CHAPTER 4

EDUCATION

Government responsibilities

4.1   The Commonwealth provides funding for a wide range of school programs as part of its contribution to the national effort for Australian schooling.

> Both the recurrent and capital programs provide financial assistance to schools so that students can be better prepared to undertake post-school education and training, to participate successfully in the labour market and to contribute to and benefit from Australian society.[1]

4.2   Education and training are constitutionally the responsibility of the State and Territory governments, which play a major role in the management and delivery of school education, TAFE and vocational training.[2] This has led to a considerable diversity in the range of responses to the education and pre-vocational training needs of students with disabilities. As with all students the foundations for future employment and training opportunities are to a large extent shaped by access to, experiences of, and achievements in, primary and secondary schooling.

4.3   The major providers of technical and further education in Australia are the TAFE colleges administered by State governments. While the major financial and educational responsibility for TAFE rests with the States, the Commonwealth government provides substantial assistance to the States, in order to improve the quality of TAFE education and to expand the opportunities for vocational education and training. The Commonwealth assumes a dominant role in higher education[3], as well as a significant role in the funding for the TAFE and school sectors. The Commonwealth also seeks to enhance the labour market prospects of the unemployed and other disadvantaged groups through special programs such as SkillShare, JobStart and JobTrain.[4]

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1.   *Commonwealth Programs for Schools 1991 Administrative Guidelines*, AGPS Canberra, 1990.

2.   *Employment, Education and Training Key Trends and Government Initiatives*, Submission to EPAC by the Minister for Education, Employment and Training, Discussion Paper 89/08, p. 1.

3.   DEET/National Board of Employment, Education and Training *A Fair Chance for All*, AGPS, 1990, see especially pp. 40-3 on higher education initiatives for people with disabilities.

4.   See Chapter 5, Paragraphs 5.93-5.138.

Access to Education

4.4   Education is essential for gaining access to employment through providing a range of knowledge, skills and practical experience which are the basis of further development. 'Education would have to be the single most important aspect for employment'.[5]

4.5   Evidence to the Committee highlighted the vital role of education in determining the future employment opportunities of people with disabilities. 'Unless people with disabilities are offered the same opportunities as their peers to gain a secondary education, with a chance of going on to tertiary education; then the chances of people with disabilities [are] severely reduced.'[6]

4.6   The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission identified the lack of adequate education qualifications or vocational training as a barrier to people with disabilities obtaining employment or advancing in employment.[7]

4.7   The 1988 Survey of Disability and Handicap found that of the 220,000 'handicapped'[8] people aged 5 to 20 years, 171,300 attended school. More than two thirds of handicapped school children attended ordinary classes, 94,600 at Government schools and 25,000 at non–Government schools. Children whose primary condition was a physical disability were more likely to be in a mainstream education (i.e. ordinary classes at ordinary school) than were those children whose primary disability was classified as 'mental'[9] (mostly intellectual).

4.8   ABS data[10] indicate that in 1989 there were 462 special schools in Australia catering for 19,844 students (or 0.7 per cent of all full-time students). Only 3,230 of these students were identified as being in secondary education (for 64 per cent their level of education was not identified as being primary or secondary).

Primary and secondary education

4.9   Witnesses and submissions differed in the emphasis which they placed on problems with schooling, and the benefits to be obtained from mainstream or from special education services. A number of people clearly believed that issues of

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5.   *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4442 (Disabled Peoples' International, Queensland Branch).

6.   Submission No. 28, p. 1 (Mr I. Dalwood).

7.   *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5861 (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission).

8.   ABS terminology; 'handicap' is a more serious level of incapacity than 'disability'. See Appendices 5 and 6.

9.   'Mental' handicap/disability is a term which should no longer be used by the ABS; it is not acceptable terminology.

10.   ABS, *Schools Australia*, 1989, 4221.0.

integration versus segregation were important in the consideration of the *type* of education available.

Integration versus segregation

4.10 A major philosophical argument about primary and secondary education for people with disabilities has centred on the imbalance of mainstream versus segregated schooling. As noted above[11] there is considerable pressure by many people with disabilities to be accepted by the broader community and to gain access to the opportunities taken for granted by others; at the same time, there is also an awareness of the importance of identifying needs and having these met in order to overcome multiple disadvantages, including the particular disadvantages of different types and levels of disability. In the area of education these approaches have not always been brought together in terms of outcomes for individuals, with the major ideological divergence between integrated versus segregated schooling dominating thought in some States and possibly insufficient attention being paid to the end result of either form of schooling. In some States where integration is established as an option for the majority of students with a disability, the lack of adequate resourcing may reduce its viability as an option.

4.11 Some submissions painted an alarming picture of the fate of some students with mild intellectual disabilities:

> Preparation for employment is also a major issue. In NSW this is virtually non-existent for students in high schools with intellectual disabilities . . . They leave school at 14 years and 9 months, too young to qualify for unemployment benefits, sickness benefits or the invalid pension. They have no skills for work, have behavioural problems and poor self esteem.[12]

> In some cases, the educational vacuum may be filled by less desirable influences still, with the result that we are now becoming aware that our prisons contain disproportionately high numbers of people with intellectual disabilities, who represent the challenges of training, re-training, and employment once more — though, this time under much more difficult circumstances.[13]

4.12 There is a need for programs which promote training and employment opportunities for people with mild intellectual disabilities such as programs to improve the secondary school retention rate for children with those disabilities and TAFE courses aimed specifically at such students which would prepare them for work.

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11. See Paragraphs 3.46-3.50.

12. Submission No. 6, p. 2 (Dr M. Ryan).

13. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 3681 (The New South Wales Council for Intellectual Disability), p. 5377 (JobMatch).

4.13   To meet the needs of primary and secondary school students an adequate response within the regular school curriculum is essential. For students with physical or sensory disabilities, the major factor may be obtaining access to the curriculum, whether through the provision of ramps and toilets or aids, or through other assistance such as material in braille or taped materials etc. The author of one submission noted that problems of physical access could limit education opportunities.

> The chances of an integrated system of education (in NSW) offering students with disabilities equal opportunity must be reduced when the building program for the Department of Education does not always reflect in practice, physically accessible schools for students with disabilities. In 1980/'81 many people with disabilities demonstrated outside the Glebe High School in Sydney at the lack of access to various parts of that school for its students with disabilities. Since that time, this unfortunate experience has been repeated. These factors impact on the chances of people with disabilities gaining access to the workforce and, having choices about the point(s) of entry into the workforce.[14]

4.14   By the end of the 1980's and early in the 1990's, however, there was evidence that greater integration of services had occurred in New South Wales government policies. While problems with physical access may remain − and these are not peculiar to New South Wales schools, or even to secondary education[15] − it was obvious from evidence given to the Committee in 1990 from officers from the Departments of Further Education, Training and Employment, and Family and Community Services, that a much more active series of strategies had been developed to improve access to services.[16]

4.15   Greater awareness of access problems amongst the community in general, has meant that these issues are now more taken into account. However, it is apparent that resources simply are not sufficient to assist all people with disabilities to access courses physically, to have the direct assistance they need (in terms of aids, individual coaching/interpreting)[17], or to obtain access to courses which meet their specific needs.

4.16   A discussion paper prepared by the National Council on Intellectual Disability for HREOC found that:

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14.   Submission No. 28, p. 2 (Mr I. Dalwood).

15.   See *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5602 'Some programs are literally not accessible' (DEAC − Disability Employment Action Centre).

16.   *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 3966, 3968 (New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services).

17.   *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 5602, 5606 (DEAC − Disability Employment Action Centre).

> Although all State and Territory education authorities have written policies which to a greater or lesser extent promote the integration of students with disabilities into regular school environments, these policies are often not supported with the allocation of appropriate resources.[18]

This view was supported by other witnesses.[19] One of these noted that integrated education:

> not only helps to give a broader education to people with disability but also to able-bodied students, educators and the wider community. This in itself will help with the education of people with a disability in the future.[20]

The Committee notes that all members of the community benefit from integration, and this view is one which could profitably inform many education and information campaigns. It helps both to identify particular needs at the same time as indicating that these needs are those of non-disabled people as well as those of people with disabilities.

Recommendation

The Committee RECOMMENDS:

1.   That adequate human and financial resources be allocated to all mainstream schools to ensure provision of services required for true integration.

4.17   The provision of additional resources to the level required for integration to operate, therefore, should be seen not only as an investment in people with disabilities but an investment in the wider community as a part of its own education.

4.18   Other witnesses emphasised that special or segregated education might have some benefits, even though they also had drawbacks.

4.19   A recent study of special education in Australia found that while 'most States had moved towards integration of students with intellectual and other disabilities into regular classes . . . the extent to which integration has been achieved differs from state to state, region to region, and even school to school'.[21] The study

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18.   *The Rights of People with Disabilities,* p. 33. See also Transcript of Evidence, p. 5599 (DEAC – Disability Employment Action Centre).

19.   *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 4444 (Disabled Peoples' International, Queensland Branch).

20.   *ibid.* See also *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 5612 (DEAC – Disability Employment Action Centre).

21.   A. Ashman and J. Elkins (Eds), *Educating Children with Special Needs,* Prentice Hall, Sydney, 1990, p. 86.

concluded that the successful introduction of integration depended on a range of social, administrative and policy responses, including modification of the curriculum to include the needs of children with disabilities, attitudinal change and adequate resources (for example, training, assistance and physical resources).

4.20 Mainstream schools, in other words, theoretically offer both a better education and the development of individual opportunities to make contact with the broader community. Yet, unless they provide appropriate resources they may not be able to offer any equity to their students both in terms of scholastic or social development.[22]

4.21 An education consultant in Western Australia, for example, pointed out that students with an intellectual disability 'generally have not continued into upper school' because of 'certain constraints in resources and curriculum'.[23] While there could be problems in keeping students at school until later (because of the higher wages they might need to be paid when they left) the special schools *did* maintain students until they were eighteen.[24]

4.22 Other parent groups or individuals had had different experiences with mainstream education – one finding that the State system could not make appropriate provision for his daughter.[25] An organisation representing people with disabilities believed that schools 'are not doing enough in the area of transition education', thereby suggesting that this preparation for employment should not be left to the end of schooling 'students with disabilities – who may require additional support – are even less apt to be catered for'.[26]

4.23 However, other witnesses or submissions pointed to the defects of special education which included a limited awareness by the community of people with disabilities and of their needs.

4.24 The segregated special schools system was considered the source of 'many of the problems that people with disabilities face in employment and further education and training'[27], with attitudinal barriers being seen as linked to the policy of segregation adopted in the past:

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22.   *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4176 (Dr M. Steinberg).

23.   *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5293 (Mr B. Blakeman).

24.   *ibid.*

25.   *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5064 (Southern Regional Planning Groups for People with Disabilities).

26.   *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5042 (Southern Regional Planning Group for People with Disabilities).

27.   *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5599 (DEAC – Disability Employment Action Centre).

Many of the barriers which people with disabilities face in the community are associated with attitudes of the general community and basic ignorance of disability issues. That has stemmed significantly from the fact that people with disabilities are segregated throughout childhood from non—disabled people. Despite the existing integration program, that has not been dealt with any great success at this time, in our view.[28]

4.25 One of the arguments against segregated education has been that, whatever the level of educational achievement, it has not been able to provide its students with the other services which are perceived as an integral part of education — socialisation skills, experience in decision making, transition to the adult world and independence. While the levels of these will no doubt vary according to the intellectual level and personality of the individual and the environmental factors influencing his or her life (including other disadvantaging factors), the capacity to enter the workforce and operate successfully within it demands the ability to function with other people on at least a superficial level. Insofar as segregated schooling may not offer that opportunity over a number of years, it will produce children who are severely disadvantaged. People with disabilities, as indicated above[29], are well aware of their separateness, and of the attitudes of society, of some employers and fellow employees; while education and information programs must work towards overcoming such attitudes, provision of the confidence with which to deal with negative attitudes is also a responsibility of those educators who have the future prospects of people with disabilities entrusted to them.

4.26 Issues of access for students with intellectual disabilities are more complex than for people with other disabilities.

4.27 They may require additional opportunities to learn — 'either because they have not learned things which are assumed to be known by regular students, or because they need to be taught things which schools assume are learned incidentally out of school'.[30]

4.28 Traditionally, special schools have responded to these needs by either continuing students' education for several years until 18 or 20 years of age or by eliminating some of the content of the regular curricula, and planning curricula with the needs of the individual student in mind. Obviously it may be more difficult to accommodate these special curricula needs in a regular classroom environment; inability to do so, however, will mean that mainstreaming is not the complete answer and supplementary classes and/or individual assistance may also be required. This is true also for many students regarded as 'mainstream', for example children from non-English speaking backgrounds or children whose parents move frequently.

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28. *ibid.*

29. See Paragraphs 3.41-3.47.

30. A. Ashman and J. Elkins (Eds), *op. cit.*, p. 53.

Quality of education

4.29   However, the problems are more extensive than this, and also concern the quality of education and the resources available to maintain standards.

4.30   A sub-standard education, in the sense of one which does not provide a solid grounding in basic principles of literacy and numeracy, could be the end result of a number of years of schooling. A young woman described for the Committee the difficulties she had experienced:

> I was integrated at a very early age, and I honestly thought that to get a job in the normal work force would be a lot easier for somebody who had been educated the way I had. But I missed grade 7 and went from grade 6 to high school. I went into the hearing impaired unit there for maths, science and social studies. . . . I was integrated for English and all my options, but in those three subjects I did not get any homework so, consequently, I did not learn the study skills.

> When I left school and tried to get a job in the normal work force I found that it was very hard if you did not have the proper schooling.[31]

4.31   The then Director of the Epic Employment Service in Queensland (a CETP program) made a similar point:

> One of the big problems that we face is that most of our clients come from special schools and the special schools headmasters say, "Don't expect them to be able to read and write". We say, "What else are you actually doing there?". They say, "We are doing all sorts of other wonderful things like microwave cooking courses". They do a lot of things which are very useful and teach them independent skills but they would never assist them in being able to get employment.

> I faced the problem, when I was at the CES, that people would come in but could not fill in the forms, could not understand the questions, could not read the newspaper to find a job, or could not access the CES boards because they could not read the cards. If those sorts of basic skills are lacking, we have really got a long way to go before we are going to be looking at more advanced things.[32]

A consumer service, DEAC, stated to the Committee:

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31.   *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5202 (PE Personnel).

32.   *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4209 (Epic Employment Service M.O.R.E. Inc.).

As for the standard of schooling levels in many special schools, people come out with grade 2 or 3 level of schooling. That includes thousands of people with physical disabilities.[33]

DEAC also suggested that 'part of the problem is ... that traditionally special school teachers are primary teachers. People come out of special schools at the age of 18 unable to access further education'.[34]

4.32 Many children with disabilities, they believed, are not as well served as they might be by their education.

> [There are] people for whom, possibly because of a severe physical disability, their intellect and the development of their educational skills are the potential ways that they can contribute significantly to their own life and to the community, and participate in the community fully. Unfortunately, because of their participation in the special school system, they come out at the age of 18 with virtually no schooling as well, and so they have no access to the further education system.[35]

4.33 These statements indicate that there are difficulties both within special schools and mainstream schools for people with disabilities although the magnitude of these problems may vary across States. Unless there is a full commitment to developing the abilities of all students on an individual basis, both forms of education may fail to prepare students to participate in society to their full potential. Although not supporting segregated education because of its 'flow-on effect', one consumer group suggested that there was a need for a flexible, individualised education service.

> There are a range of models for delivering educational services and some of them are your strictly segregated models. There are schools which provide a degree of integration and there are schools which provide a range of regional services and support to people with disabilities within mainstream settings. . . . I guess what we would be on about would be providing a service to a person, with a range of supports, both those directly on deck and those that could be shared amongst schools in terms of providing an integrated education and also delivering for students with disabilities the same sorts of outcomes that would be expected in the mainstream community, in particular levels of literacy and numeracy and those sorts of very basic things which the education system does not deliver for a number of people with disabilities in segregated settings, when it could.[36]

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33. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5600 (DEAC – Disability Employment Action Centre).

34. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5599 (DEAC – Disability Employment Action Centre).

35. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5600 (DEAC – Disability Employment Action Centre).

36. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 5612-13 (DEAC – Disability Employment Action Centre).

4.34 A submission from a thirty-five year old man who had studied at university after attending special school until age 15 highlighted the importance of such a commitment.

> The emphasis on "special schools" as with "integrated" mainstream schools should be on qualitative educational options for students with disabilities. Both the special schools and the mainstream schools require resourcing at a level which will guarantee as far as possible that the opportunities offered a student with a disability are *equal* to those made available to students without disabilities.[37]

Recommendations

The Committee RECOMMENDS:

2. That both special and mainstream schools ensure that people with disabilities receive an education which is appropriate to their needs.

3. That all children with disabilities have access to required remedial teaching during school hours in order to ensure that appropriate education is available, and to ensure that students do not leave school without their education and other needs being identified and adequate steps being taken to meet these needs.

4. That schools be adequately resourced to provide such assistance as is required by people with disabilities to obtain an education which will allow them to participate in society (including employment) as much as possible. Such access includes, but is not limited to, physical access, appropriate courses, aides and interpreters, equipment.

5. That effective monitoring and evaluation processes be established to ensure that education services are meeting the needs of individuals.

4.35 The increasing trend towards integration of children with disabilities into mainstream school settings has opened up a wide range of social, educational and vocational opportunities which previously have been denied this disadvantaged group. In Victoria and South Australia, the parents of children with disabilities have been able to choose whether their child is educated in a 'regular' or 'non–regular' educational setting since the early 1980's. While not all children with disabilities can be 'integrated', the Director of the Integration Unit for the Victorian Education Department noted in 1985 that a 'realistic and flexible approach to "integration" would permit more disabled children to attend "regular" schools than ever

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37. Submission No. 28, p. 2 (Mr I. Dalwood).

before'.[38] The Queensland Department of Education policy supports integration, and a number of students with disabilities are enrolled in mainstream schools.[39]

4.36 Most State governments now offer a range of options to students with disabilities. In Western Australia, depending on the needs of individual students they may participate in regular classes or may alternate between educational support centres on the same campus and regular classes or they may attend a separate education support school. The Northern Territory Minister for Education outlined his department's approach to the education of students with disabilities whereby students with disabilities are encouraged to attend their local school, with the Department and School principal identifying and making available the necessary support services. If it is decided by a formal placement and review panel that it is inappropriate for a student to attend a local school, education is provided within specialised settings such as special units/classes attached to mainstream or special schools. A child attending such a unit is seen as being provided with maximum opportunities for interaction with mainstream peers.[40] However, some contradiction between policy and practice was evident during consultations conducted by the Chair of this Committee in the Northern Territory in June 1990. Public servants, as well as consumers (who had recently attended Northern Territory schools) stated that this policy was not always supported in practice.

4.37 In Tasmanian schools, the emphasis is on maximum integration with the majority of children with visual, hearing and physical disabilities being fully integrated. Special schools operate in each of eight districts; the majority of students in these schools have intellectual disabilities, and a percentage of these may be able to attend some components of mainstream education. Special support units provide assistance to such students.

Post school options and problems of transition from secondary school

4.38 ... the preparation of people with intellectual disabilities for employment must start before they leave school. The tendency for the eighteenth birthday or whatever to arrive and nothing to have been done specifically to prepare people for this inevitable event is very largely responsible for the problems we now face. If we were to think ahead, do some forward planning, and train people for jobs that are

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38. 'They are Different', Michael Steer, *The Australian Teacher*, No 13, August 1985.

39. Queensland Department of the Premier, Economic and Trade Development – letter to Committee, 1 May 1991.

40. Submission No. 197, Attachment A (Minister for Education, the Arts and Cultural Affairs, Northern Territory). Early in 1992, the policy of maximum possible integration was stated to be in practice, with students attending mainstream schools where possible, with alternative courses and extra staff being provided. School to work transition programs were available for students, some of whom remained at school until the age of 21. Special School education was also available. See also Northern Territory Department of Education *Annual Report*, 1990, Darwin 1991, p. 33.

ahead we would save ourselves a lot of heartache and the crisis management that we then have to engage in.[41]

Today, education tends to be dictated by concern with standard elements of curricula and oriented to feeding the demands of competitive, top-of-the-range performers. For disabled children where the education process is punctuated by other concerns like maintenance and therapy, preparation for adulthood roles is delayed and truncated, especially when they reach 18 (in some states). The fragments of the education received are often unrelated to skills useful for obtaining employment. Considerable delay may therefore occur before entering the workforce while Activity Therapy Centres attempt to recover the situation.

The main message communicated to young disabled persons by the education system is that most of the training they receive is sham and they cannot expect to become employed.[42]

4.39 A report of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training[43] noted the Board's concern that:

Careers education should seek to overcome the disadvantage and discrimination often associated with . . . disability . . .. Simply making equal provision for all students may not be sufficient for those students who are least advantaged, and consequently, specific measures will be required.[44]

4.40 The Board also noted that careers education must be provided within a realistic economic and labour market context so that these disadvantaged students 'consider their futures cognisant of the obstacles posed by factors such as labour market trends and quotas on entry to higher education institutions and TAFE'.[45]

4.41 In 1988 almost three quarters of students aged 13 to 20 years attending special classes in mainstream schools and two thirds of students in special schools had, as their primary disabling condition, 'mental' disabilities (predominantly 'mental retardation' as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics).[46]

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41.   *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 3721 (The New South Wales Council for Intellectual Disability).

42.   *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4814 (Disability Advisory Council of Australia).

43.   NBEET, *Strengthening Careers Education In Schools*, AGPS, 1991.

44.   *ibid.*, pp. 53-4.

45.   *ibid.*, p. 54.

46.   Data extracted from 1988 ABS Survey of Disability.

4.42 Vocational outcomes from some special schools were seen as having been very poor, meaning that students from these schools have been unable to access further education and had no recognised qualifications.[47]

4.43 The extent of this problem is hard to gauge, partly because of lack of formal quantitative information as to the level of education attained by students with disabilities, both in mainstream and in segregated schools, and partly because of paucity of specific data.[48] It is difficult to ascertain both the number of students with disabilities graduating from schools and the nature of their disability. As a result it is difficult to determine how many may be missing out on places in sheltered, supported or open employment programs or other training and support programs. In particular the recent moves in a number of States towards the integration of students with disabilities makes it difficult to assess how many students with disabilities graduating from mainstream schools may experience problems in obtaining a job as a result of their disability and are in need of assistance.

4.44 A need still exists, therefore, for information on people with disabilities. If, as other evidence stated, there was a considerable number of people whose 'disability' had never been identified, the information base is currently seriously deficient.[49] However, as has been suggested in Appendix 7, there is no point in obtaining information *per se*.[50] It must be utilised to the advantage of the individuals and groups concerned, and to this end it may be necessary for the parties concerned to determine both short and long-term plans for access to additional programs. In order to be successful, however, such strategies would require commitment to a substantial level of expenditure to rectify deficiencies in the education of those who had not previously been identified as having a disability (as well as those who had). In addition, such strategies would also have to provide improved access both to education/training and indirectly to employment services for those who have moved on from secondary education into the wider community but whose opportunities have been substantially limited, often since the time they left formal education.

4.45 Since the problem of poor vocational outcomes has now been identified, the emphasis has necessarily been on establishing effective transition for those who have just left school or are about to do so.

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47. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5613 (DEAC – Disability Employment Action Centre).

48. The Queensland Government advised the Committee in May 1991 that an average of 250 students with disabilities left mainstream and special schools each year (90 per cent of these had intellectual disabilities). No data were available on students with disabilities exiting TAFE programs.

49. See, for example, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 3956 (New South Wales Department of Further Education, Training and Employment).

50. See Appendix 7, p. 10, Paragraph 5.1.

4.46 Examples of improvements in special schools can be seen in the development of a number of transition programs which assist students in their transition to adult and working life. Several State governments are currently developing strategies to achieve more effective transition from special schools to work or other activities for students with disabilities.

4.47 There is very little information on programs for other students with disabilities graduating from mainstream schools. The transition pilots in each State vary in target group, orientation, and *raison d'être*. In Victoria and Western Australia evidence given to the Committee suggests that the development of transition programs was a response to concern by parents and teachers about the lack of options for their children when they have finished school. In other States, while parental concerns have no doubt been crucial, some of the impetus has come from organisations and governments, and to some extent, from the students themselves.

4.48 Overall, the impetus to develop these programs reflects three main influences. The first is that there are reduced numbers of places in sheltered workshops which has meant that transition from special school to the sheltered workshop is no longer regarded as being automatic or, indeed, as desirable.

4.49 Secondly, there is concern that students without post-school options will regress, and this concern has been expressed clearly, especially in relation to people with intellectual disabilities. 'The need is urgent, not only to accommodate those leaving school at the end of the 1990 year but to take up the huge backlog of those who have long since left the education system and have nothing to go to. The sad fact is that many of these who have no form of employment or placement have regressed from the achievement levels that our educators worked so hard to attain.'[51] Given the particular problems which people with disabilities have with self-esteem and self-confidence, this is an important matter, particularly, for people with intellectual difficulties who may require continual reinforcement of skills.

4.50 The third major influence on the development of recent post-school options was the perception that students emerging from an integrated education system will expect integrated, mainstream post-school options. Overall, the common elements in these transition programs have been:

- consultation with students and parents to develop individual plans; and

- development of linkages between schools, community service providers and other education providers such as TAFE.

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51. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5251 (W.A. Special Schools Parent Action Group). See also Submission No. 37, p. 1 (Koomarri Special School) where the principal of Koomarri school in the ACT voiced similar concerns.

Development of Transition and Post-School Programs

4.51 South Australia has a comprehensive transition program for students with disabilities via Education Department support services such as The Daws Road Centre in Adelaide[52] which provides a transition program for students aged 15 to 17 with intellectual or other disabilities. These students have typically had trouble coping with 'normal' schooling and they attend the centre for two days each week returning to their home school for the remaining three days. The centre has found that while these students have the capacity to work in open employment they will not succeed without support. Since 1977 the centre has assisted over 1000 students of whom 60-70 per cent have been placed in open employment and about 20 per cent in supported employment. The centre works with about 120 students each year.[53]

4.52 The major activities of the students focus on development of skills and attitudes which are necessary to cope with employment. A significant part of this is the work experience program, which is matched to the needs of each student and the period of attendance depends on their needs — in the past it has ranged from a few weeks to more than two years.

4.53 The Centre works closely with other agencies such as the CES and draws on the support available such as JobStart and SkillShare to assist their students into employment. When students are considered 'work ready' a staff member assists them in locating a suitable job, accompanies the student to interviews and acts as an advocate throughout the application process. Once a student leaves the centre the staff monitor their progress. It is considered that the advocacy and support 'contribute significantly to the success of many Daws Road students in obtaining and retaining employment'.

4.54 The New South Wales Department of School Education was administering the pilot phase of its transition program late in 1990.[54] This program addresses the lack of co-operation between school based and community based programs and the need for follow-up and post-school support which has previously been identified as being a problem.The program aims to achieve greater co-ordination of existing services and programs for young people with disabilities faced with the transition from school to work.[55]

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52.   Submission No. 223 (Daws Road Centre). See also *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5063 (Southern Regional Planning Groups for People with Disabilities).

53.   Submission No. 223, p. 1 (Daws Road Centre).

54.   New South Wales Government – Department of School Education – further material supplied to the Committee following hearings in Sydney 2-3 October 1990. Other evidence was provided directly to the Committee by two other Departments, FACS (Family and Community Services) and the Department of Further Education, Training and Employment. See *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 3949-72.

55.   See also *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 3968-9 (New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services).

4.55 In order to achieve smooth transition from school to community adjustment for individuals with disabilities, the pilots have involved the establishment of two structures, school based and community based transition teams.

4.56 The school-based teams consist of the student, the student's parents/advocate, special education teachers, other school staff and representatives of adult service agencies. These teams develop Individual Transition Plans (ITP) for each student and are developing systems for tracking the implementation of these ITP's and their outcomes. The focus of the community based teams is to enhance the capacity of the various service provisions during transition, rather than to provide direct services.

> Basically this program is an attempt to secure more positive outcomes for students . . . an attempt to pull together the range of services and support that individual may need – not only those they need to secure and retain meaningful employment, but also the support services that individual will need within the community at large once they leave school . . .

> [The pilot] is looking at things like creating a transition plan for a person that says, "This is where that person is at; this is the support they need; this is what they would like to do and these are the skills they need subsequently".[56]

4.57 Following the pilot phase, the Department of School Education intends to establish transition teams on a state wide basis, so that all secondary age students with disabilities can receive effective and efficient services and support.[57] A similar process operated in Queensland in that all students in segregated educational settings must have an Individualised Transition Program (ITP) which provides the structure for their transition from school into the work area.[58]

4.58 The Northern Territory Department of Labour and Administrative Services was trialling a 'School to Work Transition Program' in four junior high schools at the time of their submission in May 1990.[59] In early 1992, transition programs were considered to be well established, with programs available for 15-21 year olds and work experience being gained while individuals were still at school. Funding was provided through the Commonwealth and Territory governments and through other sources.

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56. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 3969 (New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services).

57. *ibid.*

58. Additional information provided to the Committee by the Queensland Government, 1 May 1991.

59. Submission No. 197 (Northern Territory Minister for Education).

4.59 Evidence provided to the Committee suggested that although Victoria and Western Australia had had transition plans in place for some time they were finding that tightness in both the sheltered and open labour markets meant that students in these States were not all subsequently obtaining employment or other placements.

4.60 In Western Australia the Special Schools Parent Action Group had estimated that in 1989 there were at least 120 students leaving school each year and an existing pool of 1000 unplaced adults.[60]

4.61 The problems caused by segregation and low educational standards, leading to, and compounded by, a lack of post-school options for students with disabilities has led in Victoria to the retention of many adult 'students' in special schools. In 1988 there were 868 adults with intellectual disabilities attending special schools in Victoria.[61] Most of these had been allowed to continue at school because there were no post school options available.

> I think that the whole project and the way the numbers are growing are signs that the adult education, training and employment sectors are not growing at a pace to pick up people who are moving through school.[62]

> In Victoria, the reason why we have got the 18+ problem is that the schools have been reluctant to push students out where there have not been other options available to them.[63]

4.62 There was concern that the lack of a post-school placement meant that students' skill levels were not maintained and that this would have the long-term effect of an increased level of dependency.

> The teachers' view was that the best transition program in the world will not suffice if there are not the organisations and services to carry on the work they have started.[64]

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60. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5246 (W.A. Special Schools Parent Action Group).

61. Report of the Working Party on Students with an Intellectual Disability Aged over 18, February 1989, (additional material supplied to the Committee) p. 29. See also *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5438 (Victorian Government). Community Services Victoria indicated in their evidence to the Committee that the number of adults in special schools had now grown to about 1000 and would have grown to about 2000 by the conclusion of the pilots.

62. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5439 (Victorian Government).

63. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5441 (Victorian Government).

64. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5290 (Mr B. Blakeman).

4.63 In Western Australia an inter-departmental working party report (the 'Blakeman' report) had recommended that the Government provide funding for the creation of an additional 200 post-school placements each year for four years.[65]

4.64 However, in evidence to the Committee, disability groups expressed their concern that only 1990 school leavers (and beyond) would be eligible to participate in the new programs and that those people who had left school within the last five years and who did not have a placement were excluded.[66] However Mr Blakeman (appearing as a private citizen) supported this targeting of the program on the grounds that:

> the outcomes will be better. Obviously if you have that continuum of development of skills, one would expect greater independence and therefore less dependence in the future with those people who are well transited from school into another option or series of options.[67]

4.65 The Western Australian Government was concerned that appropriate transition programs became available, and from the middle of 1990 a number of work experience pilot programs have been conducted in order to find the most suitable model.

4.66 In July 1991 a research and development project was undertaken by PE Personnel with funding from the Post Compulsory Program, Curriculum Development Branch of the Ministry of Education. The purpose of the project was to implement three different models of service delivery to facilitate work experience for students with disabilities, compare the outcomes and draw some conclusions for future developments. In total 27 students of school leaving age were targeted for participation in the project.

4.67 The three models were: Train the Teacher; Train the Student; and Mentor, Schools and Students. The third program used mentors, who were volunteers trained by a competitive employment agency (PE Personnel) to deliver on the job support and training during work experience. A Work Experience Officer was employed, part-time, to secure work experience placements and to co-ordinate mentors.

4.68 The Western Australian Ministry of Education believes that:

> Of all the models trialled, the two which utilised the expertise and resources of a specialist employment agency generated the most positive results (that is Train the Student and Mentor). The Mentor model was clearly the most successful because of its cost effectiveness

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65. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5272 (Developmental Disability Council of Western Australia (Inc).

66. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5251 (Western Australian Special Schools Parent Action Group), p. 5270 (Developmental Disability Council of Western Australia (Inc.).

67. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5295 (Mr B. Blakeman).

and outcomes in securing paid employment. The Train the Teacher program was the least successful as teachers were unable to fulfil classroom obligations as well as work experience obligations.[68]

4.69 During 1991 several other models were trialled; it was concluded that:

of all the programs trialled during 1991, it became very clear that the most successful were those that employed outside agencies to secure work experience placements and provide on the job support. . . . Programs trialled to date have concentrated on School to Work Transition; other areas of Transition From School (recreation and living skills) are yet to be addressed.[69]

4.70 In Victoria, a Working Party had recommended that all special schools and continuing education centres design transition programs for their 16-18 age group in collaboration with local TAFE providers to facilitate the move from a specialised education environment to mainstream training programs.[70]

4.71 In addition, responsibility for the education and training of students 18 years and over with an intellectual disability should be transferred from Office of Schools Administration to programs provided by other State Government departments, depending on the specific needs of the individual students. The transfer was to be evaluated in 1990/91 in pilot projects in seven special schools. These trialled a range of community and further education options and also investigated the options which will be available in the future for students from integrated settings.

4.72 Transition programs appear to have become a growth area within States and Territories, and are beginning to meet an identified need.

4.73 As yet, it is too early to determine if all these programs will be successful in meeting the specific needs of people with intellectual disabilities who are in the process of finishing secondary education. Clearly, they will require to be fully resourced in order to ensure that participants retain skills and are able to move into the workforce; nonetheless, the poor labour market prospects will also be a factor which needs to be considered in any evaluation of effectiveness.

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68. Information provided to the Committee by the Western Australian Ministry of Education, January 1992.

69. *ibid.*

70. Report of the Working Party on Intellectual Disability, on students with an intellectual disability. Victorian Government Ministry of Education, Office of Schools Administration, Special Schools (April 1989).

4.74 More to the point, perhaps, is the role of these programs in the overall education of people with intellectual disabilities. To a degree, they may be seen as a means of providing experience and developing skills which might, more profitably, have been learnt at an earlier age (a criticism which might also apply to the need for life skills courses, many of which are run by TAFEs). Where this is the case, it points to a deficit in the education received in both primary and earlier secondary schools.

4.75 Obviously, the extent to which either special or mainstream schools are able to develop the full potential of their students is crucial to the nature and role of transition programs and post-school needs. Evidence of witnesses and from submissions suggest that in many ways such schools have not always had a positive view of their students' employability and therefore have not been able to encourage students to think of themselves as participating in the workforce. Again, to a degree, this can result from shortage of resources and where this is the case there are good grounds for being able to increase resources to enable the development of a more positive outlook and a proper development of skills, as well as increase physical and other access to services.

4.76 Transition programs which build on existing high levels of skills will obviously have a greater chance of operating as genuine transition services, enabling schools to provide the assistance needed by students to move to a more independent level of operation.

4.77 Those programs which are in effect providing education which might more profitably have been learnt at an earlier age and/or which are attempting to inculcate a more positive approach in the minds of parents, students and others, clearly are meeting a need but are performing a somewhat different function. Similar comments could be made about post-school options which are not able to build on optional learning and work experience of previous years.

Opportunities for work experience

4.78 Students in mainstream education would participate, as a matter of course, in the work experience programs offered by most secondary schools. While work experience is also available to students attending special schools 'there is much less variety in the type of work experience offered' and also 'great variation between special schools in the type and scope of work experience provided'.[71] Some programs may provide a simulated work experience program within the school whereas others may attempt to offer community based experience. The Disability Employment Action Centre (DEAC) in Melbourne claimed that some work experience programs were conducted in a manner which may create false expectations of future participation in employment.

4.79 However Westwork's experience had led them to believe that the pre-vocational training being provided to people with disabilities in special schools

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71. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5418 (Victorian Government).