

# **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, 6 SEPTEMBER 2017**

### **SESSION ONE**

#### **Members**

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

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**Hearing commenced at 10.04 am**

**Miss SAMANTHA SCHOFIELD**

**Vice President, State School Teachers' Union of WA, examined:**

**The CHAIR:** Thanks very much for coming. I have an opening statement and then we will move into it. 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. I am Janine Freeman and I am the Chair of the Education and Health Standing Committee. The other members of the committee who are here today are Bill Marmion, who is the deputy chair, and Sabine Winton. We have an apology from Mr Shane Love and Ms Josie Farrer, who could not be here today. Sarah Palmer is the committee's research officer. 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 you might say outside of today's proceedings.

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

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** No, I do not.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** I meant to mention this previously, but I would just like to put on record that I am actually a member of the State School Teachers' Union of WA.

**The CHAIR:** Would you like to make a brief opening statement about your submission and the VET inquiry?

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** Sure. I am not quite sure where to start. It is quite a complex area.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Make it less complex for us!

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** Exactly. Look, it is a great opportunity to actually bring this topic of conversation to the forefront, certainly from the State School Teachers' Union perspective and as a high school teacher myself as well. VET in schools as a component of the vocational education option for year 11 and 12 students has been something that we have been offering for quite some time and we would love to see it going on into the future. We have some significant concerns about the current operation of how VET in schools is operating and the connection between the VET sector and the education sector as well. I think a lot of that has been outlined in our submission here as well. I think it is important to note that complexities arise due to some of the significant and probably the most extensive amount of changes that we have had in public education and education itself in WA, certainly in the last, sort of, eight to 10 years as well. We made a point in our submission that one change alone probably could have been buffered by the actual sector, but combine them all together and it has created a bit of a disaster. We have not seen before the vocational side of subjects being offered to the students so heavily linked to funding, without any specific requirements for the department to actually report on those funds and how they have actually been spent across the whole system. It has become problematic, I suppose, in response to how students are actually gaining a very comprehensive public education by the time they leave year 12, and there are some significant risks to their education, specifically around the private providers—we did not have the extent of the private provider system operating eight or 10 years ago. That rise of the dodgy private providers and how they are interacting from a federal and a state perspective we have never seen beforehand. So some of the changes are outside of our control, I suppose, from

the federal perspective, and some have been quite unforeseen. But, ultimately, this is about students' education, which is at risk here. That is probably a nutshell of it all.

**The CHAIR:** That is great.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** I will go straight to, I guess, the big question going right to the end of the thing. In your recommendations you are making a suggestion, or recommendation, that the mandatory requirement is to be removed. Can you elaborate on that? What are going to be some of the consequences of that if that were to occur?

[10.10 am]

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** I think we did not have a situation beforehand where students finished with a statement of results and attainment. It is a new thing that has come into the system over the last four to five years. Prior to that, students pretty much left with either they have graduated or they have not graduated. They had their results, which used to be the TEE for those who go to university, or you use your principal's commentary and your class results of your A, B, C, D grades to be able to go into training or to employment. That statement of results now allows students to actually go out with a little bit more, I suppose—a certificate or accreditation behind them—of what they have achieved throughout their schooling. It is a formal document. We have been trying to play around with what we can actually do in this current state of play to really fix the VET sector in schools and the way vocational education operates. You cannot disband it—we understand that aspect of it all—but then how do you wind it back to a point in time where it is actually going to be sustainable and how can it actually be managed into the future quite successfully? We see one of the biggest issues with the mandating aspect of the certificate II is it has a follow-on effect into how staff are actually employed across the system—their requirements for registration not only with the Teacher Registration Board but now with the standards for registered training organisations, meeting their requirements as well. It is not funded appropriately. You cannot keep it going in this sort of format. It will actually fall apart on its own without any sort of intervention. What we are suggesting here is that the fundamental aspect of the mandatory requirement, if it is removed, you are still going to get students who will opt for this particular pathway, and so they should be doing it. What we are saying is that it is putting too much pressure onto public schools—I cannot talk about the other sectors; I can only talk about public education. It is putting too much pressure on schools to be able to provide courses that are linked very carefully to the certificates, but not necessarily based on student interests or student aspirations or the needs of the child. The courses are coming through. Because you are mandating it, it is basically like a perfunctory sort of process where you are having a course on offer to tick a box. That is what it has become. We have got courses out there where schools offer bulk, I suppose, to the students one or two pathways. It is perceived to be an option, for example, for sports and recreation a certificate II, or business. They are cheap courses to run. They do not require huge amounts of extra input from the staff. They can be done to a massive class, so your full class sizes. That is not necessarily in the best interests of the child, but because you have mandated it, the way the school is going to operate now is to find a course that can actually be achieved under the current budget situation. The other point I suppose to make is that we have asked the question over the last couple of years: how much does it actually cost to deliver VET in schools? We do not get clear answers. We certainly have not got clear answers from the previous government. Partly it has been hidden under smoke and mirrors under the student-centred funding model. It is not clear how much has actually been invested into the VET in schools process. How much is actually required is not known. This all comes back to the fact that you have mandated it and not actually had consideration in the first initial iterations of how you move forward with all the key stakeholders, both in the school sector and in the VET sector as well.

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**The CHAIR:** When you say mandated, what they are mandating is that they have to be certificate II.

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** Certificate II or higher, or you have your courses that you can use for your ATAR subjects in order to graduate. So there has been a lot of pressure on schools to appear to have 99 per cent or 100 per cent graduation, for example. This comes under the requirement from the School Curriculum and Standards Authority to actually have that as part of your formal process by the time you leave year 12.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** This goes to one of the questions. I am sorry if I read it. It drills down a little bit more about this mandated thing. In your submission you said that the requirement was implemented without any consultation and was a unilateral decision made by the previous education minister. Can you elaborate on that in terms of—I was in the system but I did not sort of watch it. Can you sort of explain how it occurred and what the process was from your perspective in terms of being able to have input into that decision making?

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** From my understanding, there was not thorough consultation across the sectors or the system—certainly none with the school principals or the heads of department that were actually going to be involved in this process. My understanding is that it came out through an announcement from the education minister. I believe the intention at the time was to find a process and a way to actually raise the level of attainment and achievement for year 12 students. So, fundamentally, I think the concept was potentially a good one; however, the consequences were never actually discussed. It is not my understanding that there was thorough consultation with the VET sector and how that would actually interact with the school sector. I believe that they sort of went, “Right, we’ve got an option here where the certificate II is a potential pathway as the minimum.” It is a pretty basic sort of qualification that you get for year 12 students, for example, and that could be nicely sidelined across to how the VET sector works. But I do not believe that there was actually any thorough consultation across the sectors or the system. Certainly from a teaching perspective, we never had any discussions with the department.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** On that, I guess what I am reading a lot in lots of the submissions too is that it goes to the heart of what the purpose of it is.

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** Correct.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** And what the purpose was in it being mandated as opposed to what the purpose of having kids in VET studies is from an industry perspective.

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** It is a great question to ask. You would probably have to ask the previous education minister what his purpose and his head space was, but it was not discussed with us as teaching staff or certainly as the union as to how this would actually come about.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Because that has, I guess, important implications for a school and teachers in terms of trying to deliver something—to understand what the purpose of it is. I get the sense that the purpose is not always the same between industry and the education sector.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** A good report. Your recommendations—I have not got a problem with those. Here is an opportunity where we are a committee, and I think recommendation 2 is where we should be looking at. Other things are symptoms you are trying to fix; the dam with holes in it. I appreciate your answer that defended the previous minister in that he was probably trying to get something out of it. We have got these kids in year 11.

**The CHAIR:** Your question?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** The question is coming. There is context around this. This is why I am on the committee. There are kids in year 11 and 12. In my day, you did not go to year 11 and 12 unless you

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were going to go to university, basically. That was me. I am an old bloke. I have got five children, by the way; I have experience in this very issue. You have got a system in place where you have got kids in year 11 and 12 and we are doing stuff for them and the minister must have said, “Let’s get some of them with a certificate II or something.” You can understand that. The question is: are we doing the right thing in the first place? You used the words “needs of the students”, which is what you should do, not the wants of the parents, teachers and industry—the wants—although you have to take those into consideration. At the end of the day there is no use doing things around those, in my view, if the kids are not interested. What can we do to make the kids interested? If the system is you have to go to school in year 12—I do not necessarily know whether that is right or wrong; I am open to whether that is right or wrong and I would be interested in your views on that—how do we design a system that is for year 11 and 12s, if they have to go to school, that works, and what is it?

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** I think there is an element in here about where we are missing your career coordinators. There is fundamentally no requirement by the public education system to have career counsellors or coordinators across the system. It is up to the school and individual choice. That is a problem. Because of the way the current student-centred funding model works and the devolution of the system as well down to the local school level and supposed autonomy, it is now up to the school to decide whether they can actually employ a career coordinator or counsellor. These are vital conversations that are actually missing. When I first started teaching in 2006, it was at a time when there was funding in the system. There were conversations that could be had with students, and career counsellors were actually around. VET coordinators were actually around. A lot of the students that go through public education do not actually have a fundamental understanding of the options available to them. This is not a conversation about low SES or high SES; they do not actually know what is available. There are so many changes that have occurred in the tertiary education sector, for example. They change every year depending on, you know, what university is going to offer, and there are different pathways to actually get those avenues into university, for example. We fundamentally miss the career coordinators, but because the system does not provide for that in a staffing formula, we are at a loss. If this is supposed to be a process where it is about equity across the system and it is about an initiative that is systemic, then there has to fundamentally be a process where you have actually got staffing to provide these conversations with students so they have actually got avenues for the future as well. Otherwise, what you end up having is that you go back to a situation where you have got your, I think it is called MESH now—maths, English, society and environment, and science—your core subjects, for example, and then your option subjects, but very, very little time throughout the school day to actually do any of those career-building conversations, which are vitally essential if you are developing adolescents and moving out to the big, wide world. You cannot fit them into a normal curriculum day. You need to be able to have the funds to be able to provide that, and a specified time in the timetable as well. Currently, it is sporadic across the whole system.

[10.20 am]

**The CHAIR:** I want to bring you back to your opening statement. You talked about significant risks, especially in relation to the private providers. Do you just want to expand on that in terms of what risks they are in terms of the private providers, and whether there is an option not to use private providers at all and just rely on the public education system with TAFEs and schools?

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** Fundamentally, from a union perspective certainly, we would suggest that the best option would be that if it was a pathway with a link and tie to the training sector, that it would go through TAFE colleges—it is as pure and simple as that. The regulations and auditing processes that are through TAFE colleges are highly stringent. I have looked through some of the auditing

processes. They are phenomenally tight and time bound and everything else. We have problems with this. Eighty per cent of students that go through VET in schools in public education are going through auspicing arrangements with private providers, purely for cost. It is actually not fundamentally now about the education aspect; it is a cost component that has come into the conversation here, which is detrimental to the students' long-term achievements. We saw for the first time last year the collapse of the first private provider in WA. I think I wrote about that in here as well. One thousand three hundred students actually had their qualifications at risk about two to three months out from finishing off year 12. That is significant. The Auditor General's report highlighted—I think it is in the submission as well—that there were fundamentally no back-up plans prior to that happening with the Department of Education, as to how it would actually deal with those particular students. We have raised concerns about: if the private provider collapses or is actually unable to provide the continuation of the course, where does the student then go? At least with the TAFE sector, at least with the public sector, you have got the ability to have 10, 12—I think it is 52—different campuses across the state now where there is accessibility and there is movement and we can always make that happen. But if the private provider collapses, then you have got to go through the process of actually obtaining that student enrolment with another private provider, meeting their requirements and regulations, having the staff then go through all that auditing process to ensure that the private provider is happy with the staff's educational achievements as well, and their delivery of training packages. You are starting yet again with a new private provider.

**The CHAIR:** Don't you think that all of those things that you have to do with private providers and RTOs, that there are hidden costs, whereas those costs are not actually in TAFE because they are already established and stuff like that? Whilst they look like they are cheaper, there are actually more costs internally in terms of the teaching staff having to meet the requirements of the private provider versus if they were in a collaborative arrangement with a TAFE.

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** It would fundamentally have been the right choice for the Department of Education to have made a very clear link with the TAFE sector when they first started this process, and said, "These are the courses that we know that you can ultimately offer without having to go through the extra auditing processes." Our particular staff, for example, have got a Master of Science and therefore we have got an agreement with the TAFE colleges that say, yes, they have actually met the specifications already. So if that particular science teacher moves from one school to the next, it does not actually matter and affect their ability to have to go through all the standards again. That did not happen. Schools have been in a very unfortunate situation where they are making the decision at the local level without very much guidance from the Department of Education. It has become the cost conversation over everything else. From their perspective they see the private provider can offer three or four different courses as a package very quickly. VET in Schools, which is the consulting company—the other VETiS, I should say—has had a very clever marketing strategy of actually putting itself out to the school system and saying, "We've had longstanding relationships with the Department of Education. We are a private provider but we know how the education system operates. Here you go." Principals, quite rightly, have gone with the best option they can do at the time, with very little knowledge themselves, and gone with that particular option. It is not a conversation they have ever had about what the principles of education are or having the right links with public education. It has become a conversation about funding.

**The CHAIR:** VETiS raised with us their concern about our inquiry using it as VETiS in schools. We said that that is what it is. They did not want us using that term. We understand you have got some concerns about VETiS Consulting. I am happy to put that on the record. Did you want to add to what you have said? Clearly they have got a marketing aspect which they felt that we, as parliamentarians, were somehow doing something in that space, given that it is VET in Schools and that is what people

call it. Do you have any concerns around their particular marketing aspects or did you want to put anything on record?

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** I have to say that I am quite shocked that they believe they can own that sort of language. I am quite shocked. We have always had voc-ed—vocational education—in schools, and the training aspect that comes in with it as well. I am quite shocked, to be honest with you. I think that kind of goes to the heart and statement of private providers operating in the VET sector and this language and abuse of language with the general populace because it creates an assumption with general laypeople, if you like, who are not necessarily education bound, that the VET in Schools consulting group is actually what the VET in Schools component of the Department of Education is offering, so have made this unfortunate link between the two.

**The CHAIR:** So people believe that they are a public entity.

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** They do.

**The CHAIR:** And that is a significant risk?

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** I think there is a risk not only just for the VETiS Consulting part, but I think there is a risk in a lack of understanding of what the private providers are all about and how they interact with the school environment. I am probably more comfortable saying that, because I have not had very much interaction with VETiS Consulting.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** Are they capturing more of the private market because of that?

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** I would assume, yes.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** I am ignorant in this area. I would have thought, just from a marking point of view, my gut feel would be that trading on that name, they would become the private provider of choice just because people would think that they are associated with the public sector.

**The CHAIR:** Whereas people also associate TAFE with that. Do people feel comfortable when they are dealing with TAFE in terms of if they are the provider for the schools?

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** I think a lot of schools would prefer to be going through the TAFE colleges, but it is the cost that has come with it as well. Fundamentally, I believe that a lot of schools would like to be going through TAFE. We used to do a lot of trades and apprenticeship training courses through schools and they actually went to the TAFE colleges. There are some very unique and very specific courses that private providers do actually use within schools. They are very minimal. We are talking something like less than one per cent across the whole state, if you like, and it might be something very specific about aviation, for example. I cannot, hand on heart, say that every private provider is completely dodgy. I am sure that there are some—I am sure that there must be some—that are doing the right thing, but having a look at the list that was provided to us from the Department of Education about the names of the private providers that were operating in the system, VET in Schools—Vocational Education and Training Consulting—came up on every single page.

**The CHAIR:** Yes. They are the largest private provider, we have just been told.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** I forgot what I was going to say. This may be a silly question, but there is a lot of pressure on schools in terms of making sure that their teachers are qualified to be able to deliver VET in school. These private providers, I am assuming, do not have that issue because their people are already qualified. The question I wanted to know is: do they have teaching qualifications? The reason I am asking that is because you did bring it up, and that is an area I would like to hear a bit more about. It goes to what Bill was saying, too—the needs of the kids—because these are young adolescents. To what extent are the providers trained like secondary teachers are to actually deal

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with a lot of them who are at risk or have particular needs beyond those specific competencies that are within these courses?

[10.30 am]

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** In the first part, the majority of our schools operate under the auspice system. They deliver the course themselves in the school environment and the external provider basically has a checklist and says, “Yes. You’ve met this particular qualification. You’ve gone through this particular activity. This is what the activity was supposed to look like. Show me the work samples of the students.” They basically have a rubber stamp that says the teacher has delivered that correctly. It is up to the teacher to deliver it within the class setting environment. That is one aspect of it. The other aspect whereby the private providers are offering certificate courses—not necessarily. Like in the TAFE system, not every TAFE lecturer has teaching qualifications but because of the way the VET sector operates, it is based on competency-based skill sets. It does not have a requirement in there to have a teaching component or an understanding of the principles of adolescent education, for example. That is the problem that we have got here—that they are actually separate.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** It is an adult based system.

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** They are separate.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** An adult learning style is very different.

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** A submission from a training provider said that the schools sector and teachers within it generally do not value VET and its potential to meet employment outcomes for learners. Do you want to comment about that in terms of what you know?

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** I can make some assumptions for you. A lot of teachers feel very disrespected having to complete a certificate course when they have gone through an education qualification through a university for three to five years. We have a number of staff who have Masters of Education degrees and they are being asked to go back and complete the certificate II to meet all the requirements and auditing from the RTO. The way that year 11 and 12 subjects operate, if we go from the foundation courses all the way to the ATAR courses, the breadth and depth of knowledge and the teaching inside of that and the actual content curriculum is quite broad but can be quite complex as well. When a lot of teachers look at the qualifications that come through from certificate I and certificate II, they feel that is quite below the standard of what might be for a year 11 or 12 course. Because the certificates are created in such a way that involves ticking a box or drawing a line for surveying, for example, or can you measure using a ruler from point A to point B and get that accurate, for example, it feels like it is not necessarily meeting the best needs of the students. I think part of it is that there is a lack of understanding of what the VET sector is all about and there is a lack of understanding of what compulsory education is all about as well. Fundamentally, what we put in the submission was that the two sectors have very competing interests and very different purposes, I suppose, as well. When we look at the VET sector or you look at TAFE, for example, you have students who come through from 15 all the way through to 90-something, I think, was the oldest student I have seen. Their needs are so varied and so different. Not all of it is about further employment. Some of it is about professional development. Some of it is about point of need or a specific skill set. Whereas public education is that broad curriculum base where you can actually go off into a multitude of different environments afterwards. And we are talking about different age groups as well.

It is difficult to have a lot of faith in the whole VET sector at this point in time. We have seen too many incidents across the country in the last three to four years where because you now have the



private providers coming into the system who are eradicating and having a massive negative impact on the VET sector, it has a follow-on effect into how TAFE is perceived as well and the public's confidence, I suppose, in the VET sector is rapidly changing. That has been quite noticeable in schools.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** You made some interesting points about parental contributions that particularly interested me and the implications or suggestions it has about free education—public education. Do you want to take this opportunity to elaborate on that, because I am very interested?

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** We raised concerns a number of years ago with the Department of Education and the previous minister and with the TAFE sector about how and what amount parents were contributing to year 11 and 12 subjects. The line that we have been fed from the Department of Education over these years is that—it is on page 9 as well—if it is a high cost component and it is delivered through the external provider and the course has a high educational value or the alternate course cannot be provided to students in the same way, the parents are asked to pay for it. I have seen data—I am aware that the auditor general's office has probably more data than I have access to and the union has access to—of the actual amount being paid by parents for courses for VET in schools. Under the Department of Training and Workforce Development policy, it says that no school-aged students should be required to have any cost for the delivery of the VET in the schools process. However, schools are charging and I think that is a process, I suppose, because of the reduced funding that has come into the school budgets. The union requested extra funding in about 2015 from Treasury and we got an extra \$19 million because of that. Now, \$19 million across the whole system seems like a lot but suddenly it gets filtered throughout the system and dissipated quite quickly but still has not, I think, addressed the whole need for it. If that was the case, then no parent would be asked to pay anything for VET in schools. I have seen parents being asked to pay for anywhere between \$10 and, in some cases, \$3 000 or \$4 000.

**The CHAIR:** What courses?

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** Is that Air Force pilots? It is very expensive.

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** The \$3 000 or \$4 000 were some of the aviation ones. That is a high-cost component so I can understand that that might be there. However, we are talking about public education where, fundamentally, you should be able to go to school and be offered a range of different courses without having any parent disadvantaged or a child disadvantaged in being able to access pathways for future employment or training.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** What if 100 000 people want to get their pilot's license? The education department could not afford to run that vocational opportunity. You just said that you should be able to provide everything. How can you do that? You could not afford to.

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** A subsidy has been provided for that one but there has been no conversation about that either. Frankly, 100 000 students are not going to go for the aviation course.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** There might be two or three. I would have loved to have done it.

**The CHAIR:** My understanding is that there is a high requirement for entry into that course, in any event, so 100 000 students could not do it. If you could just explain—for courses like that there are entry requirements and there are levels of education required. They do not accept just anyone, as I understand it.

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** My understanding is that that is correct; yes.

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**The CHAIR:** It is limited by that and we want to be able to have professions like that in our system. What we then do is put another limit on it—a financial limit. Is that what is happening as well? So only a certain cohort can do it—people who can afford it, basically.

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** I cannot make that assumption. The assumptions that I can make and give to you are that because VETiS Consulting is one of the largest providers of vocational education to public schools, they are the ones that are charging students \$100 here and there. The schools have not been able to absorb the costs of that and have to pass it on to the parents. It is an interesting state of play because you have always had contributions that come through for year 11 and 12 subjects for maths and English, textbooks and computer components and everything else.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** Practical courses cost more.

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** Correct. That has always been part and parcel of it all. Fundamentally, it is actually a problem in itself because no public school should be in that situation. But it comes down to the question of equity whereby you have low socio-economic schools that do not get the parents' contributions coming through the school environment so the school either picks up the tab for it or they cannot offer the subject. That is fundamentally what it comes down to.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** And that is what you are sort of implying—offers the subject which is a compulsory mandated part of the curriculum.

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** Yes.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** It is not like it is an option.

[10.40 am]

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** It is an option in the sense that if you, at this current stage, have not met the minimum literacy and numeracy standards by year 9. The way it currently works is that SCASA will tell you that you cannot go into those higher order subjects; you cannot go into the ATAR subjects because you have not met that year 9 basis. If you make the improvements in year 10, maybe we might be able to put you up into those ATAR subjects. The choice component is taken out because you have been told so early on that you are now limited into one of two pathways and those are the choices that you have. It is not really a choice, is it? It is not your choice; it has been made for you. From that component, if you are not meeting those eligibility requirements and you have been told that you must go into either a foundation pathway or the vocational pathway, you have no option. If your school has only got two or three subject choices for you, is that really a true option for the child? It is not.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** Hang on. Can you just clarify it for me, because I am not a teacher —

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** Sure.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** What you are saying is that once someone has told you at a certain period going through your high school that you —

**The CHAIR:** No —

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** Let me try to get my words out—that you no longer can get into ATAR and you are streamed into the VET, you are saying if the particular school you are at only has limited choices in VET, then you have to go to the private sector. That is where the costs come in because you have to provide private sector charges. I do not know how the system works; I am not a teacher.

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**Miss SCHOFIELD:** You can still get into those ATAR pathways if you have made some changes to your grades, if you like, in year 10, but it becomes harder. It is not actually forcing—it is a recommendation that comes through from SCASA.

**Mr W.R. MARMION:** I am not worried about the ATAR. We are focusing on VET. Let us say you are now in the VET, however you are, whether you can or cannot get out of it and go to ATAR—I am not interested in that; it is VET. How do we improve that person's position and the choices they have and minimise the cost so that delivery of whatever you want to deliver for that particular person for their needs can be delivered? I would like to know whether they should be delivered. I have an open canvas; I am not constrained to what is currently there. In my day, I did metalwork and woodwork in years 1, 2 and 3 of high school. We did that and it was fantastic and we loved it—even though I did the higher streams. Should those schools be having those more practical elements within the secondary schools in years 11 and 12 so the kids are not doing paperwork and sums and maths and writing stuff? They are more interested in doing hands-on stuff—the vocational thing. Should that be delivered in the schools, that is the question, rather than private sector and TAFE? What is the best system to deliver something for the kid?

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** That is one of the reasons I suggested that the review needs to be done more systemically. I do not think, fundamentally, I can say that one way or the other. In terms of what you said about who should be delivering it, that is a fundamental question that has to be asked if we are going to go down a pathway of vocational education in schools. When we used to do the previous versions of vocational education, it was delivered by a teaching staff member but it did not have any links to specific qualifications or an outcome. It is a vexed question. Who is the best person to do it? Fundamentally, I cannot answer that. It is a question that I have been asking for the last four years and I do not have a simple and easy answer to that. You will get both sides of the story which say that because it is a vocational element, it should be delivered under a training package or through those specified teaching staff members there, or lecturers for example. There is the other side which says that anything that is delivered in a school environment should be under the controlled auspices of the teaching staff member. I think that is the conversation to be had and those are the sorts of things that need to be worked out, not only across our sector, but also in the independent and Catholic sector as well, and how we deal with, fundamentally, the principles of how to educate adolescents.

**The CHAIR:** Can I ask a question about regional, rural and remote schools—just noting that we are now on time! I want to know if you want to add anything to your particular submission in terms of how it is best delivered in those remote and regional schools in terms of what you just talked about then, and the review. Is there anything you want to add?

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** One of the things that was not taken into consideration with how vocational education and training is operating is the vast distances that students are having to compete with. They do not have the access of having even a 50-minute train ride down to Mandurah and back again. They just do not have that sort of flexibility. I think there is a lot of work to be done in the regional and remote and rural areas. I think it is a big disadvantage to a lot of our students out there. One of the options is that you might come down to one of the major hubs, for example, but then that is an impost on the parents or that particular child. There are other educational achievements as well. It fundamentally was not considered, I do not believe. I do not think the trade training centres have actually worked and have been of much benefit, to be honest with you, in the regions. We are such a unique state in terms of our geographical distance that it defies logic that this was not considered as part of the conversation. This is what I was talking about beforehand—that level of consultation and thorough processes in place as well.

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**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Miss SCHOFIELD:** That is all right.

**The CHAIR:** We would normally go over time, but one of the members has to leave early and I want to give them an opportunity to ask questions with the next witnesses. It was great. Thank you very much.

**Hearing concluded at 10.45 am**

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