

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO THE DELIVERY OF THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN SCHOOLS (VETiS) PROGRAM



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 13 SEPTEMBER 2017**

SESSION TWO

Members

**Ms J.M. Freeman (Chair)
Mr W.R. Marmion (Deputy Chair)
Ms J. Farrer
Mr R.S. Love
Ms S.E. Winton**

Hearing commenced at 11.01 am

Ms ANNE DRISCOLL

Acting Director General, Department of Training and Workforce Development, examined:

Mr SIMON WALKER

Executive Director, Policy Planning and Innovation, Department of Training and Workforce Development, examined:

Dr ROSS EDWARD KELLY

Director, Policy Planning and Research, Department of Training and Workforce Development, examined:

Ms KAREN MARIE PURDY

Manager, VET System Policy, Department of Training and Workforce Development, examined:

The CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you for agreeing to appear today to provide evidence in relation to the inquiry into the delivery of the VET in Schools program. My name is Janine Freeman and I am the Chair of the Education and Health Standing Committee. I would like to introduce the other members of the committee. This is Bill Marmion, who is the deputy chair; Josie Farrer, who has introduced herself; Shane Love; and Sabine Winton. It is important that you understand that any deliberate misleading of this committee may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. Your evidence is protected by parliamentary privilege; however, this privilege does not apply to anything that you might say outside of today's proceedings.

Before we begin, do you have any questions about your attendance today?

The WITNESSES: No.

The CHAIR: You have done this many a time. Would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Ms DRISCOLL: Yes. I will keep it brief, mindful of time. In some ways it is useful being a newcomer, because you are able to see this with fresh eyes and also observe some interesting data. One of the significant things, it occurs to me, is that there has been significant growth in the VET in Schools sector, and I was even just looking in the last three years, between 2014 and 2016. In terms of the qualifications awarded, it was a 55 per cent increase. I think that is an important context in recognising that there are going to be some adjustments and recalibrations that are necessary, given the increased interest and participation in this particular field. Another piece of data that I do not think has been fully sort of developed in some of the documents that I have seen is that in 2016 there were 38 000 students, but 48 000—so 10 000 more—enrolments in the VET in schools area. That means that there are many people doing more than one subject, so there may be, for example, kids doing, say, the recreation arts area in addition to something that is much more vocationally orientated. Of course, that brings us to a thing that has not been strong in many of the submissions, and that is the concept of the variety of students. Now, I know, obviously, the Department of Education will have dwelt on that, but just again, to flag, the ATAR students might often be doing it as an alternative to their very intensive courses, and even within the vocational pathway domain, the feedback I am getting through the industry training councils et cetera is that it is important to do some occupational specific stuff where a person is very clear about what they want to do and

they know that they have got a clear pathway, but there is also some value in keeping it generic, because they do not know for certain they are going to continue to have that area of interest or they may not be able to secure employment in that space. So it is important to have some sort of broader-based training. And, of course, there are those kids that are somewhat disengaged and really need some enticing options for them that will just keep them engaged and mixing, I guess, in a productive way at the school. However, obviously, there has been some focus on whether the extent of the range of courses and the take-up are sufficiently vocationally orientated. I think everyone would agree there is some work to do there, and we are on that journey to support that and make that happen, and clearly the department's funding is very much dedicated to vocationally orientated training. There were some good signs when I looked between 2015 and 2016, and this applies both to training in schools as well as in the departmentally funded area. Things like health care and social assistance grew by 29 per cent in that year alone, so between the two years, and construction grew by 30 per cent. So there are signs—and I think it is just like turning the *Titanic* a bit—of where we are starting to move and get a recognition from students and their parents, but also the schools, of the importance of getting into the vocation-orientated areas.

Only this week I was at an NDIS conference and was aware, in researching that, that we expect 15 000 more jobs in the disability support and care area in the next three or four years. It is great to see that, and there is a real recognition that while you want a diversity of age supporting people who need that assistance, young people are also in demand to fill those careers. What has been good in the last six months or so is an increased recognition through data that vocational options are very, very competitive, and indeed in one case better than some of the higher-end academic courses in terms of, first, your employment outcome—at the moment, you are more likely to get employment if you have been through a vocational pathway—and, secondly, the remuneration levels are now very comparable as well. So I think there is an increased recognition and desire from all the drivers really to make sure that this space is reinforced.

In terms of the department itself, as you will have seen through the data, we have about 17.3 per cent of the places in 2016 that were departmental funded, and that is a 13 per cent increase on the year prior—so again an incremental change. Very much, as you know, the role of DTWD is not only to provide training through TAFE, but, importantly, as I have got to know, is its role in workforce development—identifying what are the skill needs of the state going forward. Clearly, the new government is very much committed to training people locally rather than bringing people in, and so the onus is very much on us to deliver in that space. So, clearly, supporting the State Training Board, the department very much is working on that workforce scrutiny and assessment and identification of growth. Then, in terms of our allocation of our funded places, which is in the order of \$29.5 million, it is very specifically on vocationally orientated training. Just over the last year we have tightened that up so that going into 2017, we are not funding, particularly in the metro, students who are doing the business, the sport and recreation, the design and visual arts courses—that is just not on. Also, we are restricting to maximise, if you like, the access to the funded places and only allowing one profile course per student, and that will mean a 19 per cent increase in those students able to access the sort of departmental-funded options. So I guess what I am saying is a whole range of things we are doing to do our bit to enhance the vocational orientation, not forgetting the range of different student needs that exist. We are now working very closely with the schools, and Karen is dealing very regularly with schools in terms of looking at the funded places and how we might form that through the DTWD work and therefore provide some sort of nexus to their own offerings. Certainly, work has occurred in terms of a good-practice model for schools in terms of how they can, I guess, refine and develop their responses in this place, and we want to do more work with Education in terms of developing their procurement models et cetera. So probably

that is enough. I am very mindful of time. We see certainly some opportunities to further develop the effort and the impact of our work in this domain. I just make the point that, yes, it is iterative. Of course, we have now one minister, we work very closely with Sharyn O'Neill and her team, and we have already got close relationships but are looking to step that up in terms of regular meetings, even at the highest level, to make sure we are delivering on the commitments that have been made.

[11.10 am]

The CHAIR: Just in terms of that, in other states, their TAFEs deliver more of the training in schools than they do here. Here they tend to use more RTOs, which puts people at risk. In fact, in your submission you raise some concerns about the auspicing risk with RTOs. In terms of that, is there a capacity, in that obviously you are focusing much more on that vocational-orientated area than the more—I am not sure what we can call those other lifestyle or —

Ms DRISCOLL: Generic skills.

The CHAIR: — generic skills areas. Are there discussions or is there a greater capacity for TAFEs to be delivering that training into schools?

Mr WALKER: It is fundamentally about the resources that schools have and that the TAFEs have to deliver those services. One of the reasons for putting that comparison in there was just to show that there are other differences in other jurisdictions, and we have shown that New South Wales has a lower level of auspicing, but that is a longstanding arrangement that they have with their TAFEs that service their schools. In Victoria, though, for example, they are bit similar to us. They have a lot more schools going through auspicing arrangements. So it does vary across the country. Cost is an issue, and with the significant growth in VET in schools that has occurred for the schools, the capacity for us to resource through a TAFE to deliver those services, as compared to what an auspicing service would cost, is one issue, and in part —

The CHAIR: Why?

Mr WALKER: In part because the schools have got their own permanent staff—teachers. If we were to take that business out of their school and replace it with a TAFE service, then they would need to find other work for those teachers—just as one example—and there is just a total budget issue between both sectors for government.

The CHAIR: In terms of that, then, would it be better if the education department became an RTO so that person in a school was then just operating as an RTO so that they were not auspicing out, and then that close liaison with TAFE in terms of being able to get the collaboration and the skills development, and all of those sorts of things, can happen, so that that has synergies but saves money? Would that be a better situation?

Mr WALKER: Yes. I will give you the context for that one. The standards for registered training organisations—the bar, if you like, for actually becoming a registered training organisation—have increased significantly over certainly the last five years, and, on top of that, the training products are now having greater and greater specification for industry involvement, work placements, the qualifications of lecturers and so on and so forth. So the cost—and I think the education department have explored this—for them to become an RTO may well outweigh the benefit of that.

The CHAIR: I bet if you are doing the vocational-orientated areas, that a certificate II then helps with your WACE in terms of that, but in those other broader, generic areas, if you did not require a certificate II, then you would not require to be an RTO for those particular deliveries, only because you want that level of certification that may require to be an RTO. So, would it not be better if you separated out those two areas and said, “Here are the ones that you absolutely need to have that certificate II training and here are the ones that are more generic studies, be it training based, not

educational based”, so they still have modules and competency-based training instead of the more traditional educational objective-based type of training that goes around it? Could that be a way to manage that?

Mr WALKER: You would have to change the WACE requirements to do that because obviously the cert II is now a requirement for those people that are not going through an ATAR, so you would have to start there.

Mr W.R. MARMION: You are saying that the cost of becoming an RTO is going up. Who is driving that? How has that shift happened?

The CHAIR: The Training Accreditation Council.

Mr WALKER: Well, no, it is not the Training Accreditation Council. We are governed by a lot of national arrangements. They are national standards. You probably would not be surprised to know that there have been a few issues in vocational education and training over the last few years, and a really good example, obviously, is the VET FEE-HELP debacle that occurred recently. So, lifting the bar in an environment where there are 4 500 registered training organisations in Australia—which is pretty hard to regulate; it is not like the universities—has presented a whole series of challenges. So we are trying to, as a national system, improve the quality. Some of that comes with increased compliance and more difficulties there.

The CHAIR: You try to cut out some of the charlatans.

Mr WALKER: There are all sorts of avenues about how we might do that, but we are actually bound by the national arrangements. We do not have a choice there. We have input into it. In fact, currently the act that governs the national regulator is being reviewed, so we have input into that arrangement. Where you can, you want to reduce the regulatory burden, but we are in this space where we are trying to chase down a reasonable amount of dodgy providers and also relieve the burden for the good-quality ones. You can only have one set of standards.

The CHAIR: This is probably a bit out of our inquiry, but if the government regulated public providers, then as long as they meet these core standards, they can just have their accreditation. It is really the private providers that we are concerned about in terms of that delivery.

Mr WALKER: The short answer is no. It is either all in or all out.

Ms DRISCOLL: May I just make a point. We were talking about the issue of funding before, and I feel it is appropriate to raise a broader budget context, and that is the funding as it relates to training and workforce development has been significantly affected by the withdrawal or cessation of the national partnership funding arrangements through the commonwealth. As of basically June this year, we were getting for the last year \$54 million, which has now ceased. Now, there has been an offer of some alternative funding but it has got many, many strings attached to it and the legislation to support it has not yet passed. What is also expected as part of it is for any new, if you like, dollars through the new arrangement, which averages around potentially \$38 million for us per year, the state has to cough up an extra dollar itself. When we talk about, if you like, balancing the funds between school education and training and workforce development, given there is a real commitment through many of the jobs plans to skill people locally, we also have to preserve and try and identify further funding in the skills and basically the VET education area to fund the commitments that are in that space. Work is underway to try and get the best deal we can out of the commonwealth, but, as I said, for every dollar we get from the commonwealth, we have actually got to add another dollar ourselves, so there is quite a lot of pressure in terms of ensuring we meet things like that NDIS commitment, the construction and infrastructure work that is proposed et cetera, and maximise the training through those initiatives.

The CHAIR: Josie, did you want to ask about how the department operates in the Kimberley in terms of being able to deliver into those remote and regionals, and where they are working and the communities they are working in? Did you want to ask them anything?

Ms J. FARRER: Maybe Simon can give us an overview of that.

Mr WALKER: Yes. The bulk of the services into the Kimberley, or, in fact, from the Department of Training and Workforce Development, is work through our TAFE colleges, and there are allocations for each TAFE within our fixed budget and allocation of places. We do have a heavy weighting towards the regions on the recognition that they have more challenges to try and get those services. In the metropolitan area, particularly for large high schools, they have capacity within their own resources to do a lot more. So, just a tick under, or is it over, half of our total goes into regional areas. We also make some concessions where we normally only focus on years 11 and 12, but recognising that there is a need in some cases, particularly in some remote communities, for year 10s, we will make an allowance to make sure those year 10s can be captured, and in some cases, to get a viable class, you need to bunch up year 10s, 11s and 12s, and we are more than happy to acknowledge the special circumstances that occur within those smaller communities. I think the Kimberley TAFE gets a very reasonable, if not larger than most, share of delivery.

[11.20 am]

Dr KELLY: Yes, that is true right through the regions, and also the funding rates are higher.

Ms J. FARRER: Is that right through East Kimberley and West Kimberley?

Mr WALKER: I must admit we do not have the distribution, but we can provide that information.

Ms J. FARRER: That would be great. Also, when we are talking about the job placements and that, that is a policy that has been driven by the national, I guess, policy. Does that also include where we have section of the East Kimberley that is now with the white card, and how does that work with some of our people? We do have some of those young people who have dropped out of school and they are sort of working with the job providers, the EKJP, in that area. With those young people, does that cover expenses that they require also? I think they are working hand in hand with Centrelink, and there is big confusion there in regards to how some of these young people can, I guess, improve.

Mr WALKER: Yes. Are you talking about people who are not enrolled at school or are we talking —

Ms J. FARRER: Yes.

Mr WALKER: And they may be registered with Centrelink.

Ms J. FARRER: Yes.

Mr WALKER: Yes. The issue of the support—the commonwealth job services provide a network and interrelationship with our arrangements, particularly the training arrangements—is a confused space. We will support training for those school-aged students, and in fact we have a special fee arrangement for those students as well—for people who are of that age but have elected to go into training rather than stay at school. You mentioned the white card, which is a requirement to work on a construction site, even for work experience.

The CHAIR: No. She meant the Centrelink white card.

Ms J. FARRER: No, I was talking about the Centrelink white card.

Mr WALKER: Okay. We do not have any real connection with the social security arrangements with the commonwealth, no.

Ms J. FARRER: Because that is driven from the federal government.

Mr WALKER: That is right.

Ms J. FARRER: And I think it is causing a lot of confusion amongst people.

Ms DRISCOLL: I think it is important to flag, one, we are delivering a lot of training through the TAFE colleges, but also through the not-for-profits in the Kimberley and the Pilbara, so if there are issues for access like that, I think many of them are fixable, and there are Aboriginal contact people at each of the TAFEs, so if anyone wants to do some training and they are not able to access because they see that there is a fee barrier, they just need to talk to us because there are solutions to those sorts of problems.

The CHAIR: Sharyn undertook to work with you to provide a list to Josie of contacts.

Ms DRISCOLL: Okay; excellent.

The CHAIR: That is to work with the department around contacts both in schools and regional offices and TAFEs in terms of some of the important contacts. That would be good.

Ms S.E. WINTON: I guess I want to go back to what we have talked about and is coming through from all the submissions and the hearings we have had, and that relates to the purpose of the VET in Schools program and the not always agreed sort of purposes. What do you see, as a department, the purpose of VET in schools being, and do you see your purpose as being in conflict sometimes with others?

Mr WALKER: I do not think it is —

Ms DRISCOLL: I think it is complementary.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Perhaps “conflict” is the wrong word, but we are hearing from industry that there are quite different aspirations.

Ms J. FARRER: There are some grey areas.

The CHAIR: Even in your opening presentation, it was really interesting that you talked about your focus is on those vocational-orientated areas, whereas in the Department of Education, they talked about that broader 80 per cent.

Ms DRISCOLL: As did I, of course, flag those four different types, yes. I think our area of expertise is in the sort of vocational space, but we entirely recognise that from the Department of Education’s point of view, they have several drivers that they are attending to. So it is complementary, I think. I just know at a very personal level of young students I know who might even be choosing the ATAR, basically, route. They elect to do, say, the recreation, as some of them may have interest in doing that at uni. Alternatively, they are also trying to diversify and provide some balance to their intensive academic study. I think there is some space for us to further develop the vocational element, but I think it is very appropriate that there is a range of different options available.

The CHAIR: But you are only funding the vocational element.

Ms DRISCOLL: That is right.

Dr KELLY: But there is a more defined niche for us.

Mr WALKER: We are in this niche system, as you would have heard. We absolutely acknowledge all these other cohorts and their needs, and we think that is absolutely true and reasonable, but we have to, if you like, get informed by what industry’s views are. They have a very specific view that VET in schools is there as a pathway into employment, and to their sectors by and large, so they are very focused on that, and that is where we think we can get the best quality for the schools sector, because that often requires high-level technical expertise. That is where the TAFEs have a comparative advantage over other arrangements. We service, if you like, that part of the full suite

of needs in schools on behalf of industry. Having said that, we do have a couple of programs which are more on the participation end. Aboriginal school-based trainees, for example, is an area which is more on the participation end because that particular service is geared well to that cohort, and we fund that as well, including apprenticeships and traineeships.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Just to follow on from that, how much does industry care about students having achieved a certificate II in order to be issued with their WACE? Should the focus be on achieving WACE or is the WA Statement of Student Achievement enough?

Mr WALKER: So the question is: does industry —

The CHAIR: Does industry care?

Ms S.E. WINTON: Does industry value the system that has been created by students having to have the cert II?

Dr KELLY: In terms of cert II, what they value is quality training, so if the quality is there, they value it and have a big input into that. Fair to say?

Mr WALKER: They like the idea that school kids are doing VET in a systemic way. They think that having exposure to those industries is a good thing. It varies a little bit by employer or industry, but in many sectors there is a recognition that kids getting to year 12 is actually a good thing. There are differences of opinion here, but having a full, well-rounded education, they are more likely to want to employ someone who has finished their year 12 than perhaps existed 20 or 30 years ago, partly because of the literacy and numeracy requirements, and there is plenty of evidence to show the people who do finish school are likely to have higher employment outcomes, better wages and all that sort of thing.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Really my question has been picked over, but I think what has been highlighted today is that there is a difference of purpose between you and the Department of Education in how you see the VET program. It seems to me that you are thinking of training people in construction, for instance, and they are going to go to jobs with builders. That is not the view that Education had. They said it is more likely that if someone is trained in a general business course, for instance, that may well be seen to make them more job ready for someone in a completely unrelated field because that is a life skill which will serve them well, and it also exhibits their ability to learn. I am just sort of fascinated with the difference between the two departments' world view working together.

Mr WALKER: I do not think we have a difference of views. We recognise there are multiple purposes and that from where we are coming from, which is being informed by industry of those multiple purposes, our emphasis is on the vocationally orientated employment end. We absolutely recognise that for other reasons, other cohorts may be better served by generic training.

Mr R.S. LOVE: But in your opening statement I think you said you had chosen not to fund, for instance, a business course in —

Mr WALKER: Sorry. There is —

The CHAIR: Okay; one at a time.

[11.30 am]

Ms DRISCOLL: Can I just again go to the opening statement. I very much emphasise the importance that within those who are wanting to take a vocational pathway, there are two groups. This is also a statement from my meetings with industry training councils. There will be students who have decided they really want to be an electrician or a plumber or whatever, and they are prepared to try and dedicate themselves to that, even though it is sort of locking them into a particular pathway. Then there will be others who are interested in that pathway who have not yet decided specifically

what they are going to want to do. So even within the industry perspective, there is value seen in both aspects. I think, from our point of view, we recognise we have got some skill for those who are interested in a very vocational directive, but we also appreciate that there is a whole bunch of other things that students are interested in doing, in addition to the generic vocational stuff.

Dr KELLY: There is one other issue, and I think it goes to your question. Whatever course you do, there are sort of generic skills and competencies and life skills that come out of that that will be valuable for any job, and I think that is the point they are making, regardless of whether it is a cert II in business or a cert II, for that matter, in sport and rec. They are all valuable, but if you want something more specific to a pathway that leads to a job in construction, then obviously the construction qualifications are going to be better for that outcome.

The CHAIR: The Department of Education did a review, and it is called the Nous report. I do not know if you have seen that. It said that a recommendation of that was to establish the VET course rating system, which takes into account economic relevance and academic skills, which would result in a prioritised list for schools to offer. Would that be useful in this space in terms of being able to use that sort of cost–benefit type analysis? We keep saying, “Well, there’s this.” For me, it is all sort of very loose at the moment. There is no rigour around in terms of outcomes for students.

Mr WALKER: First of all, the school is better placed to determine what the most appropriate service is and product for them. They are the ones that have to take up the full suite of cohorts and understand their needs. I am not familiar with that particular recommendation, but we do develop a register of qualifications through our industry advisory arrangements which guide what industries see as appropriate qualifications for school students, and they are clearly orientated towards employment in those sectors. That is used as a guide to schools for determining the best qualifications for industry.

The CHAIR: That is the industry qualifications register?

Mr WALKER: That is the one.

The CHAIR: And that has been developed and it is being used?

Mr WALKER: Yes. It is quite extensive.

The CHAIR: And how do you ensure compliance with that?

Mr WALKER: It is advisory to the schools, and it is up to the schools to acknowledge what is on the list.

Dr KELLY: Absolutely. In terms of the register, we are using that to guide department funding for the TAFE colleges and some of our private providers for the training that they deliver.

Ms DRISCOLL: And, to a large degree, it identifies that cert IV quals are not desirable in many occupational areas, and certainly when we see the stats, I think there is less than two per cent of VET in schools that is in cert IV, so there is clearly some recognition of the principles that are in that document.

Mr W.R. MARMION: In terms of delivery of service in the regions for providing a service, let us say that industry visited schools for, say, construction, and it actually ties in and you can get some year 11s and 12s and you put a course together, which might be hard, I can imagine, in the regions, but once you have got it going and you have got, say, a lecturer, do you have trouble keeping those trained lecturers? Have you got any problems at the moment?

Mr WALKER: I am not aware of any issues with the TAFEs retaining lecturers to deliver those services, other than the normal thing that occurs obviously in some areas. Probably the biggest risk, if I could speculate, would be whether the numbers of students in the class can be maintained

throughout the duration of the course, and some of the challenges that exist for some of those students to get to locations and group themselves together, but the continuity of service from the TAFE is not an issue that I am particularly aware of.

Dr KELLY: Consultation with the schools, where they are doing other auspicing arrangements, is where the real challenge is, so when they get mobility of different teachers back to metro or into other areas, quite often that is where you get the loss of expertise, and that has been well documented, and I think you will find on the rural and remote advisory council website that there is a report that covers that issue.

Ms J. FARRER: I have got a question. It will probably throw a spanner in the works, but I would just like to bring it out. For a lot of our Indigenous children in the Kimberley—I am just speaking specifically about the Kimberley, but the Pilbara could go hand in hand with this, and probably the Murchison—some of the courses that TAFE provides are all in English, and, as we know, our Indigenous people are the first speakers of their own, individual languages. There are resources there to support and help some of these young people understand, if training centres were open to having some of these courses implemented with the different languages. I think that this is one stumbling block that our children face, especially when they go to school, because it has to be acknowledged that these children come from a background where their language is spoken first in the home. So when they go to school, they have little understanding of English. I think that, through the education department, something needs to be done about that in two-way learning. Even if Indigenous languages were brought into the school, we have resources in the Kimberley that the education department can go to for support, and also we have an interpreting service in the Kimberley. They are resources that no-one has picked up on. It is very vital for our young people. Going to school is an alien world for a lot of these little kids, and I think we need to make these kids feel comfortable as they are growing up into the teenage years, facing leaving school and then going out to work. There has to be some education process in place that accommodates their needs in regards to understanding English. Years ago in the 70s they had what they called Aboriginal education teaching through the TAFE—you probably know about that, Simon—where they had courses for our elder Indigenous people right across to do work on showing them how and what the English word is equivalent to in their own language. There are all these resources and materials that are there to help educate some of our kids, but we are not using them. Mainstream is not using it, and it is very important for our young kids because all our kids—even with me growing up, we live in two different worlds, and that understanding is a barrier for a lot of our kids. Kids do not have mathematical skills in that mainstream area but they can add up in their own way. I can tell you it is a lot quicker than going to school and learning how to do those things. I would like to hear whether the education committee would be able to look at those possibilities.

The CHAIR: With the TAFE we would look at those possibilities.

Mr WALKER: Since you raise it, yes, that is something we could have a look at. I am aware that we developed a course in two-way dialectical learning, was it?

Ms PURDY: Yes.

Dr KELLY: That is it, and with a lot of consultation.

Mr WALKER: Which was for that very purpose. But you are right; it has not been taken up, as far as I understand. So we could, on the basis of what you have said, work with the education department to have a look at that, because there is a product that we developed only a couple of years ago for that very reason.

Dr KELLY: We did have some challenges getting it piloted, but perhaps working more with north regional TAFE rather than something metropolitan based would be a better way to go.

Mr WALKER: But also with the department.

Dr KELLY: And the department.

Ms J. FARRER: Each area now has a language centre. They have got one down here with the Noongar language, they have got one in the Murchison, they have got one in the Pilbara and they have got the Kimberley.

The CHAIR: Can you give us an update? Can you give us a response back to the committee just in terms of that? That would be great if you could.

Ms PURDY: The other thing I just wanted to add is that the department also has a youth transitions program for Aboriginal people that they are going to be focusing on as well. That has been provided through the Aboriginal workforce development centres. That is to help the student's transition from schooling to employment.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The question is around those year 11 and 12 students probably more than others, and it is probably just a little bit off the track because this is VET in schools. But those students, especially in a regional area, who are disengaged with a school, who may have access to a TAFE campus in their area, what support is there for them to actually attend a course, because it would seem to me that the big barrier between going and training in school is that it is free, but what is the situation for young people outside of that arrangement?

[11.40 am]

Mr WALKER: Yes, sure. We do recognise that there is a space that allows the choice between staying at school, attending full-time training or going into approved employment, and we have a special fee for secondary school-age people—so these are people that are not in school but of that age—which is around \$420 per year, irrespective of the amount of training you want to do. So it has been deliberately designed to offer a reasonable choice —

Mr W.R. MARMION: That is a whole year course.

Mr WALKER: Well, you could do multiple courses in that year, so —

Ms DRISCOLL: It is a really good question, because, for me, again as a newcomer, apparently one of the issues is kids generally prefer to stay at school. All their friends are at school. There is the socialisation. But if a student who is really keen on an apprenticeship or doing something else in a vocational pathway—maybe enrolled nursing or whatever—they can elect to go and do a full course at TAFE, and that is separate to the VET in schools thing. So it is a very important point that there is that option and people choose not to make it. We are, through the industry skill centres that we are looking to implement very shortly, which is about having, if you like, a more accessible go-to place at TAFEs in each of the regions as well as several locations around the metro, that will much more outreach into schools and explain what some of those options are, because there may be a sort of view that “TAFE’s not an option for me” when it actually is and you can go much earlier than waiting until you have done your ATAR or your WACE.

Mr W.R. MARMION: There is an opportunity, is there not, because if the barrier is that they want to be with their mates, their friends, you could get a whole cohort —

Mr WALKER: A critical mass.

Mr W.R. MARMION: Critical mass—and they all go and you have got a course set up. That is a brilliant opportunity. I did not know that.

Mr WALKER: We certainly encourage them, through a heavily subsidised course, to have that option. That is the reason why we put that fee setting in there.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Is there any limit—two, three, four? How far can they go?

Mr WALKER: No. It has got to be appropriate to their level and their abilities. That would apply to any student. But there are no constraints, and in fact we guarantee them a place.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I am aware in the town of Moora, for instance, there is a small TAFE—it used to be C.Y. O'Connor central TAFE. There is a bunch of kids disengaged from the high school—in fact, they probably cannot go to high school anymore for various reasons. But if they were to go to the TAFE college, pretty well the only offering is something called cert I in leadership or something. You know, they keep going around and around doing the same stuff. What do you do about ensuring that there is actually courses that they can actually —

The CHAIR: That is right—that are useful.

Mr R.S. LOVE: —get some value out of?

Mr WALKER: Obviously, the smaller the campus, the lesser the scope of options that are available, although I think it is far greater than the one course in certificate I. We can come back to you with exactly what is offered out of the Moora campus.

The CHAIR: That does not sound particularly vocational to me!

Mr WALKER: That is very much a preparatory course, and it may be that what you are talking about is some very at-risk students academically, who are starting off in a course like that with a view to then moving into certificate courses. We would have to dig a bit deeper on that one.

Ms PURDY: Can I just add, too, that the department also has a couple of programs where they provide wraparound services as well for young people who are school aged and at risk and who are not actually at school, to provide things like mentoring support, counselling and those types of things as well, which combine with the training that is provided.

Dr KELLY: Karen, is that the 320?

Ms PURDY: No, that is the participation program, and also through the WA group training program where additional support is provided to school-based apprentices and trainees.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Any information you have on that would be gratefully accepted.

The CHAIR: We have to finish up, but you said there is vocational training, there is participation training and then there is sort of business and lifestyle training, which is business, sport, art and stuff like that. I am trying to get the classifications of these, and I am sure there are grey areas in between. Are they the sort of three categories that you would call them?

Mr WALKER: Yes and no, but they are not expressed in quite the way we would look at it. If it is a vocational course that is accredited—they all are accredited for the purposes of employment—let us be really clear about that—or a pathway to employment. What we are talking about in terms of those business and sport and rec and those sorts of things are the sorts of courses that are probably more easily done within a school context under an auspicing arrangement, as opposed to the very highly technical courses.

The CHAIR: Yes, I have got all that, but the problem, I think, is that they are all called the same thing. I get that they are all training outside of education and I get that they all get a certificate because they have got outcomes or they are competency-based training and that you have to do them by modules. I get all of that, but I think, for me, the difficulty is that you have got these three distinct areas, but you bring them all together, and so people get confused.

Mr WALKER: I would certainly acknowledge that it is confusing.

The CHAIR: Are there three categories?

Mr WALKER: The three categories we conceive of are what we call hobby courses, which is unaccredited, so the sorts of community-education courses, the one-day courses—that type of thing.

Ms DRISCOLL: We are talking about TAFE stuff here, are we not?

Mr WALKER: But if it is accredited —

The CHAIR: We are talking about at schools. I am not talking about hobby courses.

Mr WALKER: In schools—and there is probably a better question for the schools sector—they will have, obviously, a range of courses which are by subjects, accredited industry courses which are not —

The CHAIR: Simon, you are not listening to my question. Listen to my question. Give me the categories of these three things as you see it.

Ms DRISCOLL: I think probably Simon answered it first up in that they are all vocational training options. So I think maybe some of the commentary is a concern about the overbuying, if you like. We have students are going in in high numbers, and because of those high numbers, it is unlikely to lead to a vocational outcome. But even within that range of activities, there is very job-specific vocational training and there is more generic vocational training. I do not think it is that or that; it is more a composite and it is a bit of a continuum in terms of the vocational specific versus some of the generic.

The CHAIR: Give it a go, Ross, because I was not convinced by that either. I am not convinced by him and I am not convinced by Anne, so you have got a chance.

Dr KELLY: I am going to focus on the TAFE bit and some of the private providers that we fund. If you have a look at the distribution of the enrolments that we have got, it is broadly like looking out there and seeing what we fund for all of industry, whether it is in mining or automotive or building construction, and business, for that matter—what we fund looks like pretty much the distribution across the industry, across the economy, and that is what we fund, and that is what we focus on for the department. There are some bits where we have recognised, if we need to spread the limited funding that we have got as far as we can, there are some things that schools can do quite well and there are things that they cannot do that TAFEs do better, especially where it needs specialist industry supervisors. So there is no artificial category saying there is the lifestyle bit or there is this bit. It is all just recognition that schools are good at some things but they need the TAFEs to do some of the other things, particularly where it involves equipment and industry specialisation. Business desk-top-type training is easily done in schools if they have qualified teachers—which they can get the qualifications for and they have PD for that—but there is no sort of sharp delineation between three categories, as you put it. It is just recognition of who is good at what and where we can best spend the money.

The CHAIR: We have got five minutes, so make it quick.

Ms S.E. WINTON: All right. I just wanted to ask, because I asked this of the Department of Education, in terms of whether VET in schools is a success or not, and we hear lots of data about more kids are engaged, more kids are doing courses et cetera. In the State School Teachers' Union submission, they suggest that prior to 2014 post-school destination data was gathered by the Department of Training and Workforce Development. Is any of that data being collected now in terms of whether kids who are involved in VET in schools are actually then going into those?

Mr WALKER: We do not collect specifically post-school data on destinations, though I understand the schools do graduate destination assessment.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Yes. The reason I asked is that they sort of said that your department did.

Mr WALKER: We do have a number of other surveys and the like that we conduct.

Ms S.E. WINTON: They are funding stuff.

Dr KELLY: We coordinate. Without the specific reference that you have got in front of you for this —

The CHAIR: Could you just come back to us on that?

Ms S.E. WINTON: I guess we would love to see some other information on what the outcome is for the kids' participation in these and then the qualifications they are getting.

Dr KELLY: It is a graduate outcome survey done every two years. We also do a satisfaction survey of the TAFE experience, some of which may cover VET in Schools students; I am not sure.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Yes, but I am more interested in: does that lead them to the jobs that —

Dr KELLY: We will come back with some detail.

The CHAIR: What data do we have?

Mr WALKER: It is a national survey.

Dr KELLY: It is national, yes.

The CHAIR: I am acutely aware that the bells will ring in two minutes. Thank very much for coming. If there are any other questions, we might put them in writing to you. We really appreciate you coming along and clarifying things for us or muddling things for us, as the case may be, and the report gives us something to think about.

Hearing concluded at 11.50 am
