**—That is about 16 hours a week?

**Michelle**—It is about 16 hours, yes.

**CHAIR**—What are the normal shift-type hours that you do?

**Michelle**—On Wednesday or Thursday I do about four to five hours at Farmer Jack's, and on a Saturday I do a six-hour or seven-hour shift. At modelling I do Mondays and Tuesday, but that is only two hours each day, which is good. I only do two TEE subjects, so it is not too stressful. At times, like everyone, I leave work to the last minute and it all gets bundled up, but it is pretty easy.

**CHAIR**—It is pretty manageable?

**Michelle**—Yes, everyone seems to be pretty lenient with the hours and what not.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Michelle. Rachel?

**Rachel**—I am in year 12 and I am doing five TEE subjects. I work eight hours a week in part-time jobs on Thursday nights. I do 6.00 pm until 9.00 pm and then on Saturdays 11.00 am until 5.00 pm at Homeart. It is good and I find it really easy. Sometimes when I say to my employers that I have to knuckle down and study they cannot cover my shift. Sometimes it can be pretty stressful. Otherwise, I am finding my TEE subjects pretty easy to cope with. Most nights I study one or two hours and I get through it quite easily. So far I have not found it hard.

**Dr JENSEN**—When you have shift work and you would like to have that time off to study what is the procedure? Do your employers ask you to try to find someone to replace you, or do they try to do that?

**Rachel**—It depends on our work. We have only four people working and one of them is another student. It depends on whether or not she can work. The other girl is available only on Thursday nights. Sometimes the other girl can work, otherwise they say, 'Bad luck. You are a part-time worker and you have to cover it yourself. You cannot just leave us.'

**Dr JENSEN**—So it is part-time not casual, is what you are saying?

**Rachel**—Yes, I work part-time and I get holidays and stuff.

**CHAIR**—But because they are set hours normally you can organise it fairly quickly?

**Rachel**—Normally pretty easily, but sometimes it is just too bad and you have to work. It gets a bit like school should come before work.

**CHAIR**—Claudia?

**Claudia**—I work about nine hours a week at a lottery and newsagent place. I do five TEE subjects. I find it relatively easy to cope with it all. It just comes down to discipline. If you have been at work all day you realise that you still have to go home and you have things to do.

**CHAIR**—What would your shifts be?

**Claudia**—I work pretty much set shifts. I go straight from school to work on Monday and I finish at 6.30 pm, which is okay. When I go home afterwards I just do not feel like it because I have been at school and I went straight to work and I have not had any break. I also work one day at the weekend.

**CHAIR**—You work on Monday night and a day at the weekend?

**Claudia**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—That enables you to organise yourself. You know when your school assignments are due and generally you can organise yourself?

**Claudia**—Yes. My workplace is privately owned, so it is a lot tighter. It is a lot easier to switch shifts and things like that and you get more personal with your boss, if that makes sense.

**Dr JENSEN**—You do not have any problems rearranging shifts?

**Claudia**—No, not at all.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. Laura?

**Laura**—For the past two years I have been working at a surf shop in Carousel. Recently I had to quit my job because I am doing five TEE subjects, and with other commitments at school it was becoming a bit too much. I was usually working Thursday nights from 5 o'clock until about 9.30 pm and on Saturdays I would be working a full day as well.

**CHAIR**—The workload priority had to be the schoolwork, is that what you are saying?

**Laura**—Yes. School was definitely going to be my focus this year.

**CHAIR**—Thank you Laura. Alex?

**Alexander (Alex)**—At the moment I am doing five TEE subjects, one of which is drama, which takes up quite a bit of time outside school. Recently I dropped one of my subjects to gain a study period, so I have an extra four hours a week within the school. I have a part-time job at Target that is just up the road and fairly close to where I live, so it is easy to get to. Usually I have about four hours a week of work on Saturday afternoons from about 1.00 pm until 5.00 pm, which gives me time to do some stuff in the morning and at night if need be. I regularly get called in to do other shifts.

Being a department store with particular sales they need different numbers at different times. They usually give me roughly a week's notice, which is enough time to organise my study habits and figure out what I am going to be doing with assessments, homework and what not. Target is fairly flexible. If I need some time off for a study break, or if I have some extra assignments that I need to do, they are pretty genuine with their giving off of time, which is quite good.

**CHAIR**—If you need that time off do you have to organise for somebody else to do shifts, or do they do the shifts?

**Alexander (Alex)**—At my previous employment at Hungry Jack's, which I was doing before I was doing TEE subjects, I would need to find a replacement for my shifts. Generally the manager did not like you taking time off for study or any other commitments that you might have.

**CHAIR**—So you did not ring unless you could say, 'I have someone to cover for me'?

**Alexander (Alex)**—You would need to. Generally, you would go into the store and they would give you a booklet that had everybody's phone numbers and you had to make the phone calls and everything like that. At Target it is the opposite of what Claudia originally said about having a small close-knit business, so it is easier. On the other end of the scale, when it is a large business like Target there are a lot of employees so it is pretty easy to find somebody else to cover for you. Target is usually more than happy to find somebody to cover your shift, as long as you give them enough notice.

**Dr JENSEN**—Alexander, how old was your manager at Hungry Jack's?

**Alexander (Alex)**—We had several managers.

**Dr JENSEN**—How old was the one who caused problems when you had to find a substitute shift?

**Alexander (Alex)**—The restaurant manager? I have to be careful here. She was middle-aged and I do not want to guess her age. I do not know for sure. This is being documented and I do not want her to read this. She was middle-aged. She would have been above 40, so she has been working in the business for a long time. It was quite funny because her boss was much younger—he was only about 20—and he was working at the office, which was Competitive Foods, which obviously is responsible for Hungry Jack's, KFC, and other places like that. The manager who was causing the problems and who consequently caused problems for other managers who would need to say the same thing if workers came up to them, was a bit older.

**CHAIR**—Are you willing to describe the nature of the problem?

**Alexander (Alex)**—Why I needed to take time off and things like that?

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**Alexander (Alex)**—I believe it happened on a few occasions. A lot of the people that I have spoken to who have experience with the fast food industry have told me that their shifts are

fairly spontaneous hours. They will ring you up the day before and say, 'Can you work three hours for me tomorrow?' If you cannot that should be all right but if it is put in the roster a week beforehand they do not need to call you to tell you; you need to check the rosters every so often. If it has been put in the roster it is set in stone unless you can find a replacement. At the beginning they ask for your availability but, generally, if you do not have a large availability they will not give you shifts.

You need to have a large availability so that they can drop shifts on you and so that you can do backups. Earlier this morning somebody was referring to having to stay behind late and having to do extra hours that they were not rostered on to do. That used to happen a lot when I worked at Hungry Jack's. If a lot of people come in to buy fast food you have to accommodate them. On school nights I have had to stay back an hour or a couple of hours.

**CHAIR**—This is unpaid additional hours?

**Alexander (Alex)**—No, you get paid for it. If you stay on you get paid, but you have to stay there for an hour or two hours, no matter whether or not you have homework or anything like that.

**CHAIR**—Or parents sitting waiting in the parking lot?

**Alexander (Alex)**—I have had to send my parents home and they have had to come back later. It is a pain for them. As I said, I was pretty lucky because at the time I was in year 10 and I was not doing TEE subjects. But had I been doing TEE subjects it would have been a lot worse.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for that. Brianna?

**Brianna**—I work at Farmer Jack's and normally I work about one shift a week because of sporting commitments that take up a lot of time. I work about four hours a week. Because Farmer Jack's is open every day of the week they are really flexible with hours, so I can pick any night and they work around that. I am finding that it is all right to cope with school at the moment.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. Just to clarify, you usually work one night a week?

**Brianna**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Brianna. Lauren?

**Lauren**—I am a waitress and I am doing five TEE subjects. I work Sundays from 8.00 am until 5.00 pm, which is nine hours, and I am fortunate because I have a flexible boss. If I required time off he would give it to me and I could swap my shifts. If I want time off he sorts it out, or I can sort it out because the business is privately owned. We are very close and it is easy to sort out shifts. I have no trouble with my study.

**CHAIR**—That is a reasonable number of hours and you are able to manage your schoolwork?

**Lauren**—Yes, because it is only one day. If I wanted to finish early I would start at 8.00 am and my boss would let me go home at 12.00 pm if I wanted to, depending on how much homework I had to do.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Lauren.

**Luke**—I do not have a job at the moment. Last year in year 11 I worked all through the year and I found it pretty stressful as I also had sporting commitments. I worked at a different job during the summer holidays and I worked about four or five weeks into the school year. I had already planned to stop work so that I could concentrate on school.

**CHAIR**—Tell us what sort of work you were doing and what number of hours you were working?

**Luke**—Last year in year 11 I was doing a four-hour shift on a Saturday, but I had two soccer games on the weekend so it was pretty busy. Through the holidays I was working two or three shifts a week, depending on what they gave me. When school started I was back to one shift and then I stopped work completely.

**CHAIR**—From what I am hearing the real clash for you was not just your schoolwork but also having a life, in that you are interested in playing sport?

**Luke**—Yes. It was a combination of those things.

**CHAIR**—Would students put up their hands if they have an experience that they would like to tell us about?

**Chris**—I work at a cafe. I work only about 13 hours a week, but I do not find it too stressful. I am doing only two TEE subjects.

**CHAIR**—What sorts of shifts are you doing, Chris?

**Chris**—I do a 10-hour shift on Saturday, so it is 7.00 am to 5.00 pm, and I do a three-hour shift on Wednesday afternoon.

**CHAIR**—What sort of time?

**Chris**—That is 3.00 pm to 6.00 pm.

**CHAIR**—Are you able to get there by 3.00 pm?

**Chris**—Yes, that is fine.

**CHAIR**—Thank you.

**Emily**—At the moment I do not have a job. I am doing six TEE subjects and it results in a lot of homework. Even though I am only in year 11 I still do two and sometimes three hours every night. If I had a job I would not be able to commit to it at all.

**CHAIR**—Yes. What about the weekends? Are you doing a lot of study or do you have other interests?

**Emily**—Sometimes I do quite a lot on the weekends as well.

**CHAIR**—You said that you are doing six subjects?

**Emily**—Yes, it is a lot.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Emily.

**Jackson**—I am also doing six TEE subjects and I do not have a job so it is all right. I was thinking about getting a job, but I have been too lazy.

**CHAIR**—With six subjects I find that hard to believe.

**Jackson**—Yes. A casual job three or four hours a week would be good.

**CHAIR**—What would make you like to do that? What is the attraction? Is it mainly money?

**Jackson**—Yes, and just to get a break from working.

**CHAIR**—Something different to do?

**Jackson**—Yes, rather than just working a lot I can go off and do something and then come back to it later.

**CHAIR**—Thank you.

**Ben**—I work 15 hours a week and I do three-hour to five-hour shifts. I do five TEE subjects. At the moment I think it is all right but as year 11 continues and I go into year 12 and my workload increases I will probably have to cut down on my hours or quit working.

**CHAIR**—What sorts of shifts are you doing, Ben?

**Ben**—I do Mondays, 5.00 pm to 10.00 pm, Fridays 5.00 pm to 10.00 pm and Sundays 5.00 pm to 10.00 pm.

**CHAIR**—Do you always have a 10 o'clock finish?

**Ben**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—It is pretty good because your hours are set?

**Ben**—Yes, my hours are set and they are the same every week.

**Dr JENSEN**—Whereabouts do you work?

**Ben**—I work at Red Rooster. I can base my studies around that.

**CHAIR**—But even now you are finding that you are working a fairly significant number of hours?

**Ben**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for that.

**Gerard**—I work about 12 hours a week at Eagle Boys. Sometimes I find it a bit difficult to cope with that and the homework. It varies from week to week.

**CHAIR**—How many subjects are you doing, Gerard?

**Gerard**—I am only doing three TEE subjects.

**CHAIR**—And you are working about 12 hours. Do you work mainly nightshifts?

**Gerard**—Yes, three nights a week.

**CHAIR**—What sorts of hours do you work?

**Gerard**—It depends. Tuesday nights are always really busy so I could be there but we do not have a finishing time. It is just whenever it stops getting busy.

**CHAIR**—When the orders run out?

**Gerard**—Yes. Normally I start at about 5.00 pm and I could finish at about 9.00 pm, 10.00 pm or 10.30 pm. It just depends.

**CHAIR**—Is there anybody else? I would like to talk to you about two issues. The first is the positive benefits that you believe you get from the work that you do. The committee has heard that it is good for young people to have paid work for a certain period. Money would be an obvious benefit. If that is the main benefit and that is what you are working for, let us know what motivates you to work, what advantages you get from it, and what you think you have come away with that has been really valuable. We will then look at the other side, that is, the problems or difficulties.

**Dr JENSEN**—You might think about one other thing. Do you have any ideas about what you would change to make the situation better for you—whether it is in the context of what you would change at school or what you would change in the workplace?

**CHAIR**—We will deal first with the benefits of working. Do any students have any comments to make about what they think is good about working while they are at school?

**Tara**—Possibly earning your own income and being able to do what you want with your own money and not having to ask your parents all the time.

**CHAIR**—Financial independence?

**Tara**—Yes. With everything going on in the world at present not all parents can hand out a \$50 note every week. It is good to have financial independence and it is good not having always to ask your parents for money.

**CHAIR**—Anybody else? Lachlan?

**Lachlan**—What I find best is the freedom you get when you get the job. As I am a bow jumper I like it purely because it keeps me fit. I like the physical activity that is built into it. It is good.

**Mr IRONS**—How many games do you play in a weekend?

**Lachlan**—Sometimes three. Most of the time I play only two.

**CHAIR**—You are getting your exercise and you are getting paid for it?

**Lachlan**—Yes.

**Mr IRONS**—You get to train as well, do you not?

**Lachlan**—No, I do my training through the Canning Vale Cougars. I am part of my brother Connell's game and the older year as well.

**CHAIR**—Are there any other benefits?

**Lauren**—The good thing about working part time when you are at high school is that it gives you experience for the future, if you are planning on going on and doing that. Experience would probably be the main reason why I went to work.

**CHAIR**—One of the things that is often discussed is that you gain direct experience in a career in which you might be working. The other side relates to gaining general experience in the workplace. Do you think that they are equally important?

**Michelle**—I teach modelling so I find that it is good. It is something that I did not think I would do. I did not think that an aspect of teaching would be a career for me, but I really enjoy it. I enjoy the social part of it, I enjoy teaching the girls, and I enjoy showing off my experience. I work only a couple of hours a week at Farmer Jack's but I have made lasting friendships. I have gained experience, even if it is just in scanning things. I have learned how to connect with people and how to present myself better, even if it is just a part-time job.

**Rachel**—I refer to what Michelle said. I work at Homeart and our customers are so friendly. They are always asking us what the products are like and things like that. You get to know people. We have regular customers now. When they see me on the street they say ‘Hi, Homeart girl!’ They are so friendly and you get to hear how older people talk to you and you also learn how to react with different age groups.

**CHAIR**—A transition to out-of-school relationships?

**Rachel**—Yes. You do not have to talk only to people from high school. People aged 40 or 50 are just as friendly and they are just as much fun. You can still have a great conversation about anything. It is a better to get to know people. My boss is 48 and she is great; she is one of my friends. It is great to meet people like that.

**CHAIR**—You are spreading your wings and your relationships beyond school?

**Rachel**—Yes. By meeting them you meet their families. It is a great way to meet people.

**Mr IRONS**—It is a good avenue stepping into adulthood. In this process of working you are going from being teenagers to adults. Even though you might not need any money as your parents are able to give you \$50 a week it is an independence thing?

**Rachel**—Yes, it is.

**Claudia**—I agree with that. My parents offered me money each week because obviously they are keen on me getting a good TEE score. They said to me, ‘We will give you money if you want to quit your job.’ I said no because it is an independence thing. I know that if I keep going back to my parents and asking for money they will want to know what I am buying. They will be asking me questions and I will not have that freedom of knowing that I have money. Probably all of us will be thinking this year about saving up for a car. With that comes petrol, registration and all that sort of thing. Some of my friends who are working say that it is good socially. A lot of us work at places where other teenagers are working, so you get to meet people and co-workers and stuff. Going to work just to see your co-workers can be a lot of fun.

**CHAIR**—That is great. Does anybody else want to make a comment?

**Hannah**—I refer to what Claudia said. I work at Venture World, which is a different social network. It is different from people inside your high school. There are teenagers but you also hang out with people who are 19 years old and older people. It is more diverse and it is good. You are also responsible for yourself, which is pretty good.

**CHAIR**—We have heard that you gain confidence in engaging with the outside world, which is important. That enables you to do job interviews and interviews for entry into courses once you leave school. People have said to us that they can see the difference between students who have had paid or volunteer work outside school and who have had responsibility and those who have not. You can tell the difference. We certainly see that here today in your presentation. Alex?

**Alexander (Alex)**—Earlier you mentioned volunteer work. Sometimes the work that we do outside school kills two birds with one stone. We have to do community service in order to get

our WACE. I am not quite sure but you probably know a bit about it. In order to graduate we have to complete 20 hours of community service. Without that we do not graduate. It is good to get the experience for further opportunities in life. Going to work in a part-time job opens you up to community service networks. It is not a question of slaving for 20 hours for people you do not know or you do not really care about; it is a question of giving back to the community. It helps to know people within that community.

**CHAIR**—It has more meaning?

**Alexander (Alex)**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Let us deal now with part-time work challenges and problems. You do not have to relate your own experiences and you do not need to name anyone. However, if you know of friends or family members who have had bad experiences and you know what might have contributed to it we would be keen to hear from you. As Dennis Jensen said earlier, you might also have some suggestions, for example, ‘I could have managed better if this or that had happened’—if the school, your parents or an employer had done something or thought about something that would have made it easier. It would be interesting to hear from you about any problems and challenges.

**Rachel**—For me especially it is the non-flexible hours. I am working part-time and I knew that when I went into the job, but sometimes they forget that I am only 16. It is not a job that I am going to be doing forever. Next year I want to go to university. Sometimes the employer thinks it is a bit more serious than it is, that it is our whole life, and they do not realise that we have friends, school and family. For me everything comes a bit before work. A couple of my friends have said that sometimes their employers do not understand that they have a life outside their jobs. If someone gets sick or it is someone’s birthday you need to show your support to that person. Sometimes employers could be a bit more considerate.

**CHAIR**—Rachel you made an interesting comment. Many students have said to us that their employers forget that they are only 16 or 17. Do you think that sometimes you are your own worst enemy because you go out, do a good job and you are reliable, and sometimes they forget that you are 16 or 17?

**Rachel**—Yes.

**Alexander (Alex)**—Target, my employer, divides its employees. Generally it will be the full-time staff and the casual and part-time staff. They have casuals on Thursdays and Saturday and they have Monday to Friday staff. Thursday to Saturday staff members tend to be the casual workers, the 16-year-olds to 17-year-olds—those people who are young enough to work on Thursdays and Saturdays. They need to have a completely different organisation for those staff.

Earlier I was talking about the availability of staff. There are two completely different availabilities for Thursday and Saturday staff. Even if they are working only a couple of hours on Monday or Tuesdays they are still known as Thursday and Saturday staff because they are casual and they are 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds.

**CHAIR**—They are more likely to be younger?

**Alexander (Alex)**—Yes. They have to expect that this group of people will encounter more availability problems than people who would be working to Monday to Friday. I find my employer is fairly—

**CHAIR**—They manage for that?

**Alexander (Alex)**—Yes. They have to accommodate for it. With such a big business and such a large number of employees they have to do that otherwise there is no way that they would have these 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds working for them.

**CHAIR**—At the cheap rates at which they work?

**Alexander (Alex)**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Okay. Tara, did you want to make a comment?

**Tara**—Yes. With me and my dancing and stuff we have a show of only six. There are only two of us who are still in school. Some of the things that they do and they expect us to do include late night performances, balls and stuff like that. I find it hard to manage my homework because they call you up and say, ‘We have a show on Sunday. It will be a four-hour show and we need you in on Saturday so that you can do the routines.’ I think to myself, ‘I had this weekend to do my homework but now I cannot because I have a commitment to that.’ I get days off school to catch up but I lose that because I have lost a day at school. I am not willing to compromise. I am not willing to lose my dancing and what I have with my dancing because I enjoy it so much. I need to find a balance but I have not yet found that balance.

**CHAIR**—We do not want students to feel that it is their responsibility to balance these things in their lives. At the end of the day you are valuable workers, not only for the skills and the knowledge that you bring but also because you are cheap. You are paid an age-based wage, which is why employers like to have you working for them.

**Dr JENSEN**—Let us just say they are not paid much.

**CHAIR**—We all agree that you are not paid as much as you well and truly earn. Because of the way in which the system is structured, you are on cheaper wages than anybody else. There is a benefit to us as adults in the availability of your labour. Some of the responsibility is on us to remember that you are still in your transition to adulthood. As good as you are it is not always fair to expect you to have that sort of responsibility. That is one of the issues that this committee is examining.

Please do not feel that you have to say—and we hear this a lot—‘It is my choice. I made the decision to work. I made the decision to take on so many subjects. I have the responsibility for balancing my workload.’ Part of it is your responsibility but part of it is the responsibility of the rest of us. As Dennis said earlier, we are keen to hear your ideas about how we can manage this better.

**Mr IRONS**—When you are signing up for a job and you work in that job for a period of two or three months do you sometimes wish that they had told you some of the conditions before you

started that job? There are conditions, responsibilities and duties within your workplace that you were not aware of, or you were not expecting when you signed up for the job because you were so keen to get the job?

**CHAIR**—Claudia, you were nodding in agreement?

**Claudia**—Yes, especially going into the first job that you have ever had. I do not know how many of us would be doing that. When I went into my first job I had no idea what it would consist of and stuff like that. I was pretty lucky in that I got a comfortable job that was flexible and things like that. It would be hard for anyone going into a first job not really knowing how flexible it would be, what hours would be required of them and that sort of thing. You are keen to get a job and to get some money in the bank.

**Mr IRONS**—You do not know the right questions to ask before you go into the job?

**Claudia**—Yes.

**Mr IRONS**—Nothing is provided to you at school or by your parents to inform you of the questions you should be asking when you go for your first job, so you do not know what you are doing. The other comment that has been made by people working in the fast food industry is that that is where they experience difficulty with shifts. Many people here are working with private companies and they have a lot more flexibility and better relationships with their bosses than those people who are working for the larger groups. Would that be right?

**Claudia**—Yes.

**Sanja**—Another negative would be that some employers do not understand that you have school and work. My first job was at KFC. I wanted to study and everything but I could not because of the hours they gave me. I was part time and I told them what hours I could work and stuff like that, but they wanted me to work other hours and I knew that I could not do it. They did not seem to understand. In the end I had to quit because of the hours that they kept putting on the roster.

**CHAIR**—When you said that they did not seem to understand are you telling us that there was a negative reaction if you tried to change your shift?

**Sanja**—Yes. I would say to them that I would not be able to work and I would give them enough notice, but they would not put me on the roster later because they were angry with me for not working. Some managers do not understand where you are coming from. They do not understand your perspective.

**Dr JENSEN**—We have heard that a fair bit from people who work in fast food places.

**CHAIR**—You were talking earlier about Target. Some of retail-based employers where a lot of young people work have been around a lot longer than the fast food outlets and they seem to be a bit better. From what Alex said earlier and from other evidence that we have heard they have better traditions and practices in dealing with young people.

**Sanja**—Some of the managers that were there would accommodate me. When other managers would find out they would have an argument over what hours you worked and why you worked them because they did not want you to work another shift, if that makes any sense. I did not really understand that, so I do not know. I got along with most people, but the managers did not really like it when I was not able to work.

**CHAIR**—Alex?

**Alexander (Alex)**—I refer to working at a fast food place, and to a point this is a horrible generalisation. Some people who are slightly older and who may be of university age are still working in fast food outlets. It is a social sort of structured standard that as you get older you move away from fast food outlets. After working there I know that the managers and people who were a bit older were frowned upon. I often wondered why they were not doing something that was a bit more successful and professional. Perhaps they are the people who did not take the TEE subjects, or perhaps they were not that interested in going into other forms of employment. I am not saying that that is a bad thing, but the retail industry tends to be a bit more professional and developed.

**CHAIR**—Career developed?

**Alexander (Alex)**—Yes. The retail industry understands the need for it, but the fast food industry might not know where you are coming from when you say, ‘I need to study.’ They say, ‘You have tomorrow night to study. Is it not due the day after?’ The managers might not be the best role models. You referred earlier to managers also being particularly young. As I said, that is a horrible generalisation.

**CHAIR**—It is a broad generalisation.

**Alexander (Alex)**—It is very broad. I am not saying specifically that all people older than 16 who work in fast food outlets are stupid.

**Dr JENSEN**—It sounded like that to me.

**CHAIR**—It is not an uncommon experience.

**Alexander (Alex)**—I tend to be blunt in some of the things that I say, so I have to be careful. Generally they might not be able to relate to the people who are working and who are working hard.

**Mr IRONS**—They have not walked in your shoes so they do not understand your priorities?

**Alexander (Alex)**—Yes. I had some problems with that when I was working at Hungry Jack’s. They would say, ‘You are working only nine hours a week. Why can you not do an extra five hours?’ I would say, ‘Because I am 15. I do not do extra. Nine hours a week is enough for me.’ That is what my parents were telling me. As other people were saying, your parents are your guide in whether or not to take on a job. I went into Hungry Jack’s, got off on my high horse and said, ‘It will be brilliant. I know everything about work. I have had a great deal of experience and everything else.’ But when you go into the retail industry you realise how bad the

fast food industry is and how much better it is to work in the retail industry, which is much more flexible and which has easier work. It is a lot less stressful.

**Mr IRONS**—Sanja, after your experience with KFC you moved to work in a hairdressing place, is that right?

**Sanja**—Yes I am a receptionist.

**Mr IRONS**—When you went looking for another job did you change the target of the workplace you were looking for?

**Sanja**—Yes. I had talked to my friends about it. People who had worked in the fast food outlets said that the managers did not accommodate them or give them the hours that they wanted to work. They said, ‘We have these hours available. Take it or leave it.’

**Mr IRONS**—When you went looking for your next job you did not look at the fast foot outlets; you just went elsewhere?

**Sanja**—Yes.

**Dr JENSEN**—Lachlan, I have a question for you. You said that you worked about 32 hours a week?

**Lachlan**—Yes.

**Dr JENSEN**—In your view is that too much? Should there be a maximum number of hours that a full-time school student is allowed to work?

**Lachlan**—Yes. Even my parents think so, especially if you work in the fast food industry. Something happened to me and my brother. If you work six months at Hungry Jack’s but you put down ‘casual’ on the application, they change it to part time, purely because it means that they can pay you less and you work more hours. Purely because of that I have to work more. Once you reach the age of 16 they are legally allowed to let us stay until 1 o’clock, the closing time, which means that you have to clean up everything. Sometimes you have to open at 6 o’clock. My managers used to say, ‘You have to do one open and one close a week.’ If I were ever to leave the job I do not think I would put it down on my resume because I do not think they like me that much.

**Dr JENSEN**—I asked you that question because Alex said that nine hours was enough for him because of parental influence. Yesterday we heard some examples of those cases where parental influence is not good or it is non-existent. Do we need external standards to control the number of hours that students work? Would that have helped you in your employment with Hungry Jack’s when you said, ‘Legally I am a full-time school student. I am allowed only to do this many hours. You are asking me to break the law’?

**Lachlan**—I think so. Sometimes you would come home and you would have an assignment. Last year I did Mathematics in Practice, which is purely assignment based. Sometimes I would come home at 1 o’clock and I would have an assignment that was due the next day and I would

be struggling at the computer. I remember a couple of times my mother coming in and waking me up because I was asleep on the keyboard. Sometimes they like to pressure you into taking someone else's shift if they call in sick. One time I had to do an 11½ hour shift with only one break. You get a break only every six hours and that break would be only half an hour at the most. They then get you up and you have to work again. That is pure time standing up making or taking orders.

**Emily**—I refer to what Lachlan was saying. This has not happened to me but I know of someone to whom it has happened. I do not know the employer but he got called up while he was at school—he was under 16—and he was asked to skip school and to come and work for them. They did not care about the fact that he was at school. He was under 16 but they said, 'Come and work for us now.'

**CHAIR**—He said, 'I am at school', and they said, 'Nick off and come and work'?

**Emily**—I do not whether he replied but they sent him a text message and said, 'Can you please come and work for us now.' He was at school at the time.

**CHAIR**—It is invaluable to hear of your experiences and the experiences of your friends and relatives. We are assured that these things do not happen and that students are treated appropriately, and then we hear the real story. There is a very clear difference. There are some employers who really value young workers and look after them. There are some employers who think that they are doing the right thing, but they do not talk to you guys and they do not know what is going on in the workplace. There are some employers who do not care. They think, 'This works for me and you should drop everything else and be committed to what I am doing.'

We have talked about employers but what about parents? I made the point earlier that when my son was working at Hungry Jack's I tried to intervene because I was sick of sitting in the driveway for an hour and a half to two hours after his shift had finished. He would not let me anywhere near the place. He said, 'Do not go there and do not say anything. I will not get any more work if you go and complain', and that sort of thing. What do you think parents can do to get things to work better? How amenable are you to your parents' advice? What about schools? Are schools flexible enough? We think that people are being supportive in schools but are they doing some things that are problematic with which we can help?

**Lachlan**—My father is a principal. At Hungry Jack's you have to put down the hours that you can work. My father always says, 'Give me the application.' He knew the exact amount of time that I should be working and how much time I should be spending on studies or so-called studies. On one occasion I said that I could work from 3 o'clock until 10.30 pm and my father took the paper off me and wrote from 5 o'clock until 10.30 pm, purely because he thinks that I should be studying.

**CHAIR**—Do your parents not have to sign the form?

**Lachlan**—Sometimes they do but sometimes they do not.

**CHAIR**—Is that because of your age? Do you know, Lachlan?

**Lachlan**—That is because of age. If you are under 13 and nine months your parents have to sign the form.

**CHAIR**—Under 13 and nine months?

**Lachlan**—If you are under 13 and nine months and you are working in a food joint your parents have to sign the form. If you are over that age you can work.

**CHAIR**—At what point do they stop signing that form? Do you know?

**Lachlan**—When you are 14 I do not think they have to sign it.

**Dr JENSEN**—What happened to the age of majority?

**CHAIR**—At the age of 14 you are perfectly able to make sensible decisions. Rachel?

**Rachel**—My parents have always said, ‘You guys should get a job when you are in year 10.’ In year 9 I started working in a fast food outlet and it was horrible. My parents said that they would always give me pocket money and they do, but they say that I have to work for it. They do not just hand me \$50; I have to wash the dishes, et cetera. I grew up in that environment. By the time I got to year 10 they said, ‘We are going to cut your pocket money so you have to get a job.’ I thought, ‘This is good; I can make my own money and it goes into my bank account. It is all mine, I can do whatever I want.’

I loved how my parents did that; it really made me become an individual and they made me work for something myself. At the beginning of this year I had an English teacher who said, ‘Quit your job.’ I said, ‘I love my job.’ She said, ‘You should quit because you have to study. English is more important.’ I said, ‘I love my job. It is a bit of a release for me.’ It just depends on who you are dealing with. It depends on everyone.

**CHAIR**—You are getting contradictory messages?

**Rachel**—Exactly. My parents are saying, ‘Go and get a job.’ They want me to work a maximum of only 10 hours, which is fair enough. The teachers are saying, ‘Quit your job. You have to study’, but your parents are saying, ‘Go and get a job.’ It is really up to me.

**CHAIR**—Instead of making it easier sometimes we are making it harder?

**Rachel**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Claudia?

**Claudia**—My chemistry teacher said exactly the same thing to me. He said two things, ‘Do not fall in love and do not get a job before year 12.’

**CHAIR**—So you took on one?

**Claudia**—I kept my job but I suppose it is up to the individual. I found that I could cope and my job was flexible so I decided to keep it. I thought there were more pros than cons.

**CHAIR**—You weighed it up and made a call?

**Claudia**—Yes. I am finding that it is fine. I have not had any problems.

**Laura**—When I decided to quit my job and I told my parents that I was thinking about doing it they said that they had been thinking about me quitting for a while but they had not told me about it because they wanted me to make the decision on my own. They wanted me to realise that I was not coping. When I told them that I was going to quit they thought it was the best decision that I could have made. Along with Rachel and Claudia, my history teacher told me the same thing. He said, ‘Not working in year 12 is probably the best option.’

**CHAIR**—Alex? Do any of you have to catch buses?

**Alexander (Alex)**—We finish at 2.50 pm.

**CHAIR**—I do not want to leave you without transport. Anybody who needs to leave should not hesitate to get up and go out quietly. If you need to go we thank you for your contribution. Those who are walking in can give us a few extra minutes. That would be great. Thank you everybody. Alex?

**Alexander (Alex)**—While we are talking about teachers and their influences, last year at the beginning of year 11 I had a very involved maths teacher who is unpopular throughout the school but she is very strict. She is one of the best teachers I have ever had because she not only gives you advice about schoolwork; she also speaks to us about TEE in general—commitment, study and things like that. At the beginning of the year I was lucky or unlucky enough to have the same chemistry teacher as Claudia and the same history teacher as Laura, and I still do. Both of them told me to quit my job, but my maths teacher from last year said, ‘It is called balance.’

I am a firm believer in everything in moderation. I think that is definitely the way to go. If you were to limit the hours and you passed some sort of legislation that said that those under the age of 17 who are studying more than five TEE subjects should not work part time, or however you were to do it, it would never work. It would never be practical enough. First, I do not think it would be able to be enforced well enough and, second, they would find other places of getting the money. Generally, it is the money that they want. If the government were to say, ‘I am sorry, you cannot have this much money’ teenagers would go crazy. They are already doing enough illegal things.

If you try to stop more things happening students will go and find other places to get work and money, even if it is off the books. I do not think you should regulate it too much. People seem to be balancing it all right at the moment.

**CHAIR**—Okay.

**Rachel**—Lachlan does 32 hours a week, which I think is a bit too much. But, as he said, it is not really a job for him. His job involves keeping fit and it is also fun. You should cut down the

times a bit so employers know that if students say they need hours to study they will have to give them time. It is the right of students to be able to study for school. Instead of employers saying, 'You have to come in and work, you have to do this and you have to do that. You have signed a form that states you have to work' they should be a bit more lenient.

**CHAIR**—We asked this question because one of the things that we as communities, parents and schools have not done for you as students and workers is to have these conversations. We have just left you in the middle trying to work your way through it all. We need a compact for employers and we need guidelines as opposed to legislation that states, 'If you are employing young people who are studying, here are some guidelines on sensible hours, negotiating with them, and talking to the school.' I am sure that your employers have never thought to ring your school and say, 'How are they going?' Some privacy issues would be involved in doing that, but if we have a conversation we should be able to do those things better.

**Rachel**—Students should be asked, 'What are your hours? What is the maximum number of hours you need for your study?' Students should be asked those questions. There should be a verbal contract. When I worked at Hungry Jack's I said, 'I can work nine hours a week' but I would then be told, 'You have to take these shifts. You have to do a morning open.' I would say, 'I cannot do that because I have other commitments.'

**CHAIR**—Rachel, was that because you had gone on to the part-time status?

**Rachel**—Yes. The exact same thing happened to me. When I was 13 or 14 it went from being a casual job to, 'You are now part-time. You have to work over 15 hours a week', and I said, 'I quit.' They almost fired me for not turning up to my shifts because I would say that I could not work and they would say, 'Too bad.' I was nearly given a yellow slip, or whatever they gave you.

**CHAIR**—We will have to wrap up. Your evidence has been fascinating. We appreciate your honesty and your openness. If we are to make good recommendations to the minister who referred this issue to us we can do that only if we know the truth about what is going on in the community. Your honesty today was important and useful to us in this process. Thank you all for your attendance here today. If you have been asked to provide additional material would you please forward it to the secretary? However, I do not think we have asked you for anything.

A copy of the transcript of your evidence will be sent to your schools and it will also be published on the committee's website. You can have a look at that and make corrections of grammar and fact if we got a name wrong or something like that. Hansard reporters might wish to check some details concerning your evidence. Check with the reporters before you leave and they will let you know whether they need some additional information from you. Usually they have just missed a name or something like that.

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

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

**Committee adjourned at 3.00 pm**

