LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

(Reference: Inquiry into E-Petition 078-25 and PET-41-26: Make career guidance a right for every ACT Year 7-10 public school student)

Members:

MR T EMERSON (Chair)
MS C BARRY (Deputy Chair)
MISS L NUTTALL
MS Y BERRY

PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

FRIDAY, 23 OCTOBER 2026

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Secretary to the committee:
Ms K Langham (Ph: 620 75498)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

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TIGWELL, MS LIVIA **17**

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 1.29 pm

LEE, MS MELISSA, Operations Officer, ACT Parents
McLEAN, MS JULIE, Policy Officer, ACT Parents

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon and welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Social Policy for its inquiry into E-Pet 078-25 and Pet 041-26: make career guidance a right for every ACT year 7 to 10 public school student. The committee will today hear from representatives of ACT Parents, the Career Industry Council of Australia, the Career Advisers Association of NSW & ACT, the ACT Careers Association, career practitioners working in the ACT, and the Minister for Education.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event or are listening in online.

This hearing is a legal proceeding of the Assembly and has the same standing as proceedings of the Assembly itself. Therefore, today's evidence attracts parliamentary privilege. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of the Assembly. The hearing is being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and web-streamed live. When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if witnesses used the words: "I will take that question on notice." This will help the committee and witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice from the transcript. In this session, we welcome witnesses from ACT Parents. Is there anything you want to say in the way of a brief opening statement covering matters that are not in your submission before we get into questions?

Ms McLean: I can give a brief opening statement. Firstly, we welcome and appreciate the opportunity to appear before the committee. As the peak body representing parents and carers of children in ACT public schools, our focus is on ensuring that every student has access to a high-quality and equitable public education, regardless of which school they attend. We recognise the value of effective career education and guidance, including the important contribution that qualified career practitioners can make. Also, we are concerned about the uneven provision across the public school system. However—and our submission is framed this way—we have raised questions about priorities. ACT public schools are experiencing significant resourcing pressures. Our consultations with parents raised serious concerns about access to qualified teachers, specialist teaching, appropriate support for students with additional needs, and suitable learning environments. These are all fundamental elements of a quality public education, and we believe they must remain central priorities for investment.

We are not opposed to having qualified careers advisers in every high school, but we question where this sits alongside other pressing needs. When schools are struggling to provide qualified teachers in classrooms, decisions about additional specialist staffing need to be considered within the broader resourcing challenges facing the system. We believe that the public school system resourcing review provides an opportunity to

consider how careers education can be delivered more equitably and consistently while balancing the many competing needs against public education. Our broad position is that effective careers guidance is important, but equity matters and so do the priorities that we set for investing in public schools.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. You have touched on equity across the system. I would be interested to hear a bit more about that. What is your sense of the availability of qualified careers guidance advisers? What do you hear from families?

Ms McLean: Our understanding is that all colleges have careers advisers. The issue that is central to the petition is about high schools. We are just going on what was listed in the petition. It looks like fewer than half of years 7 to 10 students have access to a qualified career practitioner. We would be interested to know where the gaps are. We do not have that information. From an equity perspective, which schools have them and which schools do not? There is an understanding that careers advisers in colleges sometimes work with their feeder high schools. We have questions. We do not necessarily have the answers about the equity issue, but it would be good to know whether, for schools that do not necessarily have a careers adviser position within the school, their local college is working closely with the school. Are there other mechanisms in place to ensure that students in those schools are getting some career guidance or the services of a careers adviser? We think it is important, but we do not have any real sense of where the gaps are and what sorts of services are being provided.

THE CHAIR: Your submission speaks about years 7 to 8 and that students need broader exposure in years 9 to 12 and more targeted advice. Is that something you hear from families? Is there external evidence or research that is informing that view?

Ms McLean: That is something we are hearing from parents. I think they feel that, early on, the idea is to keep lots of options and lots of pathways open to young people. Young people change what they want to do and their ideas based on their different experiences, so giving them a range of experiences through different subject choices in high school can open up opportunities for them. When they get to the later part of high school, years 9 and 10, they are looking towards college, the sort of package they want to do and the subjects they want to do. We are hearing that the support of a careers adviser is more effective at that point in time.

MS BARRY: Thank you so much for coming in for yet another inquiry. I am sure that consultation fatigue has set in, so thank you. We really appreciate you taking the time. I have a question. I hear you when you say the priority right now is to ensure that every classroom is staffed by a teacher, so this is secondary. This is at the bottom of your list. Ideally, if everything in the system worked as it should, where do you think careers advisers fit better? Is it ideally before students get to high school, or years 7 to 10, for example? You probably have not explored that with parents, because, again, you are planning to have one teacher in every classroom. Ideally, where would you think they would be better placed?

Ms McLean: It is not something that we have consulted on broadly with parents. In general, what we have heard from parents in discussions about this issue is that, earlier on, anything around careers is more around giving students a range of opportunities and being able to explore a range of subjects. If they find something they are passionate

about, that might lead to future thoughts about careers and that sort of thing, but, early on, it is about giving students a range of lots of things. For early high school, that is the feedback that we have heard. Like I say, we have not consulted broadly, so we probably cannot speak broadly on this issue, but it is around opportunities and making sure that opportunities are left open.

MS BARRY: Growing up in Nigeria, you would really take seriously what your teacher, for example, told you. Teachers would tell you, "You're really good at arguing. Maybe you should be a lawyer."

THE CHAIR: Or a politician!

MS BARRY: No-one ever told me I was going to be a politician! They start to feed you all of those subtle cues very early, as early as six or seven years old. It is quite interesting to see the difference. Perhaps it is not about steering them but having someone to guide and identify the strengths that they could build on later on. It is really interesting to hear that.

Ms McLean: Touching on your point about teachers identifying students, that is something that we do here. Teachers will encourage certain students to pursue something. They might point them towards extracurricular activities and things like that to help them develop, if it is something that they are passionate about.

MS BARRY: It is probably already happening but not in a structured way.

Ms Lee: In terms of young people developing themselves and working out what they want to do, it is such a pivotal time. A lot of parents can see that what their young person might want to do when they are younger can change over time as well, so we need to allow for that sort of flexibility.

MS BARRY: That is useful. Thank you.

MISS NUTTALL: I love the example you used about teachers tapping kids on their shoulder and saying, "You might want to try this." I would imagine a certain amount of that happens informally, but often what we are hearing in public high schools is that teachers might take on the role of a career adviser part time. Is there a world in which that sort of allocation of time away from classrooms is also having an impact right now? Do you think that might be contributing towards the challenges of getting classrooms fully staffed for things like maths and English, and specialist subjects too?

Ms McLean: I think that goes towards priorities within the system and schools making decisions about what they think is important and what they need to put their resources towards. We are in a situation where schools have to make tough decisions. You were saying a teacher might be doing a careers role for part of the time, when, really, it would be great if they could do full-time teaching and you also have a careers person. That speaks to the difficulties that schools are having with priorities. Schools are making those decisions individually. They have made those decisions individually until this point. The reforms that we are looking at will hopefully get more consistency across schools, so they will not necessarily be on their own in making those decisions, but, if a school principal decides that there is more value—there is value either way—in a

teacher being a careers adviser for part of the time, that is a decision that is being made.

MISS NUTTALL: It is tricky when we are almost speaking to two different projected future states, one of which is the current fiscal environment, which is very constrained, and one is one where—and I think the petition goes to this—the school system is funded to have a careers adviser on top of what schools are currently doing. It is a really good point. On a bit of a different tack, we had a few submissions from career practitioners that talked about the different types of intensity and support needed from career practitioners when it comes to supporting students with complex needs and students with a disability. One submission raised the support that you need to give to students with significant intellectual disability. In your opinion, do you think that our school system sufficiently supports students with complex needs in their transition out of school now?

Ms McLean: The issue of schools supporting students with disabilities and complex needs is broader than just the transition issue; it cuts across the whole schooling experience for these students. Again, we are talking about priorities in a constrained system. Getting support for students also comes with priorities. The students with the highest needs will get those supports. I cannot speak specifically to the transitions and the careers support that they receive, but we hear that, within schools generally, it is a challenge to provide the resourcing to support students with complex needs.

MISS NUTTALL: Absolutely. Is it a live question, then: if you allocated X amount of funding for students with complex needs, how much goes towards supporting them to engage with schooling while they are there as opposed to starting to build skills for when they eventually transition out of school?

Ms McLean: I would like to think that would be almost seamless from the student's perspective, and I would like to think that it would be no different to any other student—having support for their schooling and their support needs are recognised, and that those supports carry through to transition. That is in an ideal world.

MISS NUTTALL: Absolutely. Your previous submission suggested a model where you have two full-time people to support students with complex needs in their career transition. You would have one for the north side and one for the south side. Do you think that kind of model would work as a light touch but would essentially support the people that do career education within schools, to make sure that it is operating smoothly?

Ms McLean: To support the staff already in schools?

MISS NUTTALL: Yes. They would be qualified career practitioners in their own right. With the number of schools they have to cover and the number of students, you would expect that a lot of it would actually be about providing advice to both the student and the person supporting the student in the school context. Sorry—it is getting a bit in the weeds.

Ms McLean: My thought would be that some students with additional needs would be very relationship based. They have trust in certain members of staff. But, if it is a model where the person is providing advice to the existing trusted staff, it could possibly work.

Ms Lee: There could be value in having particular expertise in employment and post-school options for people with disabilities.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you. That is really helpful.

THE CHAIR: Obviously, we are talking about that specific issue, but, when parents have children who have moved to college, do you ever get feedback from them or carers where they say, "I wish I'd known more about what I should have been using to inform my decisions," in terms of course selection, and, "Now that I've found this degree, I'm actually required to do X, Y or Z," rather than talking about the solution to the problem? Is that feedback that you ever get from parents?

Ms Lee: Yes. What parents tell us is that sometimes it is quite hard when students have to make subject selections in high school or have to think about the package they might want to do at college, whether it is accredited or tertiary study, because they are not all that clear about what they want to do. Whilst having some guidance on that might provide a more seamless pathway, it is not the end of the world if, retrospectively, they think that they could have done something different. We have seen from the experiences of parents with young people that there is a range of options for post-school pathways. A lot of tertiary institutions have different pathways. You do not necessarily need an ATAR to access some of their courses. There are different entry schemes and there are bridging courses. There is a range of options as young people go down the path of figuring out what they want to do.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned choosing tertiary versus accredited study. Have you heard any accounts of students being pressured to choose one over the other? Has this ever been raised as a concern? Obviously, it is good if colleges have higher ATAR averages. Does that ever come up?

Ms McLean: We have heard a few things. In some places we have heard about keeping options open. Maybe students are encouraged to do tertiary study, because you can always drop back from tertiary study, but you cannot necessarily step out from accredited study. It is in the vein of keeping options open.

THE CHAIR: The post-school destination survey was being run until this year. It was discontinued. That decision was made in April. It was about figuring out where people went after school. Obviously, that helps with data collection, so that we can get a sense of whether the educational offerings take young people in the direction we want them to go. Were you consulted at all in the decision to discontinue that survey?

Ms McLean: Not to my knowledge.

THE CHAIR: Are there any concerns about that? You might not know it has been discontinued. They would have done it last year and decided they are not going to do it after this school year.

Ms McLean: I was aware that there was a survey. I was not aware that it had been discontinued. As to whether that information reached our office, I am not sure.

THE CHAIR: I am sorry to be a pest. Would you mind taking that on notice and checking if that was communicated with you?

Ms McLean: We can take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: That would be helpful. Sorry—I interrupted you.

Ms McLean: You asked if we had concerns about that. That survey provided information that was useful to understand outcomes from years 11 and 12, but I am not across it enough to give much more of a detailed answer. Do you want to add anything?

Ms Lee: We do not know the results. We did not look closely at what those results were telling us or what the return rate might have been. I imagine that, once young people leave, it might be hard to contact them and get them to fill in the survey, so it is hard to know what the results might indicate and how reliable they might be.

THE CHAIR: I know you did a survey recently on early childhood issues. I think that is what it was about. Generally, you would do ACT Parents surveys.

Ms McLean: Yes.

THE CHAIR: What is a good return rate on your surveys, roughly? A range is fine. It is not a test!

Ms McLean: In terms of raw numbers, how many?

THE CHAIR: Yes. You have people on your mailing lists.

Ms McLean: It depends on what the issue is. For the public school resourcing review survey that we did towards the end of last year and early this year, we got a few hundred responses. That was a good response rate. I am trying to think of others. Others are more specialised. They may look at a certain sector of schooling or something that is very particular to individuals or may cover the whole school system.

THE CHAIR: I was checking because I asked about survey response rates. They are at about 50 per cent, which is pretty high, I think, considering students—if they are gone, they are gone. That was one of the reasons given for discontinuing it. That surprised me a bit. Anyway, it is a bit of an adjacent point, to be fair. That is it from me. Does anyone else have something they want to raise?

MISS NUTTALL: Yes. You talked about the constrained resources. Do you have any feedback from parents about the components of career education that they find particularly valuable? It would help to know that to be able to inform a model—the sorts of activities we should aim to prioritise from the perspective of parents.

Ms McLean: We have not actually consulted directly on careers education. Our resourcing survey was broadly about the educational experience. We received responses from parents who were concerned about a range of things that they felt their student or young person was not receiving, and careers did not make that list of super-duper important priorities. Things like having a maths teacher, or even a teacher,

made those priorities. It is hard to say. That is not to say that parents do not think it is important, but there were other more pressing things.

MISS NUTTALL: I suppose the background noise is a roar.

Ms McLean: Yes. If your student or young person does not have a maths teacher for a year, what if they want to become an accountant? It makes it hard when they are not receiving their core curriculum.

MS BARRY: But it also makes it hard for you to identify. If you are not teaching them maths, how do you know the child likes maths?

Ms McLean: Exactly.

MISS NUTTALL: If the system were better resourced, do you think that a full-time careers adviser would be good to have in high schools in particular?

Ms McLean: We would want to know a bit more about outcomes: what sort of role that person would be undertaking, what they would be doing, and what student outcomes were being achieved. We would have questions around that. I am not saying that is something we would not support; we would just want more information. That would be in the context of the system being fully resourced to support teachers and students with disability—making sure their needs are met, and then looking at what that role would actually entail and how it is best delivered. It may be best delivered by that practitioner in every high school, or there may be another way to deliver it. Those are questions that we would have.

MISS NUTTALL: Awesome. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: We will wrap it up there. Thank you so much. On behalf of the committee, I thank you both for your attendance today. You took a question on notice. Sorry about that.

Ms McLean: That is all right.

THE CHAIR: Please provide your answer to the committee secretary within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*. Thank you very much.

BROWN, MR BEN, Committee Member, ACT Careers Association
CARNEY, MR DAVID, Executive Director, Career Industry Council of Australia
HASTINGS, MS JOANNE, President, ACT Careers Association
SMITH, MS JENINE, Policy and Advocacy, Career Advisers Association of NSW & ACT

THE CHAIR: We welcome witnesses from the Career Industry Council of Australia, the Career Advisers Association of the ACT & NSW and the ACT Careers Association. For the *Hansard* record, could you please state your names and the capacity in which you appear so that we can start.

Ms Smith: Jenine Smith, representing Careers Advisers Association of NSW & ACT.

Ms Hastings: Joanne Hastings, representing the ACT Careers Association, and I am the President.

Mr Brown: Ben Brown. I am also representing the ACT Careers Association as a committee member.

Mr Carney: David Carney. I am representing the Career Industry Council of Australia.

THE CHAIR: Please note that as witnesses you are protected by parliamentary privilege and also bound by its obligations. As such, you must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. Before we go to questions, would any of you like to make a brief opening statement covering anything that s not in your submissions?

Ms Hastings: This is a piece of data that was not in the submission, so I thought it might be good to add it. Our submission focused on equity of career guidance for students for years 7 to 10, but a piece of data that did not get included was about career practitioner projection—the number of people in the ACT who have the qualifications and are professionally qualified and current. Our data shows, from the ACT Careers Association, that every year we use three qualified and professionally current career development practitioners. Currently, as you know, there are only six in years 7 to 10 schools, mainstream schools, so this means that we will have no career development practitioners in high schools by 2030. Historically, career development practitioners, if the opportunity arose, get employed in colleges, because they are funded and therefore they can have the money. I just wanted to update that little bit of information.

Ms Smith: My opening statement is simply to say that I thank the Standing Committee on Social Policy for providing the Careers Advisers Association with the opportunity to support our colleague, Joanne Hastings. As well as representing CAA, my experience and knowledge as a careers adviser, VET coordinator and teacher spans over 25 years, and I look forward to our discussion here today.

Mr Carney: Thank you, Chair and committee members. I would probably say that fortunately I think across the submissions there is definitely widespread agreement on the value of quality career guidance. I think probably the discussion that you as a committee are probably looking at is how we focus constructively about how best to deliver that. I think the government rightly notes in their submission that a whole-school

approach cannot rely on a single role, and we would fully agree with that, but their own submission does actually point out that that needs to be led actively by qualified practitioners. We know that most ACT high schools lack these essential leaders that present a clear area for improvement in this area.

I think to ensure that the model succeeds "qualified" must specifically mean "professionally qualified", from the peak body's perspective. Career guidance is just not simply about distributing information to students. It is very much a nuanced counselling conversation with young people, many of whom are vulnerable, about decisions that shape their futures. They are living in a world where the labour market is changing rapidly. We have got a duty to make sure that we are not placing unqualified individuals in front of vulnerable students.

I like to use the analogy that if you find yourself in a legal situation, you would probably make sure that you were going to see a qualified lawyer rather than somebody that had done a diploma in legal studies from a TAFE college. I note the ACT Parents appearing prior to us, and their principle that a qualified teacher belongs in every classroom we would agree with, but, similarly with career guidance, it is specialist work, and it should be done by professionals explicitly trained for it.

Finally, I would just say that it is a timely opportunity for structural improvement in the ACT right now. The government has identified its one public education system reform. I think we do have a chance to reconsider how career education and career guidance is resourced in our years 7 to 10 schools. I thank the committee, and I look forward to the conversations we're about to have.

THE CHAIR: In your submission the ACT destinations data that is cited does not specify whether guidance came from a qualified practitioner. Did it though? Or is there more clarification that you can provide there?

Mr Carney: The information that we provided in our submission came from the destination data itself. To your point, without seeing the actual questions, I think the question probably asks the student what sort of advice they may or may not have received. The student would not indicate whether or not that came from a qualified career practitioner or whether it came from a generalist teacher or somebody else. I think it is a failing in the destination data; although, we do talk about disappointment that the decision has been taken not to continue this data, because at the moment this survey and the data from it is the only way of being able to measure whether or not we are actually having an impact on student transition or not.

THE CHAIR: Were you consulted on that discontinuation?

Mr Carney: No, we were not consulted.

THE CHAIR: Other witnesses?

Ms Hastings: No. I was told.

THE CHAIR: Told after?

Ms Hastings: Beforehand that it was going to disappear, not continue.

MS BARRY: Were you told why?

Ms Hastings: I would not like to repeat why they said was the reason. In fact the surveys and destinations team used to deliver to the ACT Careers Association professional development every second year. The career practitioners are very keen to hear about the data, particularly those students who are classed as leavers, because we know their data is not as strong, so when we found out that it was not continuing—we had them lined up for a professional development in March this year actually, and they said, "No, we cannot deliver it anymore."

THE CHAIR: Ms Smith, you were shaking your head, but that does not get written down. You were not consulted either?

Ms Smith: No, because I am more New South Wales than I am ACT.

THE CHAIR: I might just jump back to that quickly. I have been asking some questions about this, so perhaps the reasons I have been given might be similar to the reasons you were given, but it does not look like it would be costs for that survey. It is $160,000 a year. It does not seem like an insane cost. You have got a look on your face that suggests to me that perhaps cost was the reason that was given.

Ms Hastings: I am sorry. My poker face did not—

MS BARRY: Don't worry. We already knew.

THE CHAIR: What is the value that—I am happy to open this up to everyone—witnesses see in that survey and the results it provides? And would you assess that as worth more than $160,000 or $160,000?

Ms Hastings: From a career practitioner's point of view, very much so. I think principals also look at that, because every principal gets their own data from the survey. You probably know that, don't you. Principals forensically look at that data to see how to improve as part of their improvement plan. From a career practitioner's point of view and also being in a school, the data is presented to us. Everything is data driven now, so those pieces of data are critical.

Ms Smith: I do agree with that same process. Government education sectors and principals rely on data to provide evidence, and for us, having evidence, particularly as Joanne said, with those who are looking to leave school, is understanding what their needs are and identifying how we can improve their learning opportunities.

THE CHAIR: It is incredibly hard to do that without this data being collected.

Ms Smith: Correct.

Mr Carney: I think the only thing I would add to that is I would agree with the statements that have been made. I would go back to your point, Chair, earlier where we were talking about the distinction about when a student is asked in the questionnaire

about the guidance that they actually received and whether they actually received any. I think it is an important point to make. We work with jurisdictions across the country, and in those jurisdictions that still undertake student destination data they do ask these questions. They have also identified that there is potentially a gap in identifying who the guidance has actually come from. We know that career guidance is provided by a range of people in a school, and young people do not differentiate between somebody with a qualification in careers and not. It is just who they happen to get that information from. I would also echo the point that without this destination data there is actually no way of the government being able to assess whether or not any changes that they decide to put in place are actually having a positive impact or not.

THE CHAIR: Seems strange.

MS BARRY: I am just going to pivot a little bit, because I am a parent who has just had to deal with a child who is going into uni but also a parent who earlier on got career guidance, so I could not understand throughout my son's journey why he had no idea what subjects he needed to do if he wanted to be a psychologist. Also there is a disconnect between the evidence we heard earlier from the ACT Parents body group and what you are requesting. I do not think the disconnect is because they do not support career guidance. They obviously have to deal with multiple things. My question is: do you deal with the peak body, ACT Parents, at all? And if so, what are you getting from that conversation? And how does it inform your study?

Ms Hastings: At the ACT Careers Association we are all volunteers. We work full-time except for one committee member. We have engaged with the parents and citizens association, and they were well aware of the petition. We asked for their input. Yes, they have written to us. We also engaged with them. There was an issue previous to the petition. It was about BSSS changes to E courses. We engaged with them then. The parents and citizens association does know us. We know that they are also short-staffed. We have had positive engagement, and we know it is important to have even stronger engagement with our important stakeholders.

MS BARRY: I have a very left-field question. I was digging into education data for my electorate of Ginninderra. You probably would not have gone into this detail, but I just wanted to test this with you. What I found is that for very low socio-economic schools where there is very low attendance there is data that shows what the qualifications or career path of their parents and even educational background of their parents are. My question is: for a parent, especially from a multicultural background, if the focus is just for their kids to learn to read and write, do you think that is affecting or impacting your ability, for example, to make the case that career guidance is quite important? For that parent, they think, "If my kid can read and write, then that's enough." Do you think there is a correlation there? Have you looked into it at all?

Ms Hastings: Can you clarify that? That was quite a lot of—

MS BARRY: It was a long bow to draw.

Ms Hastings: We will all contribute to this.

MS BARRY: Of course. It is for everyone. What I found is that for parents with low

socio-economic backgrounds where the kids are not—the parents do not have the highest qualifications, for example. Some of them made it only to I think year 10 but did not go on to have a career per se. Do you think then that affects your ability to make the case that career guidance is important because it helps to shape and guide? The parents are not aware. For example, I was aware that I needed to talk to my kids about career guidance, but the parents are not aware, so they cannot have those conversations. That then drives the push for us to have these structured conversations in school. It is a background build-up type of thing.

Ms Hastings: As a career practitioner—I am still a career practitioner—previously in high schools and in a college, I think it is even more important. It is critical that we engage with those students who we know have barriers, that we build their aspirations and that we make sure we check in on them and we look for those opportunities that engage them. Engagement in learning is critical. If a young person can see a future and see that school education up to year 12—we hope—that is important to them. Literacy and numeracy are important. A career practitioner draws connection—connection between who the young person is and where the young person would like to go. If that young person is unsure or has little idea about the future and the world of work or the work of tertiary education, higher education or even short skill set competencies, then it is our responsibility to ensure that we draw the connection, but it is the young person who needs to develop those skills and career management skills—we can make the connection—to engage. What we do in high schools is develop the career management skills so not only do they make career-enhancing decisions, they will actually have the skills and the knowledge to help them at the next decision and the next decision and the next decision. Does that help?

MS BARRY: It answers the question, yes.

Ms Smith: Can I add a bit more to that?

MS BARRY: Yes.

Ms Smith: On top of that, from a parent perspective, our ability and our knowledge to engage with the parents is just as essential, because ultimately a child's decision-maker is their parents, and all the studies have shown that to be the case. For those careers advisers of us who have that sort of situation in their schools, they will work with the local community as well as the parents themselves to inform, because often if they are recent migrants or refugees, they do not know about the school system in Australia. We are educating them as well and helping them understand what the options are for their children to give them the confidence to be able to support their child in succeeding in their education.

MS BARRY: That is really useful. Two more questions: one around workforce—sorry, David.

Mr Carney: I was just going to add a different point, just to give you an example of another jurisdiction who is actually specifically targeting the group that you are actually talking about and the success that they are having. The WA education department run free career conversation events for families where parents can bring their children to learn about the Australian education system, the labour market, pathways, whether it

be TAFE, apprenticeship, university. The largest attendees at those sessions are first-in-family further education—so parents have not gone on to further education, but children are looking to aspire—migrants and refugees who do not understand the system.

To echo Jo's point and Jenine's point, if you extrapolate that out of what the role the career practitioner can play in the school, they definitely have a role, as Jo pointed out, in the individual. Also, as Jenine pointed out, this is the value of a qualified career practitioner in a school. They have got to be working with the whole school community, and that includes parents. To your point where you say that the parent just wants their son or daughter to learn basic English and numeracy, that is a good first step, but for them to be able to get fulfilment in the labour market and to be successful citizens moving forward we obviously have to take them through that path.

MS BARRY: What your answer has just highlighted to me is that it is actually building inequality, because if you have further education for parents who have had further education attending, they understand the value of a career, and they are obviously attending to inform their children. How about the others? It is actually quite interesting to hear about the cohorts that you are seeing, and it is really important then that your work covers everybody, all parents.

Mr Carney: It is also what the international evidence shows. The OECD has consistently shown through their research that career guidance has the ability to uplift. For those individuals that are on the margins of society, career guidance has the ability to empower and to uplift. To your point about school attendance, a young person understanding the value of the education that they are receiving, why they need to stay in school and learn and stay connected and how that leads to further education and ultimately employment is crucial.

MISS NUTTALL: Did you have a couple more questions?

MS BARRY: I have just one more. You go.

MISS NUTTALL: It is probably on a similar line to what we are hearing from this discussion. There might be a misunderstanding out there in the community about the scope of what career practitioners do. I am wondering if you could enlighten us, because usually when I am chatting to young people what I hear is, "I want help with life skills. I want people to help me build those connections out into the community." Is that within your scope of practice? What does that look like?

Ms Hastings: Definitely. What is our scope of practice? CICA has a wonderful document called the *Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, and all career development practitioners who are qualified know this document and work with this document. Therefore you can developmentally create programs and implement programs to meet the needs of students. The scope of practice (1) meets the students' needs, depending on the school; and (2) meets the frameworks that we have at our disposal, but it also is under our professional standards. When you mentioned, "What about those students who have less social capital?" that is one of our professional standards: inclusivity, respect for diversity, making sure that we look after students with less social capital. When you ask, "What are these career development programs that

you do?" you could bundle them into two areas. Do you want to know the bundles?

MISS NUTTALL: Yes, please.

Ms Hastings: There is career guidance, which is delivered by a professional career development practitioner who is current and registered, and career guidance is either one to one or in a small group and very personalised. There is career education, and under career education are all the programs that you can have within a school. It depends on the capacity of the school to resource the career development practitioner, how much they can deliver. But I can say, from delivering career practice in an ACT public school and a career practice in a college where it was a full-time career development practitioner role, the scope for the services, programs and the industry engagement is so much bigger when you are resourced.

MISS NUTTALL: With that, too, I know there are some people who might be concerned that it is just about paid work and about translating young people into young workers. Is that right or is that—I can see some shaking heads.

Ms Hastings: I think it is changing.

Ms Smith: Very much so.

Ms Hastings: I think the concept of career is changing. Thank you to CICA and thank you to the work of our career practitioners who have worked so hard on that. Yes, there is a last century idea that a career is just a job, but with so many people talking about lifelong learning now and so many people talking about the number of jobs, even underemployment and the gig economy, there is a different concept, but then it is really good that people who have been out of the workforce previously or are carers in schools have got a career too. For our young people who are carers, their career is well and truly in that space, so they are a carer, they are a student, they are aspirational, they are a learner and they have probably got a part-time job as well. The concept of career is broader, and the message is getting out.

Ms Smith: Slowly—very slowly. I would describe it as that we no longer tell the students, "This is the job you should be doing." We work with the students to prepare them for their next stage of their career pathway and their learning pathway, because the reality is now that finishing your education in year 12 or year 10 and not doing any further training, industry-focused training, as the stats say, is less likely to create employment, whereas people often say to me, "People say you change your jobs five or six times," or that you will go on this pathway, but the job might not be there and all this sort of stuff. I will explain to them that is why we do not talk specifically in jobs. We say, "We are looking at pathways into further education that suit your skills, abilities and strengths," and that means that it can open up to opportunities.

I often talk to students about, "If you want to be an accountant, you can be an accountant, but you don't have to work in an accountancy firm. You can work in a hospital. You can work in the train system," and all that sort of stuff. There is value in explaining jobs to the students, but there is no value in saying, "This is what you have to do." We have to work a lot more with the students than what people perceive. As Jo said, we have the formalised curriculum of the *Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, which is a

competency-based learning document, and the outcomes on that are not age specific or circumstance specific, so we can adjust them to suit our own set of students and school community, really.

Mr Carney: Sorry; I know you are short on time, but can I just go back to your previous question about the role of a career development practitioner covers? I think it is a really important question. As I think was borne out in the previous evidence, I think there is a lack of understanding about what a career practitioner actually does in a school today. I think it comes back to why you have probably seen, even in the submissions that have been provided from those of us that are in the careers field, about the issue of full-time and people saying, "Why do we need full-time when we have constraints?" The role of a career practitioner, and the understanding of what a career practitioner does today, is very different to what the average person understands they might do—what a parent might think they might do, what a school principal thinks they actually do.

As Jo said, when she was talking about the difference between career guidance and career education and career programs, a modern-day career practitioner working in a school today is responsible for not only career guidance but also working with staff to embed career education into curriculum, engaging with industry and working with parents. So when schools give an appointment to that role of part-time, with part-time teaching, or 0.2 with 0.8 teaching, and then wonder why it is not working or wonder why the career practitioner is putting their hand up saying, "I'm burnt out," these are the reasons why. It is an enormous job if you want it to succeed.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you.

Ms Hastings: You often hear about work experience in schools. Work experience is delivered by a career practitioner—but it does not need to be. "Value add" is with a career practitioner supporting a young person. You will always hear that work experience is part of the school program. There are a lot of people in schools who are not career practitioners who deliver work experience, and the assumption of parents in the ACT is: "Oh, they are getting work experience. They are going to the expo. They are seeing their career practitioner." We need to improve our role in the ACT to get the message out.

MS BARRY: How do you improve awareness of your role? Where do you see that sitting?

Ms Hastings: It is happening. People are coming to the ACT Careers Association now, particularly industry, and they are emailing us and saying, "Can we meet up? How do we get into schools? We need these young people to be in our industry." I tell them, "You need to talk to the career practitioners. They are the ones who are motivated, skilled, experienced and have the expertise to engage with industry." That is what the ACT Careers Association is doing. But there are also agencies out there to help. Within the school, to get a foot in the door, a maths teacher, for example, is not going to find the time to say, "Oh, you are from Community Services; come in." They do not have the capacity and they do not have the expertise.

Ms Smith: A suggestion for an example from New South Wales is to have a look at the Department of Education's Regional Industry Education Partnerships program, RIEP.

I was involved in setting it up about three or four years ago. That connects industry and education, which is what the fundamental need is.

Ms Hastings: We used to have something called the Student to Industry program here in the ACT, which was funded federally. It was absolutely brilliant. It made the job in careers so much better and so much easier.

MS BARRY: Better integrated.

MISS NUTTALL: One of the primary questions that we have seen emerging through the submissions is: career advice is important, but is it the thing that you prioritise in a constrained fiscal environment? You have made a really good case, talking about the scope of the role of a career practitioner. I understand it is also part of the Australian Education Union's minimum staffing bid. Can you speak to the importance of why we should prioritise it in a constrained fiscal environment?

Ms Hastings: Would you like to start with that one, David?

Mr Carney: I am very happy to start. The constrained fiscal environment is not going to change. We are going to be stuck with a constrained fiscal environment moving forward. We need to look at this from what our young people in schools today require. It is about reprioritising how we best support young people to transition. I think the role of a career practitioner in a school plays that very key role.

In its crudest form, we set the education system up to educate our young people to prepare them to move to further education, training and employment. If we cannot do that successfully, then we are actually failing a group of young people today; we are not setting them up to succeed; we are actually setting them up to fail; we are setting them up to fall into a social welfare system, where we do not want them to be. The role of a career practitioner plays an integral part in a school today to make sure that we are connecting those key elements together to ensure that young people transition. It goes back to my previous evidence that it is not just about one-on-one counselling; it is about that whole role, which works with industry, with parents, with students and with the other teachers in the school about embedding career education to the curriculum. It is an enormous role to undertake.

You talk about how we need to change this. This has to be changed from the top. This needs school principals to be able to understand the value of the role. This needs the Education Directorate to understand the value of the role. Yes, we do have finite resources. We understand that. But those finite resources are not going to go away. It is about prioritising the importance of a role which is going to enable our young people to transition successfully. Ultimately, that is what we want. As parents, that is what we want for our young kids. We should be wanting that as an education system and we should be wanting that as a country.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I thank you all for your attendance today. Thanks very much for taking the time.

Hearing suspended from 2.34 to 3.00 pm.

BORZILLO, MS NICHOLA
JOHNSTON, MR RICHARD
TIGWELL, MS LIVIA

THE CHAIR: We welcome witnesses who are career practitioners with schools and industry in our region. Do you have any comment to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Ms Borzillo: I am from MEGT, but I am still here in my personal capacity.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Please note that, as witnesses, you are protected by parliamentary privilege and bound by its obligations. You must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. Would any of you like to make a brief opening statement covering anything that is not in your submissions before we go to questions?

Ms Tigwell: I am prepared to make a statement. Do you want to go first?

Ms Borzillo: Thank you, Livia. Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear today. My perspective comes from industry working across schools, employers, apprentices and trainees. I have seen the difference an engaged career practitioner can make, particularly those that understand vocational training and education, to the journey of students.

Ms Tigwell: Equity and quality matter. I am a 43-year experienced high school teacher and I have spent most of my career with a time allowance to provide career development services. According to the OECD report *Equity and quality in education: Supporting disadvantaged students and schools*, the highest-performing education systems across OECD countries are those that combine quality with equity. The Education Directorate's publication *The future of education: Why does educational quality matter?* States:

> Equity in education matters. It is the hallmark of a fair and just society, it is the vehicle by which people can improve their long term health, wealth and wellbeing and it is an issue that matters to the ACT community. … so that no student is being left behind, so that no group of students are failing and so that all students can access what they need to achieve educational outcomes.

If we genuinely believe that equity in education matters, all high school youth will have access to professionally qualified career practitioners. This will only be possible if there are sufficient qualified members of staff so that youth at all 22 high schools can benefit from equitable access to the career development services they need and deserve.

If equity and quality in education are a priority, dedicated and recurrent funding will be made available to ensure that the diverse career development needs of students are met and that practitioners work within an acceptable student-to-practitioner ratio. If quality matters, the ACT government will reinstate the ACT post-school destinations and pathway survey, including whether a student's school employed a qualified practitioner. If quality matters, the ACT government will provide a verified baseline audit of current career development services, qualifications and staffing across ACT public schools,

with datasets published annually. If quality matters, the ACT government will facilitate mentoring, so that the skills of the few remaining career practitioners in schools are not lost.

The OECD and our Education Directorate are right: equity and quality matter. They go hand in hand. All youth deserve to have equitable access to the full suite of professionals—teachers, librarians, social workers, psychologists and career practitioners, who are experts—working collaboratively so that every student is supported and well informed. Access to experts should not be a matter of chance, as it currently is. Every young person should expect equitable access to professional support to develop career plans and to have hope for their post-school future.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Johnston: One of the strengths of the ACT public education system is its commitment to continuous improvement. I think there is a genuine willingness to reflect and refine processes and look for ways to achieve better outcomes for students. I am really grateful to be part of a system that values that approach and appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this discussion today.

Having dedicated career practitioners working with students from years 7 to 10 can make a significant difference. Early engagement allows students and families time to explore options, build skills, develop aspirations and understand pathways available to them. It also helps families navigate what can often be a complex system, particularly when it comes to disabilities, community services, the amount of things that they have to go through, families and the pressure that parents are under to understand this. It can helps if we do this early and particularly in years 7 to 10.

THE CHAIR: Thank you all very much. We will go to questions. I am curious about your understanding of the grounds on which some high school students currently have access to a dedicated career practitioner but many do not. Do you know how those decisions have been determined?

Mr Johnston: I do not know how principals decide that a career practitioner is not worthwhile. It is probably based on funding. That is the only reason that I can see. From what we have submitted here today, there are so many advantages to having career practitioners in the schools. They work collaboratively with wellbeing. If you have students that are disengaged, what better way but to get a career practitioner on board. The career practitioners, for these parents and for the students, have gold—and gold is information. The information is so valuable to them, because they can see that there is actually a future.

Like Livia, I have been doing careers for many years. I have worked with many people in this area—for example, social workers. We have welfare workers and support within the school. I think it is a really powerful model to have the career practitioner there offering programs to a range of students. That is where I stand up. I do not know why there has been this reduction in qualified career practitioners, because it really makes a difference.

Ms Borzillo: I do not know why either. I am not coming from a school perspective on

this panel, but, from my own experience, what I see is that, when there is an expert in the school—that leader; that career practitioner—the job of an apprentice connect provider to go in and offer industry perspectives, connect with employers, RTOs, and explain school-based apprenticeships, the processes and the expectations, if the students are prepared, they are more likely to be apprenticeship-ready, or at least work-ready, with the advice of a qualified practitioner or a VET leader. I see that when I go into schools that have maybe two compared to schools that do not have any or perhaps it might be a teacher that has this extra role to offer advice. I that firsthand, from my perspective.

Ms Tigwell: I think there are two reasons why the majority of ACT high schools do not have—a career practitioner that is professionally qualified. I think the first important reason is one that Richard just touched on. It is the fact that principals are under pressure to deliver a great deal. I know that parents and the Youth Coalition that submitted submissions think that schools should be doing certain things well, and we agree. Principals would have to fund the positions that I have had over the years, 43 years, teaching mostly and with a very limited line allowance for careers. They want to give me time to do the careers work, and generally it has been 20 per cent of a full-time load. It is not that they do not want to give me more time; it is just that they are under a lot of pressure to deliver a lot in their schools.

I think the next important reason why all schools do not have a career practitioner is that there is not a lot of understanding of what we actually deliver. If you were the principal, with all good intention, at one of the schools that has not offered any kind of line allowance for a professional practitioner in this space, you would not know what you are missing. If my school lost me, they would know that the services that I am delivering are missing, because they can see that I have been delivering them there for 15 years at my current school. But the schools that do not have one do not know. So they cannot afford it and they do not know what we deliver. I think there is a lack of community understanding, and I think that has probably come out already.

THE CHAIR: That is helpful; thank you. In the schools where there are career practitioners, what proportion of students are engaging—or, perhaps more interesting, what proportion of students are not engaging and what are the reasons for that?

Ms Tigwell: I can only talk about my experience where I work. Where I work, it depends what year group we are talking about. I have a 50 per cent allowance of time for careers. I think that is the best in any high school. There are not many high schools offering careers support from a professional. I have struggled for 43 years to get that 50 per cent time allowance of a full-time load. I am not totally satisfied with it, because it is not enough. But what proportion of students? It depends what year group I am talking about. I am in a high school. Our school also has a primary campus.

I can service year 10 pretty well, because they are transitioning. They are leaving year 10 and going to college. Most of those students and pretty well all of their parents, the highest proportion of parents, the majority, have not made any decisions yet. They are in year 10—they have come through that much schooling—and they are at a crucial time where they do actually have to start to make some decisions and have to engage some career management competency that they have to develop. They have to develop this competency to make decisions for their future—and it is a skill they have not

exercised much yet. They have to begin to make decisions, and that is where the career development practitioner comes in. Although I do not have enough time to look after all year groups at the school where I work, I have focused on the year 10 group because of the importance of the transition they are making.

I engage fully with that year group. I meet with every student in term one, because they can enrol in college in term two, and I invite the parents to come in, and they are really keen to come in and find out what the careers teacher says to their child—and that is exactly what I want. Most of the parents I meet with their child did not go to school in the ACT; they have come from overseas to the ACT or they have come for a job here from interstate, where the system is a bit different. So the curiosity to find out what the options are is certainly there, and they are very grateful for what I am able to impart in terms of information, I suppose, to get these young year 10s started.

But, as to your question about engagement, for the other year groups, I see as many as I possibly can in the time that I have. Students come in and see me. Today, some students came in. Yesterday, they came in. Regularly, they are dropping in to see me with all kinds of questions. The year 10s get to know me early in the year, if they did not know me before, but the younger ones come in with their questions. They are questions about how to get some work experience and how to write a resume, because they're looking for a job. They have questions about the full range of things that I could possibly cover.

I also do not wait for students to come in. I deal, as Richard's already pointed out, quite closely, in fact, with the wellbeing staff and the social workers at my school. The wellbeing executive teachers sometimes mention students to me. I can see on the information to teachers that I receive on a regular basis which students are not always well behaved and, if those students, are not referred to me, I can find them and I can talk to them and open a conversation. If some of these students are educationally vulnerable, they are not going to actually come and see me, like the ones I described a moment ago. But some of the students that need the most help are the students that, because I care and I can see that they are not a great fit for five days a week, 40 weeks a year of schooling, I have a chat with them over time. I start with those students early, when they are in year 8, and not the best-behaved year 8 student. I have some experience at talking to those kinds of young people, and they are quite keen to hear from someone like me who understands a little bit or cares about how they might feel. I open conversations, I get students referred to me and I deal with whole year groups. I could do it much more effectively if I were full-time in the role.

Mr Johnston: Livia, I might just say that, broadly speaking with careers, we work on a tiered model of support—tier 1, tier 2, tier 3 and it can go up to tier 4. Broadly, when we are talking about career services, all students, if they have got a career practitioner, will get embedded with some career services. It could be classrooms where we talk about careers. That is for a wide variety of students. We might have a room where all students can come in and get resources.

Then we go to tier 2, which is more specialised—so those kids who are needing to do courses to get into particular levels of work, like a white card, RSA and that kind of thing. They are specialised courses. We do not need to see everyone. Not everyone needs to do those courses. It is those kids who are interested in that, and we get those.

Then we go to the tier 3 kids. They are the ones that need a lot more work and a lot more one-on-one engagement. That could be because they are disengaged and they come from difficult backgrounds. They might come from a refugee background or from overseas and need some specific help. That is how orderly we go. All kids should, if we have a career practitioner, have some embedded career services within the school.

MS BARRY: Just listening to you, I think the biggest problem is that people do not actually understand what you do and also that people probably assume that the teachers are doing that work. It is quite interesting—and it is quite interesting that we are running this inquiry. I just have one question. Why do you think it is important to start in high school? Why do you think that is important? Why do you think it is important to start talking to children about careers from year 7, for example? I think year 7s are 14 years old.

Ms Borzillo: I think the early adoption of any kind of career advice prepares a young person. As you said, Livia, your door is open for those younger people to come and have the conversations. We are talking about career exploration at that point. When a kid gets to year 10, it is, like, "Okay; what do you want to do? What is your subject selection? What do you want to do for a career?" It is alarming. We can all probably sit in the room here and say that we did not have a plan.

MS BARRY: I did.

Ms Borzillo: You did?

MS BARRY: Because we had career advice.

Ms Borzillo: I think career exploration from year 7 is extremely important to build confidence and curiosity around what is available. We are in a very complex labour market, I guess, where there are roles that are not even traditional roles anymore that people of our generation or older might not have heard of that kids are being exposed to these days as careers.

Mr Johnston: I focus on disabilities. I love working with kids with disabilities. I am at Black Mountain at the moment, and we do a plan from year 7. If we take a step back, if you are a parent with a student with disabilities or a parent, you do not stop worrying about the kids. As the kids progress from year to year and they are heading towards college, the parents get more anxious and the kids can be extremely anxious. We are worried about mental health as being a significant issue at the moment: one in five coming down to one in four or even more. The kids suffer anxiety from not knowing or not doing well at school and then feeling that they have limited prospects. If a career practitioner is informed they can guide the conversation and can show people exactly what options there are—and there are many. Kids do not know what they do not know, until they come to a career practitioner who has that gold. That is that information that I spoke about before.

That is for parents as well—for example, parents with disabilities. Imagine a parent with a disability—who maybe has mild, moderate or severe intellectual disabilities—and think about what is going on in their head. They are worried from the outset. It is important to have someone who can explain to them the options and explain how things

could work in years 11 and 12 to get prepared. Parents have to think about full functional analysis. When they are submitting a change in circumstances for the NDIS, they have to get quotes from service providers. They have to think of guardianship; and they have to think of, at 16, the pension and the disability pension. Parents do not know this information and they have to go looking for it.

We are in the best position to help the community. I see this as a community relationship, because people are moving into the community after this. For some, education stops at year 12, but they are going into the community, and we are helping them with that. It is a really powerful exercise to have someone who understands this and can work with the kids. It is relationship-based. The biggest thing about teaching is relationships and building relationships. The circle of influence when you first meet someone is tiny and then, as you get to know the person, it grows and grows. When you have a person who students and parents can trust someone who knows what they are talking about it can make a huge difference. You can see in a one-hour consultation with parents—I speak to all the parents in year 12—the amount of relief that comes up, and I give them options. It does not take the relief away. I do not know what it is like to have a son or daughter with a significant disability, but I see the effects of it. It can be isolating for parents. Having someone who knows this stuff and who can prepare in years 7 to 10, I think, is extremely powerful. That is what parents are talking about when I speak to them.

MS BARRY: I just have one more question. From an industry perspective, we have heard evidence that the number of qualified career petitioners is declining and potentially could disappear. From an industry perspective, in terms of workforce capacity and capability, what is your concern? How is this going to play out for you?

Ms Borzillo: My concern is that if students do not have educated advice when they are at school, they are disadvantaged and are at a huge risk of joining the unemployed. I think that we are so desperate for a skilled workforce right now that the opportunity for students to do a trade, do an apprenticeship or do a traineeship is absolutely huge. I am a big advocate for school-based apprenticeships or traineeships starting early, so having knowledgeable people that we can talk to to assist with when we are bringing up that messaging to schools. School-based apprenticeships and traineeships really propel a young person. Quite possibly even before they are 25 they can be a fully qualified tradesperson and well on their way.

As an apprentice connect provider, one of our responsibilities as part of our contract is to have meaningful engagement with schools. I guess each school, depending on their resources, sees that differently. I think that the annual career expo is not the answer. I think it is a great addition, but we do need to have relationships with career practitioners or VET leaders in schools to bring those jobs to the students. One of our brochures actually says, "School-based apprenticeship—how do you do that?" One of the first things is to explore—we were talking about that exploration from the very beginning—what kinds of pathways there are and then go and speak to your teacher about it. It is so key that that teacher has knowledge.

Ms Tigwell: They have got someone to go to.

Ms Borzillo: Did that answer your question?

MS BARRY: It did, definitely.

MISS NUTTALL: I think more broadly I am interested to know about your experience for young people leaving high school and leaving the system. When they have had career advice, can you talk a little bit about what that looks like for them? Maybe if you have particular examples—

Ms Tigwell: I would like to jump in there. Richard mentioned that young people are anxious, and he talked about the importance of providing the career development service before they leave school. I agree. The key role of a career practitioner in a school is to help to combat that anxiety. It is normal. It is not just the students who are educationally vulnerable that are anxious about leaving high school, it is all of them, and they do need information early. To just jump back to the earlier question about why from year 7, it is complex, as you have said. They are anxious. Even if they are very bright and very talented and going to go to uni, they are still anxious.

The earlier we can start to drip-feed the information and build up the relationship that you have been mentioning—if we can build up these relationships with our young people in schools early, ideally I would have a better time allowance to do my job as a career practitioner and I would get across the road to the primary school. On the odd occasion—sadly, odd occasion due to time constraints with my job—when I have gone across, I have spoken to students in primary school, and they just sit there. I got the guest speaker in from the industry that this particular boy with a disability actually—he and his classmates sat on the floor, and they were all ears about their classmate Ryan's interest in being an electrician. It just expanded their whole horizon about what is possible if they could hear about a job that one of their classmates was interested in because the people in the fluoro vests came into the classroom.

I just think that we need to get young people exposed to information and experience as early as possible. Colleges have a better time allowance for their career practitioners, but the students in year 10 are making decisions about what subjects to do. The people I meet over many years of having the individual meetings I have with the students and their parents, as I have outlined previously, have not thought about this before. I guess they might have been asked, "What are you going to do when you leave school?" In year 10 that is a standard question that an aunt or uncle will ask. In actual fact how they are going to get from where they are now, the safe environment in their high school, whatever year they are in, to where they are going is completely a void. They have not thought about it.

They need to have access to someone who has got time to talk to them, and it is not a one-conversation kind of arrangement here. That is what my colleagues have been saying. It is a series of conversations. They build up trust in you, and then they come back to you or to me, and they eventually start to make plans. Then they leave at the end of year 10.

I have a class that I was teaching today. Knowing I was coming in here, I asked them, "How many of you feel better about going to college? Have you chosen the subjects and do you feel happy?" I am always asking my students because I want to know if there is a way I can improve my service. All of the students in my classroom had

decided where they were going. They had got into the college they wanted. That is not easy actually, but I guided them. They had subjects that meant something to them.

Your question, Laura, was about how we get them to where they are going. I get the students that I deal with, as a professionally qualified career practitioner, to consider where they want to be: "Where do you want to be in five years time?" if I'm talking to the year 10s, which I make the most time for. "Where do you want to be? And how are we going to get you there? I'm on your team. How will we get you there?" That is not a one-meeting conversation. It is what the previous group of people who came into the previous panel were saying: it is a collaborative effort. It is a range of different experiences, where you lead a team of people in your school to provide for each individual so that they are prepared, so that they have thought of a goal and they then know that they can manage the journey to that goal, and that is a powerful thing.

The maths teacher alone cannot do it, and the deputy alone cannot do it. They have all got their role in the school, but they cannot help a young person manage their transition to a goal, because that is not their role. My role as a career development practitioner is to support the rest of the team in my school, to add that bit of the puzzle—I think quite a critical bit of the puzzle. David Carney I think hit the nail on the head. We want these people to be prepared for the future. We want them to have thought about a future.

I want to come back to the anxiety that Richard mentioned. We do not want them to be anxious. We want them to have hope. Everyone who has worked as a career practitioner that I have ever met will say that the work that they do provides young people with hope, because they have had enough experiences, they have heard about the options and they have hope for the future. That contribution to a school community cannot be delivered by anybody other than a career practitioner.

Mr Johnston: If I can just very quickly add to that, I have had the benefit of working in a high school for many years, that college as a career—TAC, we call them. Now I am, as I said before, at Black Mountain. The benefit of students in years 11 and 12 having a career practitioner in years 7 to 10 is that they are going into college understanding all their options. They are not going in there with misunderstandings. The misunderstandings can come from parents. They can come from their own peers. Parents might suggest to do subjects that scale well—"If they scale well, do maths, do specialist maths." If it is anything like me, that would be the last option we would want to do.

Ms Tigwell: It might not be the best advice.

Mr Johnston: There is the option there. Kids will also want to go with their friends. They will make these choices about their options. Kids, if they choose well and they are given enough information, can make some fantastic decisions about college, which will engage them, which will inspire them. College is fantastic in the ACT. We have a fantastic system here. I love college. I love the collaborative nature of college, and I love the collaborative nature of high schools working together with colleges. That will happen with the career person. When the kids are directed and misunderstandings are clarified, it makes a world of difference to the engagement of kids down the track, not only in years 11 and 12, but these kids just need one subject or two subjects where a scallywag—they have been a scallywag, but all of a sudden they have got a subject that

they just are suddenly passionate about, and that is what we offer it at college: specialisations.

There is one subject, English, that is compulsory. Maths, unfortunately, is not, but I think it might be coming up. All your subjects are elective. They can go in and find a subject, and then that can make a difference, as you were asking, for their outcomes, because they can do woodwork, they can do metalwork. If they went with their friends and did science, we see what happens as a result. They V-grade, things happen. It is not perfect. Kids still V-grade, but that assistance is there for parents as well as the students, and I think parents and students are very important in this conversation when it comes to careers.

Ms Borzillo: And connecting and working together as a community, because career practitioners can lean on outside industry to bring in employers to assist with that broader opportunity for young people. It might be a work experience opportunity. We were talking about electricians, but an electrician coming in and saying, "This is a day in my life. This is what I do"—that storytelling I always find works well with young people when we visit schools, but it is a community.

Mr Johnston: Collaboration.

Ms Borzillo: The collaboration, yes.

Mr Johnston: Collaboration between schools and colleges and industry is really important, and it can offer a lot. In year 10 we can do work experience. That is extremely powerful, but it is not everything. Work experience is not the only thing that will get them through. They can change their mind, they might find different things to do, but they are on their way. I think that is what a career practitioner offers in the high schools particularly and in years 11 and 12.

MISS NUTTALL: That is an excellent answer. If you do not mind me asking quickly, if we have time, as a broader question of equity within the system—I am thinking particularly for students with a disability, students with English as an additional language or dialect, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and those from a lower socio-economic background—in your opinion are they currently able to access adequate career guidance across the public education system?

Ms Tigwell: It is part of what we offer. We provide services to everybody. Our professional development, our code of ethics, the blueprint and the benchmarking tool that we use all guide us in making sure that everybody is given career development support. We are well professionally developed in ways that other teachers with teaching qualifications are not, not receiving the professional development on a regular basis that career practitioners receive. It is a requirement of our professional status that we complete professional development every year. We are a profession. We complete a minimum of 15 hours of career development-related professional development every year. Most of us would complete far more than that. That professional development will assist us and will support us in helping those groups of people who have barriers, whatever they may be. Those services that we can provide those students with barriers are services that no-one else in the school can provide due to the fact that they are not trained.

MISS NUTTALL: That sounds amazing for students in schools where career practitioners are. What does that mean for students who do not have a dedicated career practitioner?

Ms Tigwell: It is a problem, isn't it?

Ms Borzillo: They are disadvantaged.

MISS NUTTALL: I was going to say—

Ms Tigwell: I would say they are hugely disadvantaged, because the maths teacher, the history teacher, the science teacher, the deputy, the social worker—no-one else in the schools that do not have a career practitioner can provide that kind of specialist support. It is specialist support from people who are experts, these career practitioners, and they do know how to help these people, they do have the industry contacts, they do know where the information is and they are able to talk to the parents. They have got the community contacts, the industry contacts, the ability to converse with parents and the student themself over a substantial period of time, beginning right back in year 7 or even in primary school. That kind of wraparound service that links the career development service with all the rest of what a school can do just is not happening in a school that does not have a career development practitioner. That is why I am sitting here.

Ms Borzillo: The cohort that you are talking about exactly and identified if there is a career practitioner is a really great example, Livia, of if they move into an apprenticeship or a school-based traineeship, there are additional supports in place as part of the traineeship-apprenticeship model for that cohort, but if they do not have that advice and support, they are severely disadvantaged.

Ms Tigwell: I can give an example. I know we are running out of time, but I will quickly give an example. I have a boy who did have an ASbA, I do not know, 10 weeks ago. He did the wrong thing. He did not actually do the wrong thing at the workplace; he did the wrong thing at the business next door, but nevertheless he made a mistake and lost his ASbA. He and his family knew me. He is in year 10. We built up a relationship over the years because I am the career development practitioner at that school. He came straight back to me. Last week we started to make phone calls and found another business. We sat together making the phone calls. I do not do it for the students. We sit together—that is the way I do it. We found another business that is going to give him another go. That does not happen, Laura, in a school where there is not a career practitioner. If that boy had stuffed up at a school that did not have a career practitioner, where would he go? He might contact someone like Nichola, but he might have just lost hope, and it is hope and experience that we want our young people to have, which we deliver that no-one else can.

Ms Borzillo: In that particular scenario, if that person were to call MEGT, we would try our best to replace him but do not have that personal relationship.

Ms Tigwell: I know the boy. I know he is worth the trouble, but someone at MEGT might just think, "He stole a packet of chips. We really can't trust him again." I am

making that bit up. I am not telling you too much. Someone on the outside does not know the student like I do. I need to work with MEGT, but it is the career development practitioner that builds up a relationship with the family.

MISS NUTTALL: Then you have a trusted advocate during a—

Ms Tigwell: Yes.

MISS NUTTALL: I do not want to say crisis, but time-sensitive issue.

Ms Tigwell: That is why he comes back, and now he has hope.

MISS NUTTALL: That is good.

Ms Tigwell: That is really the bottom line.

THE CHAIR: We are up on time, so we are going to have to wrap up. Thank you so much. On behalf of the committee, I thank you all for your attendance today. There were no questions on notice, so that is the end of the session.

Short suspension.

STEPHEN-SMITH, MS RACHEL, Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education, Minister for Child Development and Wellbeing, Minister for Finance, Minister for the Public Service and Minister for Health Infrastructure
EDWARDS, MR CRAIG, Executive Leader for Student Centred Improvement and Leadership, School Improvement, Education Directorate
PERKINS, MS ANITA, Executive Group Manager, Service Design and Delivery, Education Directorate
WOOD, MS JO, Director-General, Education Directorate

THE CHAIR: We welcome Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA, Minister for Education, and officials. Please note that, as witnesses, you are protected by parliamentary privilege and bound by its obligations. You must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. You are welcome to make a brief opening statement, if you would like, before we go to questions.

Ms Stephen-Smith: No statement.

THE CHAIR: We will go straight to questions. I asked some of the previous witnesses about the supposed inequity, with some high schools having career practitioners and others not. Is that just an example of having had the devolved model? How has that come about?

Ms Wood: As we have talked about with the committee before, we have had a very devolved model of decision-making around school structures, models and delivery. The work we are doing now, following the public school system resourcing review, is moving towards a more systematic and systematised approach—still being really conscious of and understanding local context and local need but getting more consistent in the way that we deliver education services. The Strong Foundations program is a stand-out example of that, with a consistent evidence-informed approach to literacy and numeracy, promotion of high-impact teaching strategies, and a whole lot of professional learning and support for schools to make those changes, as well as some consistent resources and tools to support them to do it. That is an example of where we have done that.

In terms of the approach within schools, careers education has evolved at school level. Really importantly, the models of career education have to involve a whole-school approach. That is something that comes from the research. It is across the curriculum and it is about particular opportunities young people have, like work experience, programs and resources. It is across the whole school, but it is also a shared responsibility with the community and families. Having led a college, Mr Edwards can speak a bit more about the approach within our schools.

THE CHAIR: It is specific to high schools. Some schools have them and some do not. I understand a bit about how that has come about. Does the government have a position on whether they should, and have you sought or received any feedback from high schools that do have dedicated career practitioners as to how important they are for them?

Ms Wood: At a system level, our position is that we recognise the core value of careers

education. It is a core part of students' success and, ultimately, successfully transitioning. It really requires a multi-tiered approach. As I have said, there are specific career education practitioners in our colleges, as you have identified, and in some high schools, but that is only part of the support students need to engage in thinking about careers and understanding what the opportunities might be. We have the Understanding Building and Construction Program, for example, which gives young people exposure to that sector and industry. All of it builds. Embedding it across the curriculum and embedding it across different opportunities students have, all the way from primary school through to college, is important.

We see its importance. We see it as being multi-layered and having multiple components. One of the things about it being a system is that we are able to learn from the people getting great success. We can look at what different schools are doing and see which elements we really want to see consistently across the system, but at this point we have not got to: "Here's a consistent system approach."

THE CHAIR: One of the submissions asked how many qualified career practitioners are employed in high schools, where they are and what the FTE is. Do you have that on hand?

Ms Perkins: We do have that. I might need a minute to find it, though.

THE CHAIR: While you are finding that, I want to ask how it works at Melba Copland Secondary School**.** Presumably there is a career practitioner at the college level. Do they engage with the high school students? That might be a good case study for us.

Ms Wood: I do not have detailed knowledge of exactly how Melba does that. Do you?

Mr Edwards: Like all the colleges, they would have a funded TaCO position for careers and transitions. I am not sure how they interact with the high school. We would have to explore that a bit further.

THE CHAIR: Are you able to take that on notice and let us know if years 7 to 10 students have access and, if they do, what the access looks like?

Mr Edwards: Sure.

Ms Stephen-Smith: For the purposes of the *Hansard*, yes, we can take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Thanks, Minister. Ms Perkins, have I bought you enough time or should we come back to that one?

Ms Perkins: We have quite a bit of detail across each of the high schools regarding the number of qualified advisers and their time allocation, as well as support staff and time allocation. It is quite detailed. Would you like me to go through it?

THE CHAIR: What do you think, Miss Nuttall? I am happy for it to be taken on notice so that we can get it as a document, or do you just want to hear it?

MISS NUTTALL: It would be helpful to know if you differentiate qualified career

practitioners within those numbers.

Ms Perkins: Yes, we do. We can provide that for you on notice.

Ms Wood: At a high level, I have the summary level.

THE CHAIR: Let's get the high-level summary and then get the detail on notice. That sounds great.

Ms Wood: Ten of our public high schools have a qualified career practitioner. Those people might have dual roles. It might not be a full-time career-focused role, and it may be full-time or part-time. In some of our specialist settings and flexible education settings, we also have a career practitioner. Black Mountain High School, for example, has a career practitioner, and our Flexible Education service also has a qualified career practitioner.

THE CHAIR: Do the 10 high schools include Black Mountain or are specialist schools separate?

Ms Wood: They are separate.

THE CHAIR: I am not sure if you can answer this now, but, as part-time positions, are they generally also teaching other subjects or they are doing this at multiple schools?

Ms Wood: They may be part-time staff or they may be—

Mr Edwards: They are generally implemented differently. It depends on the availability of staff. For example, you could have a careers and transition role split between two teachers, and they could have a teaching role and a careers and transition role, or, vice versa, you could have a teacher coordinating a section of the work experience program as well as doing careers advice. It looks a bit different in each school setting.

THE CHAIR: But there would not be one career practitioner who is doing half the week at one school and the other half at another school? There is not that kind of—

Mr Edwards: Not to my knowledge.

Ms Wood: I am not aware of any of those.

MISS NUTTALL: You mentioned that a multi-tiered approach is required when it comes to career education in high schools. Who coordinates that in public high schools if there is no career practitioner?

Ms Wood: It is embedded in the curriculum. It is a shared responsibility across school leadership and the educators. Obviously, it needs a focus for all students in a school. It is not really something that one person coordinates; it is about how it is embedded. That is probably what matters the most.

MISS NUTTALL: Does that mean that, say, if you have a faculty team doing their

term planning and the scoping and sequencing, they would need to look at the curriculum to pick up on any career components and then work that in as a matter of course? How does that work if there is not a point person? I am sorry if this is a silly question.

Mr Edwards: You might find that it is integrated into the school's pastoral care approach—for example, in what they might be doing for daily pastoral care in a high school or what they might do weekly in a college, to introduce students to general career information in that way. That is generally introduced by a teacher who is not a career practitioner but at a level at which the students can then be referred to a suitable person within the school to either explore work experience or seek careers advice.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you. On page 4 of your submission, you mention two initiatives that you are undertaking: the student transition dashboard and the ACT Careers Hub. What are the timelines for both of those initiatives? And do you mind me asking whether they are budgeted for yet?

Mr Edwards: I am aware that the dashboard is getting close to being concluded. It may already have been tested, but I would have to give you the specific details later.

Ms Wood: We will take that on notice.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you. Could you also please take on notice if they are currently budgeted for? Where might we find them? We have looked as much as we can, but we may have missed them.

Ms Wood: I do not know about the Careers Hub, but we have a range of dashboards that have been developed over time using a diverse range of datasets to equip schools with better information, to help them look at trends across the school, across years, but also to drill into following the progress of individual students. That would be within the work program rather than a funded initiative that appears in the budget statements.

MISS NUTTALL: That is helpful. So they are delivered as part of existing resources?

Ms Wood: Yes.

Ms Perkins: It is similar for the Careers Hub. It is not a specifically funded initiative; we are funding it through existing resources.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you. On page 5 of your submission, you state that the evidence surrounding the beneficial nature of a whole-school approach to career readiness is reflected in current practice within ACT public schools. Could you please point us to what these current practices are? And are they happening across the entirety of the sector?

Ms Wood: That kind of takes us back to the work we are doing to bring more consistent approaches across the system. They are embedded because our school leaders and teachers are well-versed in their profession and the application of the curriculum, so they will bring those learnings to the work that they do, the planning that they do, and how they deliver across the curriculum. For example, in primary school, there could be

a learning that has a focus on "What jobs do your parents do?" and a whole range of things that expose children to start to think about what their future might look like and what they like doing. It could happen in a range of ways across the whole curriculum. As I said, we have not had a system approach to that, so we cannot say, "Here's exactly the practice." We could certainly say that it is not done the same way across every school.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I want to ask about the post-school destinations and pathways survey. I put some questions on notice about this previously through the chamber, so thanks for providing those answers. The answer given as to why it was discontinued was that it was essentially due to low response rates. Let me quote so I am not misquoting: "Consistently low response rates impacting the robustness of the data." Were any steps taken to increase response rates prior to discontinuing the survey?

Ms Wood: There were efforts over probably a number of years to try to find ways to increase the response rate, but it actually continued to decline. We have looked at how else we can do it. And, because it continued to decline—that was in the earlier answer—the robustness of the data was a problem. The quality of the data was not sufficient for it to necessarily serve its purpose. We have included some additional questions in our broad School Satisfaction and Climate Survey for year 12 students, starting this year. That is capturing the intended pathways after leaving school. I appreciate that is different from known pathways after leaving school. And we have asked students if they would be willing to participate in future follow-up research.

There are some different ways we can tackle getting an understanding of post-school pathways. A broad-brush approach—trying to reach everyone and seeing how many people respond—is one way that we have tried, and we have really struggled to get that to continue to be successful. We are exploring whether we could find a cohort of young people who actually want to participate, and we are also looking at opportunities to leverage nationally linked datasets that can give a longitudinal picture of young people's pathways. You cannot always drill down into the ACT in those kinds of datasets, but there are still insights to be gained from that longitudinal picture.

THE CHAIR: You indicated that the response rate had consistently declined, but in the last two years it increased. In 2024, it went from 44.5 per cent across all sectors up to 46.8 per cent. In the next year, 2025, it was up again to 47.6 per cent. These seem like pretty high response rates. If I put out a survey and I get almost a 50 per cent response rate, we knock off early, and that is a great outcome—which we may end up doing today! We will see. What were we shooting for? I reckon that is pretty good.

Ms Wood: I can take on notice a bit more advice on the kind of assessment we did of the data and the data quality to come to that conclusion, but it goes to some technical issues. I am happy to take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Who was consulted prior to the decision being made to discontinue the survey?

Ms Wood: That was a directorate decision. I know that ACT Parents raised that they

were not consulted. It was a decision about the effectiveness of the survey and the data, not a decision not to continue to find a way to look at post-school destinations as one of the outcomes of schooling. We are still committed to finding the best ways to do that.

THE CHAIR: I understand the directorate has uses for the data, but presumably others do as well, like providers and even employers. Other people may have been accessing this. It came to my attention through someone outside of the education system who said, "Wait a second. We really value this data." Given that, it seems like a bit of an oversight not to consult before making a pretty significant decision.

Ms Wood: We have not had anyone approach us about the data, but we are happy to have conversations with anyone who wants to—

THE CHAIR: They might not know yet. When does it normally come out?

Ms Wood: I will take that on notice. I do not know the timing.

THE CHAIR: I am going to loop this back a bit more to the purpose of this inquiry, where we are looking at careers education. By not having that destinations and pathways survey, which specifically asks whether students received career guidance, it is going to be difficult to gauge whether the government's approach to careers education is working. Is there some alternative approach, in terms of monitoring and evaluations, to make sure that whatever happens next is effective?

Ms Wood: Part of the work which connects to the dashboard we have spoken about is the data that we collect across schools. We reproduce that in the dashboard and it gives us more visibility of delivery within schools. We can certainly look at whether there is data separate from what students might have reported to us on a voluntary basis. We can look at what we can collect from schools. We are trying to do all of that data collection with schools in a way that is not adding to workload, by using existing systems as much as we can. As we look into the future and as the system approaches are developed, like Strong Foundations, we work at what the metrics are and what is going to tell us if the intent is being achieved. That would also apply to careers education.

MISS NUTTALL: One of the conversations that has emerged today about a potential difference in the value that people place on career practitioners and their role goes a misunderstanding of the scope of the role. Forgive me if you have mentioned it in your submission. I had a quick look. How would you define the role and scope of career practitioners, particularly in ACT public schools? What is your understanding of that role?

Ms Wood: Mr Edwards can speak to how TaCOs work and their role within our colleges.

Mr Edwards: Our career practitioners would give students a range of careers advice. Some of it would be about post-school pathways, university entrance, work experience—a whole variety of things, including employment post school, in defence and other areas, and courses at CIT. It is really varied, depending on the needs of the students. There is an important role for careers based activities, such as work experience,

to feed into how young people understand what their post-school pathway might be. The career practitioners play a really important role. They help to facilitate students participation in work experience or they work with another member of staff who coordinates that. They work hand-in-hand to provide advice to young people to make those choices.

MISS NUTTALL: Could you speak a bit to their value, especially in years 7 to 10? One of the big things we have heard is subject selection and understanding, making the link between the subjects that they study in high school and want to study in college and where that will take them in life. Could you speak a bit to that as well?

Mr Edwards: Probably only to the fact that young people—and I have several of them at home—sometimes do not know what they want to do post school. So keeping students' options open and giving students the opportunity to explore different things is really important, especially in career related activities such as work experience. Work experience can help young people understand or discover a passion they might have for the future, but it can also help confirm an area of employment that they do not want to pursue.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you. What is their role in the whole-school approach to career guidance? How do they fit into that model?

Mr Edwards: What I have seen in my experience as a principal is that they play a key role in supporting general teachers around what is available—what opportunities come up for students and things that young people should be aware of, and then they communicate that to not only the staff but also the broader school community. That happens fairly consistently across our public schools, in different ways.

MISS NUTTALL: That sounds like they play a quite critical role in the whole-school approach. What happens when you do not have a career practitioner to deliver that whole-school approach? I appreciate that you have spoken to the curriculum side of that, but, when it comes to engaging with the school community and identifying kids who might be struggling or might be experiencing disadvantage, who does that if a career practitioner does not?

Ms Wood: I think Mr Edwards spoke about the role that teachers play in pastoral care. They have an ongoing relationship with students, independent of the subjects that they take, and have regular check-ins. There are different people in a school who will have knowledge and understanding, particularly regarding students who maybe need more support or find it harder to engage at school. All schools have a wellbeing team of some kind. How it is constructed looks different in different schools, because they all have a different approach. They might have a school leader or a teacher who leads wellbeing. It depends on their structure. There will be different key people who have that perspective. Particularly if we are talking about high school, they will look at how they support the year 10s to transition—that kind of transition planning. The schools come together in geographical networks, so they look at the pathways for students from the feeder high schools into the college and try to make that transition as effective as they can for young people.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you.

Ms Wood: Chair, I have an update and a correction regarding questions we took earlier. The update is that the transitions dashboard is now available to schools. That is now in operation. The Careers Hub is actually funded and led by Skills Canberra. It is being led by CMTEDD. They are in a consultation stage and we expect to see delivery in mid- to late 2027—the second half of next year.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I want to pick up on the whole-of-school approach—I am sure this is coming up through the bargaining that you have to go through—where teachers feel like, "I have to try to teach the classes and also support kids with their social and emotional wellbeing. There are other kids with complex needs and parents who can be more or less reasonable, based on who they are and also who their kids are, and whatever else. And they also want us to provide career advice." Is it a risk to have a whole-of-school approach, in that some of these key pieces are missed or they feed teacher burnout?

Ms Wood: We are really conscious of teacher workload and what we can do to support sustainable workloads. Going back to Strong Foundations, that is a good example of a consistent approach, consistent tools and consistent resources. It is a step towards reducing that workload, but we are also doing work on our supports for student wellbeing in school—all the layers of what teachers manage. There are high expectations of what we, as a community, expect our teachers to deliver. The scope of that is really broad.

The whole-school approach is not proposed as something that pushes the work out to others. It is what the research says is needed to really flesh out students' understanding of careers, by getting educated about different types of jobs, different kinds of industries, what the world of work is, and all of that kind of thing, as well as getting into the very specific career guidance type conversations that Mr Edwards was talking about—the role that the specialist practitioners play in colleges. They get into that much more specific guidance and connect young people to pathways.

THE CHAIR: Regarding that kind of web, we spoke earlier about the importance at the year 10 point of getting some good guidance. The AEU mentioned it in their submission as well, pointing out that the lack of career guidance in year 10 can lead to students limiting their options without realising they have done so. Do you think this is an area to look at, in terms of some more professional advice being provided to all year 10 students in particular? The petition calls for career guidance for all years 7 to 10 students, but we have heard about the importance for year 10 students especially.

Ms Wood: There is a whole range of professional learning for teachers to participate in, including TQI-accredited learning, to support their students at all levels. The work that schools do on the transition from year 10 to college involves engaging young people in that pathway, and that is maybe an opportunity to have some of those conversations. As we have already talked about, we do not yet have a way to do that consistently, but it is something that schools do actively.

The other thing I would say—and Mr Edwards can correct me if I get this wrong—is that young people make subject choices, but there is quite a lot of opportunity to change them. At the start of college, they may enrol in some subjects, but there is enough

flexibility in the system. If the subjects are actually not for them, they can change their streams, and lots of students do that. In year 10, they are not yet making a forever decision; there is still some flexibility.

THE CHAIR: I suppose the benefits we are hearing about formal guidance or specific expertise is that students are making more decisions with a mind to what they might go after. You touched on that, Mr Edwards—that kids are not thinking about it. I was not thinking about it when I chose what I was going to do in years 11 and 12; it was just about what I reckoned I could do well to get a good ATAR, and then I would figure out what happens next. Then I studied philosophy, so obviously I did not get any career guidance from doing that! It feels like it is a critical intervention point to have some of that formal guidance. I am making a comment instead of asking a question. The question would be around actually asking—whether it is parents or students—what kind of guidance and what kind of support would be helpful for them. Is that something that the directorate is looking at doing—engaging with students or families and asking, "What kind of support do you need?" and at what year, what age group?

Ms Wood: We engage with students around their priorities through the Minister's Student Congress, which happened a couple of months ago. That has school leaders from across the whole spectrum, from primary school and all the way through. They bring their priorities to us. They get together and identify what the priorities are. A group of students plans the congress and the topics that they want to drill into, and some recommendations come out of it. We can provide some advice about what young people have said to us about careers and transitions.

THE CHAIR: That would be great. Thank you.

MISS NUTTALL: A number of submissions to the inquiry highlight the gap in career and transition services for students with complex needs, whether that is disability or based in flexible education. Is any current funding available under the students with a disability loading for post-schooling planning, and does that kick in during high school?

Ms Wood: For 2027, we are moving to the adjustments based resourcing model, regarding the provision of funding for students with disability, and that is moving away from the old approach of diagnosis-driven supports but also eligibility criteria for disability employment programs. That is intended to give schools and students the flexibility to use those funds to meet the range of needs of students in their schools, depending on the level of need. The funding is framed around the NCCD, the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data. Depending on the level of adjustment needed for students, they would have some form of individual learning plan, although it may be called different things in different places, and that will include engagement with students and families about what the students need to engage in learning and be successful.

Certainly, when you are talking about students in year 10 and those going to college, you would expect to see some conversations going to "How do we equip you for the transition that comes next?" Those could be on career interests. Certainly from my visits to our specialist schools that are high schools, a really active part of what they do is planning with young students and families about the post-school transition and finding the right opportunities to connect young people while they are still at school.

MISS NUTTALL: I am really sorry to be a bit monotropic here, but just one more time back to the "whole-school approach". I am trying to look for the history of where this term has been used by the ACT Education Directorate. I am trying to understand the origin. I have found the guidelines for ACT public school career development practitioners. When it refers to the whole-school approach, it refers to something that career practitioners lead. Has the term been used differently since? Is that where the confusion is coming in?

Ms Wood: It probably has been used differently. I think it is probably used differently in research and maybe we have used it in that kind of guide. I don't know how old that guide is. It is probably something we need to take a look at.

MISS NUTTALL: Maybe 2019 or thereabouts. I would love to know—and it is all right if you want to take it on notice—where the Education Directorate's definition of a whole-school approach has being written down before now, just to understand. The reason I am asking is that, if career practitioners are the anchor point in actually delivering the whole-school approach, it is sort of hard to justify not having them in high schools if that is the best practice.

Ms Wood: I am happy to take that on notice.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you; that is really kind.

THE CHAIR: This came up earlier. National data shows First Nation students and also students whose parents did not finish school are less likely, or least likely, to receive careers education. I have asked a little bit about whether some of this comes down to students engaging and parents encouraging students to engage and seek this kind of guidance. How does the current approach, or if there is a planned approach, make sure that we are addressing those gaps—that it is not just the kids who are already thinking about their future getting advice about it?

Ms Wood: I think we rely heavily on educators and practitioners to look for opportunities to engage as many young people as possible. I think we rely heavily on that kind of professional expertise. Inclusion, kind of broadly, is a drive for us, under the Inclusive Education Strategy. I think it also comes back to data dashboards and other things. One of the reasons that we are using the data in this way, including the dashboards, is to make visible where those equity gaps are and where young people from different groups are maybe not getting the same experience of education, the same opportunity or the same outcomes as others. I think that will help us get better visibility.

THE CHAIR: Is that in the existing data that has been gathered, whether through the post-education destination survey or otherwise? Has there been any data that has been collected on who has not received guidance?

Ms Wood: I will take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Broken down by cohorts—or whatever way is appropriate. Thank you.

MISS NUTTALL: The Australian Education Union submission—it is on page three if

anyone has it to hand—suggests that the current practice is that, right now, in order to resource career practitioners, schools must fund the position from the general staffing budget. Does this essentially devolve the responsibility to schools? I know we are sort of moving back towards one system and away from school-based autonomy.

Ms Wood: The nine colleges and two special schools that have the transition and careers officers received an allocation for those roles of $117,000. So they are specifically funded. This is kind of the work that we are in around school resourcing at the moment. Schools have had complete flexibility about how they structure their staffing. We do not have, like, an establishment that says a high school should have these roles and look like this; they are all quite different. It has been left to schools to look at their staffing resources and how they are going to prioritise them. That is how we have some high schools that have part-time or maybe full-time specific practitioners and others that do not—because schools have made different choices over time and kind of address that in different ways.

MISS NUTTALL: Okay. The AEU has spoken publicly about the fact that career practitioners are included in their minimum staffing. What effect do you see that having on public high schools and their ability to deliver career guidance?

Ms Wood: We are working through the minimum staffing claims in bargaining. We are still bargaining. I think we have had some very constructive conversations. Really, it is a focus on ensuring that schools have the staffing they need to deliver the core education requirements—core education is the curriculum—but also those core supports for student wellbeing and other things. We are approaching the conversations in that way We are looking pretty holistically about how we ensure schools have the staffing to meet all those core requirements.

MISS NUTTALL: Awesome. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today. For questions taken on notice, please provide your answers to the committee secretary within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank all our witnesses who assisted us through their experience and knowledge. We also thank Broadcasting, Hansard and the secretariat for their support. If a member wishes to ask questions on notice, please upload them to the parliamentary portal as soon as possible and no later than five business days from today. This hearing is now adjourned. Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 4.26 pm.