

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

(Reference: vocational education and training)

Members:

**MS K MacDONALD (The Chair)
MR S PRATT
MS R DUNDAS**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

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**Secretary to the committee
Mr D Skinner (Ph: 62050137)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

The committee met at 10.05 am.

ROBYN HOUSE was called.

THE CHAIR: Good morning. Robyn, just before you start, I just need to read this out to you. I will also introduce you to Steve Pratt, who is the deputy chair of the committee, and Roslyn Dundas, who is on the committee as well. Of course, you know me, so I won't introduce myself.

You should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal actions, such as being sued for defamation for what you say at this public hearing. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the committee the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter. Having said all that formality, welcome. What would you like to tell us about your perspective of vocational education and training?

Mrs House: Well, yes. My perspective actually comes from the fact that I've been a student, a parent of a student, a teacher in VET, and now I'm an independent education consultant. So I've had an opportunity to look at it from all sides over a long period of time. My particular passion, I guess, is advocating quality vocational education and training and ensuring that we get the best outcomes for the learners. So that's probably what's driven me for the last 20 years that I've been involved in teaching VET.

I'd like to say thank you for the opportunity to talk to you. I think this inquiry is timely. I think over the last five years we've had a lot of changes in VET, and I think it's a good idea to critically reflect on the impact of those changes—what have been the good things and what are the things that perhaps we can improve on. I'd like to preface my remarks by saying that I think the system in the ACT is fundamentally sound. I think there are areas that are at the leading edge. I think there are inspiring and talented practitioners. But I think there are areas that we can actually improve. So the points on the terms of reference that I'd like to speak to are 1 and 2 and some aspects of 4, if that's all right.

My preference always is to look at the positive things and to take a constructive approach. So the way that I've prepared for my contribution to this inquiry is to look at: what do we need, from my perspective; are we achieving that already; and, if not, what are the things that we can do to actually achieve it?

So, under the heading of "The effectiveness of the administration", if our aim in the ACT is to have a coherent implementation of national policy, then I think the following things should happen. We should have efficient, transparent process and procedures. These remarks are prefaced on the basis that TAE is the administrator within the ACT—can I say that?

THE CHAIR: Yes. Can I just see that people are aware that TAE is Training and Adult Education.

Mrs House: Sorry.

THE CHAIR: That's all right.

Mrs House: It used to be OTAE, and if I lapse into OTAE-speak it's because I'm finding it difficult to take off the O.

I think we need clear and consistent information to all of the participants in VET. I think at times we don't have that. I think there are areas where the messages are inconsistent, and sometimes inaccurate, not helpful and confusing to the people who really need that information. So I think that one of the things that we really should be doing is focusing on how to get that consistent, accurate and timely information out to all of the players.

I think we should create and maintain a collaborative culture in which all players are encouraged to participate and contribute and in which their contributions to VET are valued equally. I don't think that happens to the extent that it should at the moment.

I think there are lines of demarcation between providers, across sectors, and between providers and industry. I don't think that's helpful. I think we should actually be focusing on a much more collaborative approach, because all of those players in the VET system have important contributions to make. I think it's unproductive to create barriers, and sometimes the barriers aren't created consciously, but they occur. So I'd like to see TAE encouraging that collegiate culture, and there are a number of ways that they can do that.

I won't go into that because there are a lot of things I want to say, and I'm keeping my eye on the time. I think we should develop and communicate new or changed processes, procedures and guidelines in a timely and inclusive way. When changes occur—and sometimes they're big changes—the information trickles out to some people and comes out in a torrent for others. In both respects people find it very difficult to find their place in those changed systems. So I would really think that that would be one of the important issues—how to get that information out to the people who need it but do it in a timely way and a way that is not going to overwhelm them.

I think we should encourage and facilitate, through realistic resourcing, innovative implementation strategies. When I say “realistic resourcing”, I'm not talking about throwing buckets of money at ideas. I'm talking about resourcing it in a way that can sometimes be cost-neutral but have very positive outcomes for the people involved and for the end users, who are the learners.

I think we should apply an access and equity policy to project funding decisions. In the past, I think some of the projects have been funded on an ad hoc basis, I don't think that they have been targeted to the people who can best deliver outcomes, and I think that some sectors have been excluded. I don't think that's helpful because what you get is sometimes a one-dimensional outcome and often a self-referential process, where people who agree are talking to each other and the people who have a different view are excluded.

I think TAE should adopt a value-for-money rationale to all budget expenditures. I think that that should be one of the things that, as a taxpayer within the ACT community, I'm looking for. I'm not sure that we're actually getting that quite right yet.

I think we should embrace responsible and accountable practices in allocation of project funding. It seems to me that sometimes projects are funded and they begin with a burst of enthusiasm and advertising and promotion and then sometimes wither on the vine, sometimes get sidetracked and quite often fail to produce the outcomes that they should be producing. So I think that's very much a process of monitoring what you commit to and ensuring that TAE, as the holder of the money, actually does get the product that it is buying.

I think TAE should devise and implement strategies to avoid costly and ineffective duplication of effort. I think that's one of the ways that we can actually be smart about resourcing. There are different providers in the ACT who have particular strengths and have built up expertise in particular areas. It would seem to me to make sense to use them as the lead provider in certain areas and in that way spread the resources and the expertise gradually, so that they can mentor and encourage other providers in the particular areas that they're focusing on. At the moment I think too many people are trying to do the same thing and the achievement and the outcomes are not necessarily what we would want for our money.

I think I would like to see a review of the current policy on all senior secondary colleges being individual RTOs. I think the compliance costs under the new AQTF standards will continue to be prohibitive. I think it will continue to be a drain on the resources of the people in the schools and colleges and in TAE generally, and on the education budget for the ACT. I'm not sure that it actually achieves a positive outcome.

THE CHAIR: Having said that, can you just explain what the AQTF is?

Mrs House: Sorry, yes, I beg your pardon. It is Australian Quality Training Framework, and in June 2001 new standards for registered training organisations were implemented at a national level and those standards, quite rightly, require stringent compliance for all RTOs. It would seem to me that to expect each school that is involved in VET and each college that is delivering VET to be an RTO and to undergo the process that goes with meeting those standards is asking too much. I think the quality of their VET delivery will be diminished if they have to focus so much of their time, attention and resources on the compliance. I really think it would be best if the department was the RTO and the department was the one that actually was required to meet the compliance requirements of the AQTF standards.

In other states I understand that's happening. I was talking to someone from South Australia who said that the idea of individual senior secondary colleges being individual RTOs had been canvassed there and was rejected on the basis of the cost and the imposition of time and resources, and all of those things. I really think it would be much better for all of the people concerned if the time and energy could be devoted to the actual delivery of the VET programs rather than the compliance. People who have been involved in preparing for audits under the new compliance regime will tell you that it's a very demanding and time-intensive process.

What else? I think TAE should develop systems and procedures that enhance access to information through all communication media. That means the website, the phones, the people. I think the website is difficult to work your way around. To actually make

a telephone call to TAE is very difficult unless you know the direct number of the person that you want to speak to. In many cases I've been referred to the website to get a telephone number, and I think that's inappropriate. Some people in TAE are fabulous and responsive and helpful and supportive, and others make it very difficult for people in the system to feel comfortable about seeking advice or information. So I think that that's one of the areas that I'd like to see improved.

To achieve all of this, I think TAE needs to be well resourced, not necessarily additionally funded, and charged with leading the way, not necessarily being just the regulator but the leader in delivering quality VET outcomes in a climate that encourages, values and recognises innovation, collaboration and achievement. In some respects TAE is doing those things. In terms of the training awards, I think that happens. I suspect it probably costs a lot of money for those awards and I wonder whether we get value for money from them. But I think they're an important thing to do. But they shouldn't be the only way that innovation and achievement is recognised within the ACT.

On the subject of promotion of VET, again I think this is a challenge because you're trying to deliver messages to a range of stakeholders who have different needs and wish to access their information in different ways. So I think what's needed here is a comprehensive communication strategy with clearly stated goals, clearly defined outcomes, including an evaluation strategy which tells us whether we've actually achieved what we set out to do or not, and review and reporting mechanisms that are disseminated to the VET audience.

Again, I think we should be talking about value for money, and that means using scarce resources wisely and well. I think we need to avoid piecemeal, unfocused, one-off promotional activities that tend to dilute the message. I think there should be careful consideration of how national initiatives fit into the ACT, both as a broad implementation requirement and also as part of the whole of the promotion strategy that TAE is endeavouring to develop.

I think the promotion policy and implementation should be predicated on targeted, clear and simple messages, based on—this takes me back to my communication teacher days—the simple principles of: who is the receiver, what is the purpose, what is the context? Promotion is not and should not be about forests forgone. It shouldn't be quantities of glossy brochures that don't hit the mark, or sit in boxes, never to be sighted by the people who would really value them. It's not about all-purpose, dense booklets that make trying to work your way through them impossible and turn people off. It's not about information overload—or, alternatively, the information desert, where no information reaches the people who most need it.

I think they should be aiming to deliver consistent messages clearly and effectively through all their channels. The purpose should be to reach the people who need to know, and the people whose support is critical to the success of VET in the ACT. I think the promotion strategy should be efficient. It should involve efficient, cost-effective networking strategies that are not depending on funding or individuals to be sustaining. Too often we have projects that are funded that are wonderful and when the funding runs out they die—or, when the champion who has been leading the project moves on, no-one is there to carry it on.

I think current promotion strategies should be rigorously evaluated against specified criteria to determine their effectiveness and their continuation. We should be aiming for continuous improvement always. I'm thinking of the provider forums. I think that I have been to some that have been very useful and informative. It seems to me that the same people go all the time, so we're not tapping into the people who need to be brought into the information circle. We had a series of breakfasts when training packages were being implemented and they were very well received and found to be very useful. But they've withered on the vine. We have workshops on various specific issues. Sometimes they are very productive and constructive and other times they're not. The consistent concern I have is that the same faces are always there and we're not bringing the new players in. I think that that's one of the big challenges.

So, in summary, on promotion, I think the challenge is to create and nurture a community of VET stakeholders that is self-sustaining in the medium to long term. It needs to facilitate open and constructive dialogue, with genuine respect for all players. They should be able to learn about each other's roles, concerns and ideas and to have those taken on board. It should be based on the assumption that all have a role to play in the promotion of VET, especially the learners. I think they are the hidden people in all of this. We don't go to the learners to find out what worked for them, what do they want, what do they need, what do they think about their experience of VET? I think they are actually the untapped resource.

I won't be able to talk about the other things that I wanted to discuss, but in my remaining five minutes I would simply say that I think one of the most important issues for teachers is the issue of professional development. I would like to see a professional development strategy that is premised on action research, action learning, communities of practice, shared knowledge, cost-neutral activities that encompass mentoring, shadowing, pairing with others—and that taps into the areas that have the expertise. Can I say the public provider in the ACT has tremendous amounts of expertise. I think that one of the ways that teachers of VET in schools could feel more confident about what they're doing is if there were some relationships or partnering set up between those teachers in the public provider, who have been through all of these things before and have learned what works and what doesn't, and teachers in VET in schools who are really struggling to fit VET into an already crowded program. It's not that they don't value it or see its worth. It's just that they're trying to fit it in and it's not easy to do.

So, in summary, I would like to propose four initiatives for consideration. Firstly, refocus TAE's role in VET implementation, to be the leader, innovator and facilitator, not just the regulator. Ensure that TAE is well resourced, and then expect quality outcomes. The professional development policy should be founded on communities of practice—and that's an inclusive process, not an exclusive process. It should focus on action research and action learning, change management and cross-sectoral linkages, and there should be an open and outward-looking focus. There should be a coherent, integrated communication and promotion strategy with clearly-defined charters. Thank you. If there's anything else you would like to ask, please do so.

THE CHAIR: Before we go to questions, there are a few things that you haven't been able to get to, so it might be good if you could actually put those in writing for the committee.

Mrs House: I will, yes.

THE CHAIR: That would be great.

Mrs House: They were really about the role of the ITABs, which I feel some degree of concern about, and the cross-sectoral linkages. Now that we've got schools, TAFE and universities all in the VET game, I think that we need to really take a serious look at how we actually incorporate those three sectors, so that we're not duplicating and that we're learning the best of all of those things.

THE CHAIR: For the record, because the record can't read my brain—and I do know about this—what's your experience in working in across those different sectors?

Mrs House: Sorry. My main experience is working in TAFE. But, while I was doing that, certainly in recent years, I've been involved in working with teachers in the schools who are implementing VET. In my current role as an education consultant I'm working with the university sector in implementing VET programs.

THE CHAIR: You've done that with the University of Canberra and UNE, isn't it?

Mrs House: No, not UNE, just the University of Canberra. I think that that's another issue of being inclusive and tapping into the expertise and the talents of all of the people and not being dismissive because they're either new players in the game or they're outside of our traditional domain. I think we can learn a lot from the other sectors—speaking as a TAFEy.

MR PRATT: Do you have a comment to make about the relative capabilities of schools to undertake VET versus TAFE? Where do you think the division of responsibility ought to be—going back to your comment earlier about duplication?

Mrs House: I think that the schools offer tremendous opportunities for students who do not want to follow an academic pathway, and I think those students can be prepared, and well prepared, by undertaking some certificate 1 or certificate 2 level courses that can then prepare them for their pathway and articulation to TAFE for their higher level courses. Hopefully TAFE will then be able to build articulation pathways into university for the students who decide, after they've had this experience of learning in a VET environment, that university may be the place they want to be.

I think the other thing I'd like to say is that it needs to be coordinated and the process of delivering VET in schools needs to be carefully thought through so that it's not a hit-and-miss affair where everyone's trying to do a little bit of something. I think there are some colleges in the ACT that have a history of VET delivery and have expertise in particular industry sectors, and I think they're the ones that should be the lead agencies, if you like.

I think there is a place for VET in schools. I think it offers students another choice. I've heard so many good news stories about students experiencing VET in schools that you would never advocate taking it out. But I do think it needs to be targeted. It needs to be linked to what the other sectors are doing.

MS DUNDAS: I know you didn't get to it in your presentation, but you spoke a lot about the need for cohesion and greater communication. What role do you see the ITABs having in terms communication structures?

Mrs House: I have real concerns that, at a time when the national agenda is encouraging partnerships between providers and industry, we're taking out that critical link. I know that there are some justified criticisms of ITABs or the role that they play. I think that's more about the history of how ITABs were set up, and I think it's about a lack of consistency in identifying their roles and responsibilities. But to me they have a critical role to play, because where do the people go to get the information they need and the support they need to embark on vocational education and training, and implementation of training packages, from the industry perspective?

So yes, I think that, rather than taking them out at the state level, we could perhaps critically reflect on the role that we want them to play and then set up the framework that allows them to do that. But, again, it's about getting value for money. So don't resource and fund ITABs just because they've always been funded, but look at what they can offer and what their industry sector is and look how they relate to what's happening in the broader environment of the ACT. So what are the priority areas for the ACT, and then where are the industry advisory bodies going to fit into that? It could be amalgamation; it could be strategic alliances; it could be a range of ways that we can retain the role that they play, but using the resources more wisely.

MR PRATT: I would like to go back to your earlier comment about compliance, that TAE shouldn't focus on whether it is checking compliance; its focus and energy should be on how RTOs deliver. There's probably a quite obvious answer that I can't see but, just to fill in some gaps, how would that compliance be better checked?

Mrs House: I'm not saying that they shouldn't be doing it; it's part of their role.

MR PRATT: So it is still part of their role?

Mrs House: I would have to say—and this is remiss of me because I wanted to say this at the beginning—one of the bouquets that I think TAE deserves is for its implementation of the audit process for the new standards for RTOs. I think it's one of the most effective implementation strategies that they've put out. I think it had a lot of thought put into it. I don't know what its cost was; I have no idea. But it seems to me that it's an excellent model that could be transported to other states. I don't think other states are doing it quite as well. So I think the role of the monitor of the compliance against the RTO standards is still an important role, as is the accreditation of courses and qualifications. But I think the perception is that that's what its role is—to be the regulator—and what I'm saying is that I think they should broaden out their role to be the leader, the facilitator, the innovator, and to get the message out to people so that the perception changes.

THE CHAIR: I don't need to ask questions. Thank you very much for your time. If you could give that written stuff, which you didn't get a chance to tell us about, to David, that would be great.

Mrs House: Thank you.

VINCE BALL was called.

THE CHAIR: To save time, you heard me reading the screed before about the obligations and responsibilities that privilege gives you before the committee. For the sake of introduction, please state for the record your name and the organisation you are from.

Mr Ball: Vince Ball, Construction Industry Training Council. Thank you for the opportunity to represent the industry in a forum like this. Before I go into that, I know that Robyn came up with bouquets for TAE, particularly ARC, which is the Accreditation Registration Council, in its implementation of the audits of various RTOs. It is a national leader and it is the only state or territory training organisation that has involved ITABs or industry people as part of the process. It actually trained and qualified all the industry people to be part of that process. It is the only one in Australia doing it and I think that that is why it has been very successful in its implementation. I am just agreeing with Robyn. Sometimes you can give bouquets out.

I have been given the charter of representing the industry this morning. The industry, when it comes down to VET and to all training issues, is represented by the Construction Industry Training Council.

MS DUNDAS: Can I just clarify that? Are you talking about the construction industry or are you talking about the ITAB industry?

Mr Ball: No, the Construction Industry Training Council is the ITAB.

MS DUNDAS: You were talking about the industry and I just wanted to clarify which one.

Mr Ball: It is the building and construction industry. One of the areas is, hopefully, clarified. There is some confusion with all Assembly members and a lot of the people in the education bureaucracy about the different roles of the Construction Industry Training Council and the ACT training fund board. There are significant differences under the legislation for the training fund board and some confusion does arise, especially when it comes to money to fund various activities for the ITAB or the council. By legislation, the council cannot access the fund, so it is not a cash cow for the Construction Industry Training Council.

We can compete and provide them with services, but we do not have direct access to the fund because the fund issues grants for training and, in some particular needs, access and equity, but that is built quite clearly into the legislation. But there is some confusion and today certainly provides for the opportunity to clarify that. The Construction Industry Training Council is represented by all the associations of employer groups, plus employee groups, plus CIT itself within the education, and it really sees itself as the voice on policy for all education matters, particularly for VET in the ACT.

As to a couple of areas that I have written about, I would like to go specifically through my response to the inquiry to clarify some of the wording that I have put in there so that you will have a clearer understanding of where we are coming from as an industry.

Talking about the effectiveness of the administration and promotion of vocational education and training in the ACT from an industry point of view—once again, if you don't mind, the industry will just be the building and construction industry—I refer to the uncohesive and fragmented approach, especially to funding, within this industry. We feel that, in particular, TAE is unable to cope with the provision of funding to areas or projects that have innovative and positive educational outcomes that are different from the normal day-to-day ones.

As an industry, we feel that there is very little due diligence when it comes to funding or the operation or the way the funding is done within TAE. For example, if you put in a proposal for project funds, you don't even get an acknowledgment that it has been received, or you might get a phone call and be told, "Why don't you go to the fund?" It is not done very professionally and we feel that that is a particular area of TAE that needs significant improvement, especially with the significant amount of funding that actually goes out of there. There is really very little transparency, there is very little communication and, even though there is no tangible evidence, it certainly appears that you will get funding if you know the right people.

I have an example of that and I particularly put it in because we are an industry of great passion and we have really been at the forefront, particularly in the ACT, of a number of innovative ideas. The program that we are currently running, and the council has been the driving force behind it, for kids at risk at Ginninderra High School has been appallingly handled by TAE. I spent two days with the previous senior manager working on innovation, whether it could be funded, whatever. We don't know where the various buckets of money are in TAE, nor should we know, but we had an innovative project, sat down for nearly two days and worked through all the issues because there were actually six significant players in this project.

MS DUNDAS: Is this the grapes project?

Mr Ball: This is the grapes project. Six. Everyone talks about four, but there were six. People tend to forget the students, parents and guardians. But you have the ACT Chamber of Commerce and Ginninderra High School itself and the whole education system within the schools. You have got MBA group training, who actually are the employers and are the trainers and you have got the council. But what we knew about this innovative idea for these particular kids was that it would not work if there wasn't a safety net behind them, which is the mentoring, the facilitation, the coaching—all these sorts of things—from an independent body, and that is where the council came into it.

That was agreed for all the funding for the mentoring program, plus user-choice funding. All along we realised they could not achieve certificate 2, so it was to be partially funded from the user-choice bucket. Because they were significant kids at risk, TAE were going to fund from a different area, but at the end of the day, from industry's point of view, it was the equivalent of user-choice money for each of the students. We started with 12, but the program was always designed for 10. We always knew that the program would end up with 10, as there would be a couple of drop-outs. That was our expectation.

We are three-quarters of the way through the program. MBA have not received a cent, to my knowledge. TAE have told us that they will not fund the mentoring, coaching, facilitation process, and they are only funding half of the user-choice to MBA because

the outcome is certificate 1. But that is not even in writing. That is what I am saying about due diligence. For an organisation that funds significant amounts of money, there is no process in place, or it is not visible, which can become quite frustrating, I think, for innovation. That is just an example. We certainly see that as one of the main areas in which we, as an industry, can make a huge contribution to VET. As I go through, that will become clearer because of the issues that we are having in trying to get trades people or people into trades. That is an issue nationally, but it is also a significant issue in the ACT.

Robyn was talking about the AQTF audits. They are a requirement for all RTOs, but nothing has been built into the system for the tremendous amount of additional work that all RTOs have to go through to get ready for the audits. They should do it as part of good business practice, but at the end of the day it has been overlooked as part of this relaunch, if you like, against those audit processes. I don't think that that has been thought through. It has from ARC's point of view, but for the individual RTOs the considerable effort that is required to bring that up to speed may not have been thought through.

One of the main areas on which I can express an industry point of view today is not an ACT issue; it is more of a federal issue. Everything is now called new apprenticeships. Not only this industry but several other industries look on the traditional apprentices as new apprentices. We can talk about carpenters. I think that they should not be called new apprentices. Apprenticeships go back a few thousand years. I won't bring up some of the other things, but a carpenter is a typical example of what is now called a new apprentice.

The funding arrangements nationally for new apprenticeships versus trainees are just unbelievable. A new apprenticeship or a traditional apprenticeship, even though it is competency based, still has a time component, which is three to four years under a contract of training, and that hasn't changed. A trainee can move from certificate 2 and complete certificate 2 and certificate 3 in some of the areas in 12 months. My executive council/board asked me to do some preliminary figures and examples on the funding issues because there is a difference again if those apprentices or trainees happen to be employed by a group training company, because they don't get a completion grant.

The funding issues are quite significant. I have actually done a table here, if you would like to see it. It was done as an example for my board, but it creates a picture of some of the issues that we have within the industry on a traditional apprenticeship versus a trainee, and they are significant. That is a big issue for us in trying to recruit apprentices in our industry. The training fund board has made a significant contribution to supporting employers to take on trades in which we just can't recruit, like bricklayers and hard plasterers. It is very hard to get trades people in them.

THE CHAIR: When you say that it is hard to get the trades people, do you mean that it is hard to get the experienced trades people to actually show them?

Mr Ball: Yes, to actually get them to take up a trade. There are significant issues with that as well. It is a very tough industry physically, and I am not talking about the others. The time, the weather, the conditions, the hours of work—it is very tough physically. Do you know that those kids only get \$6 an hour in their first 12 months? If they go to McDonald's they get \$12 an hour. These are the sorts of things that we are trying to

balance as an industry to get people in there. Maybe we as an industry need to be more innovative and look at different ways, which is not a government responsibility. I am just saying that these are the significant issues that we need to work with. That is why we need to work and are quite passionate about working with the schools, and are trying to do that.

One of the other areas to clearly understand—and, once again, this goes back to TAE—is that a lot of the promotion work and the sorts of expectations are that all industries are the same. It is quite interesting just to listen to various conversations down that path. If I could just clarify that: the people who train apprentices in our industry are usually one-on-one small businesses, they are subbies. Those subbies work on faxes and mobiles, yet everything is driven down a computer, the internet, and more and more is being done on that, all the promotional work. We have an industry that doesn't use it because the employers of apprentices in our industry, once again, are the small subbies and they are out there working. We have evidence to say that the failure of a lot of the small businesses and subbies is usually due to the breakdown of a relationship, because the partner does all the bookwork and all the work at home. There is tangible evidence to support that. We have these people on faxes and mobiles, yet all the information is on the internet. That is another issue that people are not clearly understanding within the industry.

Industries are not all the same; they are significantly different. One of the other areas that are significantly different for this industry is that, for the training of apprentices, the user-choice money is basically fixed. But we have an industry in which the cost of material for training apprentices is horrendous. For example, a motor mechanic will pull a motor down 10 times, but it will be the same motor. If you build a wall with some timber, paint a wall, tile a wall or put some bricks up, you can't reuse the material. The cost of material for training in our industry in every sector is horrendous because we can't reuse the material. In most other industries the trainees and apprentices can reuse nearly all their training resources. I have worked very hard with TAE. I have sat down and said, "Please give the industry some flexibility and recognise the actual cost of training." That is not built into user-choice funding, but it is significant.

A lot of the work that we do in the college system is based on the school-based new apprenticeship programs. This industry, through both group training companies, actually provides 20 per cent of the training of all SNAPS in the ACT and that will increase significantly next year. Of those students who go through, 30 per cent usually elect to take on an apprenticeship, but from the industry's perspective, and we also have hard evidence, the worth of that training to the students, even if they don't elect to go down the path of picking up an apprenticeship in this industry and decide to go to university or take another career, is significantly enhanced by the experience and discipline that they have had to go through in the structured, school-based program.

Once again, that is totally different from the other industries in the way they run those programs. The students have to work with an employer in their school holidays and they are actually placed in winter and summer, so they are exposed to all the elements, and they do start at 6 o'clock in the morning, so they have got all the disciplines of a work placement, but it is done over a two to three-week bloc, it is not done one day a week, so they are actually there for that time. We are getting fabulous outcomes, even in other areas. We hope to increase those numbers significantly next year.

One of the issues is work placement for one day or four or five days per year. The industry is certainly refocusing and saying that there is really no value added by our industry doing that, so we are looking at that differently.

Another area that the industry is looking at—it has never been looked at before—is the issue for a lot of the employers of the \$6 an hour payment not only to students from school but also people in the workforce who deliberately want to make a career change. Some people may be half-way through uni and want to come back and do more of the traditional trades, and we are experiencing that. How can we actually get those people to come into the industry and take up a trade when they have adult financial responsibilities and cannot survive on \$6 an hour? The industry nationally, and this is being driven from Canberra, is looking at how Newstart could be used to complement wages as part of that employment. The industry is going down the path of recognising all those issues. The ACT is a significant force behind that and is the major player in that regard.

Another area that this industry is looking at—and I think that this is an excellent forum to discuss it as it might create some thinking—is that, as part of the traditional apprenticeship, why can't those apprentices complete their year 12 as part of their apprenticeship? Why can't that be achievable? The industry, especially the construction industry and the utilities industry, is working very hard to see how we can actually implement that or bring that into vogue. It is a reversal of the traditional way we have done things. If a year 11 student wants to leave school at that time and take up one of the apprenticeships, why can't the student complete year 12 in the process as part of that apprenticeship?

THE CHAIR: In line with that, what do you feel would need to be done to make it possible within the college sector, considering that within most colleges to complete year 12 you have to do four or five streams, which would impact on doing the apprenticeship?

Mr Ball: From an industry point of view and a personal point of view, I think that we would need, whether it would be in TAE, which would also embrace some of the college people or systems, a small unit for innovation—not only for this industry, but for a number of industries; but they shouldn't be bureaucrats. They should be a mix of industry, college, teachers and business. There needs to be a right mix for that innovative group to pull that group together and work through the issues.

At the end of the day, the system may not allow that in one or two years, but there should be a long-term innovative approach. We know that all kids don't go to university when they finish year 12. How can we be innovative about supporting those students to do a number of things throughout their career? Even in year 10, how can we complement the ongoing learning of life skills by the students? I am a plumber, drainer and gasfitter. Most trades people move on but always have those skills that they take through with them.

MS DUNDAS: In your written submission you talk about the need to centralise a number of functions currently performed across a number of departments and agencies.

Mr Ball: Yes.

MS DUNDAS: Can you explain to me what functions you are talking about? Is it a problem of the state system versus the national system, or are there problems across the state system that we can address?

Mr Ball: One of the areas of concern to the industry that is continually voiced, particularly at industry meetings, is that VET funding is fragmented. There is a real perception of that. They are saying that it should be consolidated, that there should be clear, transparent processes in place for any funding that is issued, either in projects or for whatever. There is also federal money that does come in. Previously, it was ANTA money. Where does that go? Where is the visibility of that? How is it managed? What is the process?

But there are also a number of innovative ideas, once again. The Chief Minister's Department currently has a program which will have a VET program for kids at risk. Why is that funding sitting there, not within the innovative group, within responsibility for training? Those are the sorts of questions that are being asked within this industry. Why is it fragmented? It is not a criticism that it is not being done. Our industry is one that is hammered continually about due diligence, risk management and transparency in all aspects. We are saying, "Why aren't the training and funding areas, particularly in VET, more visible down that path as well?"

The other significant issue that we need to address, and TAE has certainly walked away from, is that we now know that there are a significant number of apprentices working on ABN numbers. The issue for that is: at the end of it, how are they going to get the qualification? That is starting to surface now. I have put a number of proposals to TAE to work through that.

THE CHAIR: I'm sorry, are they working without or with?

Mr Ball: With. I think that that is quite legal, but the issue is that it is not being monitored. Because the old apprenticeship inspectors that used to make sure—I am not saying "police the legislation", but to make sure—that people weren't working outside of the legislation have gone, it is quite clear now that that is not even being monitored. It is starting to become a concern. We don't know how big a concern it is going to be, but we do know that significant numbers are working on ABN numbers. They pay their own leave, they pay for their own time to go to tech and they go through CIT. CIT do get a signature on a training agreement. Therefore, they get the user-choice funding. But where is the monitoring? They only do that once. We in the industry see this as a significant issue for the apprentices that are not going to get a qualification after four years, because they haven't known.

I am very conscious of the time. The final point that I would like to put forward is that significant efforts have gone into SNAPS programs and school-based programs, but I have never seen any research undertaken about students who have participated in any of these programs. There are no qualitative evaluations, if you like. What has been the worth of that? Do we need to move? If it is being done, it has never been publicised. A significant investment has gone in there, but what are the outcomes? From a federal perspective, you read in the papers that there are 350,000 people in training within the VET programs. What are the qualitative outcomes of that? We don't know. Has it all been worth while? Our focus is quite clearly on the ACT and, as an industry,

we want to support and enhance all that for anyone who participates in it. But not only in our industry. We make a significant contribution to other industries as well. I am very conscious of the time.

THE CHAIR: Do you want to ask a couple of questions?

MR PRATT: Yes. Vince, if I could just clarify your comments of five minutes ago about the college achievers, were you wondering whether the programs could take a student through the full qualification within the college framework or were you only looking at certificate 2 or 3?

Mr Ball: Certificate 2. I have been involved in development from day one. The training is not about the knowledge underpinning; it is also about the experience, and it is very difficult to get life experiences that you can train in a short period of time. Sometimes, that is missed within some of the programs which say, “Yes, we can do this in 18 months and someone will come out with certificate 3.” The reality is that there are no life skills attached to that in that short period. I think that is the beauty of most of the industries. Certificate 2, structured with the experience, especially the way our industry does it. The students—they are not always kids—have to do it in their own time, in their school holidays. They work 12 weeks on the job. But at the end of it, if you look at those programs combined with the traditional areas, you do have a training equity imbalance. We can accept that up to level 2, but the industry would not accept it above that.

THE CHAIR: Nothing has changed.

Mr Ball: No. But it is a very passionate industry, especially when it comes to training. I think you are well aware of that. It is also very innovative and not frightened to move outside of the box, but it does become very frustrated if the appropriate transparency, due diligence and process are not in place. I tend to agree.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, Vince.

Mr Ball: Thank you very much for your time.

KIM SATTLER was called.

THE CHAIR: Welcome Kim. This is Steve Pratt and this is Roslyn Dundas. Steve is deputy chair and Roslyn is on the committee. I am the chair. You know me, of course. I will not introduce myself. I will read this information for witnesses.

You should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections, but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal action, such as being sued for defamation for what you say at this public hearing. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the committee the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter. For the record, when you begin please state your name and the capacity in which you appear.

Ms Sattler: My name is Kim Sattler and I am the executive director of an organisation called Community Education and Training, a not-for-profit RTO. It was originally set up by youth workers in the ACT, in 1989, and became an RTO in 1995. Our organisation is a bit of a curious beast. There are not very many of us in the organisation, and we predominantly provide training in the community services industry.

We train mainly from the community services training package, but we also have a very big bank of other resources that we have developed. We developed the first youth work traineeship in Australia, and we also did the first Aboriginal youth work traineeship trial.

I have had significant involvement with the community sector as a person who ran services in the youth sector. I am going to talk about my concerns about young people, because I still am very passionate about what is not happening for a lot of young people. I will also talk about what is happening in the community services industry.

One paper that I make reference to in my submission is written by Richard Curtain, who is a Victorian consultant. He does quite a lot of consultancy work on vocational education, and looks at the school-to-work transition. He has worked for NCVET and a number of the other large national VET bodies. He wrote a paper last year called *How young people are faring 2001: learning, work and in between*, and I have a very poor photocopy to give you. If it is too bad, I will have to find another one.

MS DUNDAS: I think we received a copy of that paper when you sent in your submission.

Ms Sattler: Okay, you probably have a better copy. My photocopier has very variable days. The key statistic for the ACT to which I draw your attention is on page six. It is in table three, which describes the proportion of young people aged 15 to 19 years not in full-time education or full-time work for each state or territory. It compares figures for May 1999 and 2001. If you look at the ACT, you will see that the proportion of our young people in that category went from 8.5 per cent to 17.6 per cent. The figure doubled. It was by far the largest increase of any state or territory.

I think that is a really disturbing statistic. What it says is that, at any point in time, we are relegating at least a third of our young people to unemployment as they leave compulsory secondary education, and at least another 20 per cent to part-time work or part-time education. A lot of those young people do not want only the option of part-time work or part-time education. It is just that they cannot get full-time places, because they cannot afford to access them.

Because of the nature of the casualisation of work, we have thousands of young people out there working in the retail industry who are trying to live on 12 or 15 hours work a week. If you talk to all those young people working in the Coles, the Woolworths, the Clints and the Go-Los, and ask them how many hours a week they are working and how much they are earning, you will be shocked.

What this means is that those young people cannot leave home, they cannot access any other income support from the federal government, and they cannot gain independent accommodation because they do not earn enough money to pay the sorts of bills you have to pay to move into your own accommodation. When we look at the 20 to 24 cohort, and at how many of those are long-term unemployed, we should remember that they were the previous group who are now in this cohort.

What we are doing is creating an entire generation of young people whose major expectation is part-time work and part-time study. That really disturbs me because what we are actually doing is reducing our ability to have those young people engaged fully in the ACT community, and particularly fully engaged in the labour market. They just cannot get their feet in the door. We know that a lot more of them would like to have full-time places at CIT. There are not enough places available for the number of people who want to get in.

I compete with CIT in the community services industry and I am a very fierce competitor. Our organisation was formed because the nature of the work of people in our industry has changed dramatically in the last 10 years. I have worked in this industry for 25 years and I have never experienced the level of social problems that we are seeing at the moment.

The course of mine that has been most requested by community workers in the last three years is without a doubt the one about how to deal with angry, aggressive and violent clients across the counter. Agencies where staff are working at an open-access counter, where somebody can walk straight in off the street—and I am talking about organisations ranging from the large community services in the ACT, at Belconnen and Woden, right down to Legal Aid—are all requesting this kind of training. The Canberra Connect staff are also requesting this kind of training.

That is because people are so desperate to get help, and they are often finding it very difficult to know how to access the right kind of help. They go in wherever they can pin somebody down and just yell at them, or cause a stir so that somebody will give them attention. It is true to say that a lot of these people may have significant mental health problems, and they are probably homeless or experiencing very unstable living situations.

However, this means that the training that we have to deliver to workers in my sector now is much, much more complex, and much denser than that a training package can offer them. I am a great supporter of training packages. I think they have done a lot to create more training opportunities. In my industry, such packages have meant that thousands more workers have been able to gain a qualification.

However, the reality is that the nature of the work is really almost a thermostat for what is actually happening in our community. I run two programs that target disadvantaged young people. We run an outreach literacy program for young people under the age of 25, and we deliver that program through youth centres. We have a relationship with youth centres and we send our literacy teacher out to where the young people are. We have better success at delivering outcomes to that group of young people than any other literacy provider that I am aware of in the ACT.

How do I know this? Because half way through each funding year, I am asked whether I could pick up places that have not been filled by other providers, and whether I could give them a short program for the rest of the year. We are not even scratching the surface. I do not even have to advertise to fill those places every year. I fill 30 of them every year. I continue to keep some students from the previous year, because there is nowhere to which I can channel a lot of those young people. Their literacy level is not sufficient, even after one year's support, for them to be able to access a TAFE course, for example, or a traineeship. Most traineeships assume a level of literacy and numeracy higher than that of year 12.

I also run another program which is called the Pathways indigenous program. It targets indigenous young people coming out of custody, those who are on community service orders, or those who are at risk in any other way. Nearly every single one of those young people is not engaged in the education system, and has not been for some time.

Our indigenous outcomes are appalling. Of all the states and territories that could be providing good models, only the ACT is not. We are still not. As a youth worker, I am seeing the siblings of the kids I worked with five years ago. I am seeing all their relatives come along in the next half generation. We can all count how many of them are going on to year 12 on maybe two hands, if we are lucky.

Obviously, something is not working. I guess that is my point. I do not want to concentrate only on the fact that the system is not working, because I really want to explore some ways in which it can be made to work. Traineeships and apprenticeships are seen as the panacea, but the reality is that they are not. We can't actually convince a lot of employers that they are a beneficial thing. We are not getting the numbers for Skills 500, even with the support of the extra ACT government subsidy. There has to be a reason for that.

We are not creating any full-time entry-level positions, even within ACT government. If you are giving career counselling advice now, you cannot tell young people in year 12 to try to get into the public sector. The only way they can get in is as a graduate, now. If the ACT government is not taking on any trainees and apprentices, and many other industries are struggling to take them on, then where are these entry-level positions going to come from?

In my sector, the community services industry, I have probably had a debate with the traineeship and apprenticeship system for about six years, about its complete lack of promotion in my industry. Most of the employers in my industry have very little understanding of the traineeship and apprenticeship system. They will tell clients that, as job network providers, they might see how to access it, but they do not employ anybody under that system. I am talking about quite large employing organisations, who employ upwards of 300 people. Very few of those large employing organisations actually employ trainees or apprentices.

There is a very good reason why they don't. In the non-government community sector there is no fat. You cannot create a position. You might get a \$4,000 subsidy from the federal government to take on a trainee or apprentice, but where are you going to find the other \$14,000 to \$20,000 to pay the wage? What we have been saying in our industry is that we need a different kind of promotion. We need the ability to share trainees between a number of employers. We need much better incentives for our employers to even explore the traineeship and apprenticeship system.

The number of agencies with which you have to negotiate and the paperwork for setting up a traineeship are nightmares. Although there are a few good sticks out there who will just do it again and again, if employers have done it once, a lot of them think once bitten, twice shy. They just will not do it again.

As just one part of that process—it might be as a chosen registered training provider—we have enormous trouble dealing with those other arms, the NAC or the employer. I have people in my industry who were signed up as trainees, who are working less than 10 hours a week, and are being paid less than 10 hours a week. How can that happen? I think the colleague before me said it is not monitored. That is illegal under the system. It is not supposed to happen. It does happen.

TAE had to send out a general notice to employers to tell them that they could not have casual trainees, but that people could be permanent part-time employees and they may be able to access a traineeship. That does not mean an on-call casual.

There is a huge gulf between employers' understanding of the way they employ people and the way the traineeship and apprenticeship system actually intersects with that. I think my industry is a classic example. We have very low uptake. The areas that take on trainees include aged care. That is because there is a critical shortage in that industry because it is growing very quickly. In the disability sector, which has been very controversial in the last couple of years, they are almost out in the streets begging people to come into the industry. Although they have increased the number of traineeship places, we could triple them and still not meet the demand.

I think that the whole way in which we look at our labour market is not nearly clever enough. What we do is rely on national data, and we rely on information that is provided on a large-state model. We do not look at our own labour market very critically. We are never going to solve the problems of young people's access to the labour market unless we look here. At the current moment, most of them cannot afford to leave Canberra, so they cannot even consider going to another labour market unless their families support them to leave.

We are relegating them to long-term unemployment or long-term underemployment, and inadequate access to real training for quite a long period of their lives. We are probably looking at some of those young people being in that place for 10 years. That has huge implications for our tax base, for our revenue base, for our ability to support people who are leaving the work force, for our ability to support those aged care facilities, and for our ability to support community services in general. I have a number of concerns about the long-term impact of not addressing that problem.

I do a lot of work in schools and colleges and, because my organisation is unfunded, I do a lot of that work on a fee-for-service basis. Schools do not pay you to come to do work unless they have reached some kind of crisis point, in my experience. So I do everything from the sex education talk that no-one wants to do, and the drug and alcohol talks that people want to see happen before end of year formals, right through to explaining how to understand the labour market, how to understand the common youth allowance, and how to understand the housing market.

A lot of young people and a lot of their families are living in a time where their knowledge is old and not current. A lot of young people who are going through school at the moment take the information home to their parents, who think that the world is still like it was when they were children. Some of them have updated that knowledge, but most parents find it very confusing working out how to assist young people with making decisions about what courses to do and how much things are going to cost.

People have no idea how much the fees are to do vocational training. Most people think it is free. They still think it is free. Most of the workers who access training with us don't understand that the ACT government subsidises places under the industry training program. It is not promoted. It is not actually put out there in the sector. The only people promoting it are us. When we tell them there is a compulsory \$650 fee to do a certificate 4 course, a lot of workers in our sector find that they have to spend the entire length of the course paying off their student fee.

That leaves me without the income stream that I need to pay my trainers, until the very end of the training delivery. You hope they hang in there and finish the course, and you have to provide an awful lot of support to some people to make sure that they do, because a lot of the people doing my training are working rotating shifts and casual hours. A lot of them are not full time, and they are on low wages. Those who put their hands up to do vocational training are really quite dedicated, and they are doing it to help develop a long-term plan for a career path. If we don't resource a lot of those workers to access training, they will not move, and no entry-level positions will be created at the bottom end of my industry.

For probably six or seven years, I have argued with TAE that the existing workers are the critical group needing training in my industry. You have to pour real resources into training those workers because, if they don't move, there will be no traineeships or apprentices in my industry. There are no vacancies down at the bottom. We lobbied and lobbied and they gave us two qualifications this last year. They gave us aged care and drug and alcohol. Yet, we had a disability inquiry, we had three inquests, we had hundreds of people walk out of the disability industry in the ACT, but did we have any disability worker places funded under existing workers? No.

It is as though the planning process happens over here, and everything else that happens in the ACT happens over here. It is as though we are getting all this information fed down, and we are just following the model of how you analyse your labour market. It took them five years to even recognise that community services was a growth industry.

I have been involved in the VET sector since 1991, and at that point I was involved in developing competency standards for youth workers, and I was an employer in this sector. It has taken a good 10 years to convince the training market that in fact they had a bit of a gold mine over here in community services. If they would just put a little bit of energy into it, they could actually create some entry-level positions. It was a growth industry. You did not have to be a Rhodes scholar to work out it was going to continue to grow. In fact, if you read some really good national analysis, you would have known that, you would have already got that picture.

However, at the beginning of this year, the yearly outlook stated complete surprise that the community services industry was growing. It is growing at a rate of 10.4 per cent. It is right up there with building and construction at the moment, which has always been considered the growth industry, yet it is not getting anything like the resourcing it needs to create more training places.

One of the problems is the way TAE is positioned within the department of education as a very poor cousin. It does not have a lot of say and it does not have a lot of power within the department. It has lost funding at various times. When it does not spend all of its allocation, its allocation is taken back into the bigger department, and that has happened every year that I can remember.

THE CHAIR: I am interested in the comment that you have just made about TAE being the poor cousin. Of course, I have my own ideas about that, but I would be interested to hear your opinion about why TAE is the poor cousin, or is treated that way.

Ms Sattler: I think there is competition for funds between the school-based arm and the voc ed arm. There is still a lot of snobbery about vocational education. Where you don't have a very significant labour market, with a lot of very noisy players, then it is very hard for that area to be heard.

I think it has suffered from very poor leadership for quite a long time. It has a very high staff turnover. There are some very dedicated souls there, but they are a bit lonely. You get used to bringing new people on board all the time. In the industry and the training sector, we induct people, explaining who we all are, how we all operate, and how the system works or doesn't work. Most of us have been to so many consultations about what is wrong with the system that we have all reached overload. I think Brendan can probably give you feedback about some of that.

THE CHAIR: I am sure he will.

Ms Sattler: If we really want to address the whole issue of creating more training places, increasing the numbers of traineeships and apprenticeships, increasing the numbers of vocational education opportunities for young people in school, then we have to put some expertise into that department. We have to do some proper research, our own research, about our labour market.

Along with other representatives from APTS, the Association of Private Training Services, I have met with the minister, and we have put all of these points directly to the minister. We know that a number of things are being reviewed within TAE. We have seen this happen before, too, but I'm an optimist and I hope that something good will come out of that. However, I think the problem has to be addressed at a much more senior level within the department.

Even to do very basic reporting, we have to use a system that is obsolete in most other states. We have to use a data system that does not actually meet any of our needs as registered training organisations. Most of us have to create a mirror data system, and then we have to feed our data into the VEERA system, which is then used to create the AVETMISS data. This is chronic inefficiency at its best. This VEERA system has had problems from the day it was brought in. I met with the NCVET expert on data collection a couple of weeks ago, and he informed me that VEERA is now obsolete. There is a new system, yet no-one in TAE seems to know that this is what is happening.

That just seems incredible to me. I am a very small player in the great scheme of things. How is it that I find this information and yet the body that is actually supposed to be leading the charge seems to be on the back foot about this?

THE CHAIR: By the way, for the information of the committee, NCVET stands for National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

Ms Sattler: They are the people who do that long-range forecasting and try to analyse what is actually happening in the labour market, and what is happening in the school-to-work transition. I think that we are completely outside a very big loop. Because I am involved in the youth sector and the non-government community sector, I also intersect with a whole lot of other national networks. We are getting that information. We are reading that research.

However, when you take that back to your planning discussions with TAE, it is as if they say, "That is not relevant to us." We really need to make an investment and get some people employed in the vocational education arm of the department who are very serious about achieving some real outcomes here, because we do not have any time to waste. When I quoted that figure about what is happening with young people, I was indicating to you that we already have two cohorts in that boat. We are about to see another lot come out at the end of this year.

These are the young people who are supposed to be the base of our economy in the ACT. Unless we export them, we better find some way of getting them all work. If they need more training to get that work, then we really have to address the vocational education system.

I will make one more comment about SNAPS and voc ed in colleges and schools. My biggest frustration is that the very young people who could probably benefit most from being able to access voc ed courses are the ones who are not getting into them. It is our high achievers who are actually pursuing the voc ed arm—the smart ones who have good support and good advice are having a leg in both camps. They are doing a tertiary stream and a voc ed stream at the same time.

Nearly every SNAPS student has to be kid wonder to be able to achieve a certificate 2 or an apprenticeship, almost something approaching a certificate 3, as well as achieving their year 12. If you met any of them you would realise that they are extremely high-achieving students. The sorts of young people that I meet in my Pathways program or in my literacy program do not have a hope in hell of getting those voc ed places. Those kids have already dropped out before they are given the opportunity.

The biggest drop-out rate in our college system occurs in the first term of year 11. That is the point at which we should be doing some really serious examination, and providing some proper career advice to young people. Clearly, we have to be giving the information to families and young people in years 9 and 10.

The teaching of voc ed is all based on the training packages. It is all based on having an industry component. The reality is that it is all being delivered predominantly by teachers who have not worked in the industries that we are talking about. Any teachers who put their hands up to be voc ed teachers in our system deserve a medal because all they are doing is agreeing to do twice as much work.

THE CHAIR: Yes, that is true.

Ms Sattler: They are doing their level best, but the problem is that, if you as an industry provider try to go into a partnership with a school, you cannot get them to share any of the funding with you to pay a trainer who has industry experience. We have probably been negotiating this kind of arrangement, particularly in my industry, for at least four or five years, and we still have not had a guernsey. We still do not have a partnership up.

I did a completely unfunded joint project with Canberra College last year, where I took some of their year 12, certificate 2, community services students and I brought them into our youth work classes so that they could actually sit alongside our certificate 4 youth workers. Those young people coped very well. They had to come to class in their own time. They had to make their own way to those classes. However, they made big contributions to the delivery of that course. It was a really interesting experiment.

We wanted to have youth workers who had to state their views and attitudes in front of young people, and we thought it had legs. We thought it was a really good model on which to base some kind of partnership. Canberra College and ourselves put in funding submissions, none of which were successful. I am sure that is not the only college which wants to explore those kinds of partnerships. However, essentially, when a school gets a bucket of money, it is not about to go and give some of it away to somebody else, and you couldn't blame it. There has to be much more creative thinking about how to get some of these partnerships up and going.

There are a lot of us out there who want to participate in those partnerships, but we cannot do that for nothing. An organisation such as mine is only in this business because it is very committed to improving standards in the community sector. You would not run my business to make a profit.

In the past, TAE has given quite a lot of money to some New South Wales providers to come in and pick up industry training program places, some of which have fallen over. Any interstate provider who wants to come into the ACT to provide training places is only doing it for profit. I don't think anyone could give me an argument to say that they suddenly care about the ACT labour market, or the future of our young people, because I don't believe they do.

Where you have players who have been on the ground and here for a long time, why would you actually take funding away from them and give it to an interstate provider who comes up with a clever tender, who then falls over nine months later? It has not happened just once: it has happened several times. Those of us who can fill more ITP places than we are granted—

THE CHAIR: ITP stands for industry training program.

Ms Sattler: Sorry, this area is full of acronyms. I am given 15 places for non-clinical mental health: I fill 30. So what do I do? I spend five months negotiating with TAE to get increased funding to match those 30 places. In the mean time, another provider is given places. It gets its commencement fee and then it is gone within months.

THE CHAIR: TAE doesn't get that money back, does it?

Ms Sattler: It does not get that money back. People in there are trying to be quite creative and they try to back fill where they haven't picked up places, but the system does not respond very quickly, and it certainly doesn't respond quickly enough for me to be able to survive by overfilling courses. The economics of the way the system works are not efficient at the moment.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, Kim, I am going to have to get you to wind up.

Ms Sattler: Everything else is in my submission so, unless you have any questions, I can wind up now.

THE CHAIR: Steve, Roslyn, do you have any questions?

MR PRATT: Where do you start?

MS DUNDAS: Yes. There is so much that we might think about.

MR PRATT: That is particularly the case with the management of resources and how we might try to solve this problem of the children at risk. That is the crux of this presentation. I cannot ask you in more detail. We do not have time to go further into that.

THE CHAIR: We might actually revisit that and get back to you about it, if that is all right with you.

Ms Sattler: Yes. I know that there are other players who were quite concerned about that. I also know that the minister is actually quite concerned about it as well, so I think it is an opportunity to try to address the problem.

MR PRATT: Just one quick question. How many youths would you put in that basket, roughly?

Ms Sattler: The 12 to 25 years population in the ACT is around about 77,000 to 80,000. I do not know what the slice of 15 to 19 year olds is but, if we know that it is around 20 per cent of that—say it is a third of those young people, then a third of 77,000 and 20 per cent of those—that means we are talking about—

MR PRATT: About 3,000 to 5,000.

Ms Sattler: That is right, and we are churning that many out at the end of each year 12.

MR PRATT: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your time, and your very comprehensive presentation, Kim. We will contact you again.

MR PRATT: That was very good, thank you.

MS DUNDAS: Thanks, Kim.

BRENDAN MULHALL was called.

THE CHAIR: Just as part of the formalities, you should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal action, such as being sued for defamation for what you say at this public hearing. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the committee the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter.

Mr Mulhall: My name is Brendan Mulhall. I am director of Brendan Mulhall and Associates, which is a training consultancy in Canberra. My presentation really is as a consultant that was hired by TAE to look at training package implementation within the ACT. That project was started some six months ago and completed a couple of months ago, and the report is currently with TAE.

I'll just give an outline of the findings. The major thing we were looking for within the report was to highlight the patterns of training package implementation. Over the last 12 years there has been a lot of government activity at the national level and the state and territory level on development of competency standards, training packages or frameworks that really become the focus for vocational and educational training in Australia. I was selected on the basis of my knowledge and experience within training package development at a national level, more so than at a local level, and also as an RTO, or registered training organisation, within the ACT, involved in implementing the training package. That background has also included the days when the whole agenda began, through competency standards development, the training package and the current status as it is now.

So the purpose of the investigation was really to have a look at how well we're doing it in the ACT, to identify any areas for leverage, any areas that we can improve, to mark and highlight any future areas of high growth or potential within the ACT, and then to recommend for TAE what future role it can play in the implementation of training packages.

It was a large task, probably bigger than I thought, because as soon as you enter this field you realise just how much data exists and how many research papers exist. Sometimes the data is collected in different formats so they don't match, both at a national and state level. One of the critical things I found was that I was swamped by the amount of information that's out there and trying to get an accurate reflection of actual training packages was quite difficult because you really had to consult both the national figures and CVER figures, as well as TAE's local figures from its database, and often it didn't match.

What I was really after was just someone to tell me about training package implementation and how many people are using it within the ACT, and you can't really get those figures. You can get how many people are enrolled in government-funded activities, but not necessarily related to training packages. They're done on a national level.

So what did I find in it? There are 70-odd training packages in Australia. Many, many millions of dollars have been spent on implementation there, and training packages consist basically of two things. One is a framework, including the competency standards and assessment guidelines and qualifications. The second thing is the materials to support its implementation, called non-endorsed, and they include assessment, training and professional development materials.

As to what we tried to look at, for the first time, in 2002, we've really had a chance to look back over the three years or so that the training packages have been implemented. We really haven't had a chance to do any evaluation of that before. Changes of government et cetera and changes of focus have meant that we've done evaluation on a broader scale, but for training packages themselves, no, we haven't really had a chance to look in the rear vision mirror and look back. So in doing this, this was my first opportunity, and doing it in the ACT was excellent because it's a small market, it's geographically concentrated, and there's a good network of people that talk to each other out there.

So we found we did it three ways. We did a survey, which was of limited value. It gave us some feedback on how good the materials were and some of the major concerns. We did group focus workshops, which were valuable. It really was a chance for getting together the major players within VET in the ACT to discuss their issues and concerns, and we did the old SWOT analysis and found out where the major issues were and we summarised them and looked for strategies.

MS DUNDAS: Did your "major players" include students?

Mr Mulhall: No, implementers. We defined the major players as being the ITABs, and we had a focus group on them; VET in schools providers, and we had a separate focus group; CIT, and we had a group for them; and TAE itself; and someone else. We were going to organise one for the unions as well, but we decided to make that an interview basis because there were not enough, so we interviewed them individually. There was business, which we interviewed as well.

THE CHAIR: Brendan, I, of course, understand why you haven't included students, but can you explain for the benefit of the committee and the hearing why students weren't actually included in the focus?

Mr Mulhall: It was really to see the response on the implementers—how well we were implementing it. Probably surveys have been done, and are being done, with employers and students, and feedback on the courses provided et cetera. So we saw that as already being covered. The focus for us was really to say to the implementers, "How well are we doing? Let's have some feedback from the implementers."

This was basically getting into the detail stuff. It wasn't how good the course is or how good the package was; it was really, you know, the technical competency standard side of things—the technical side of the VET we were concentrating on. We looked at three things, and those three things were really about the actual stage of maturity of training packages and stuff like that. It was the technical side—how old they are. We tried to gauge the maturity of training packages by saying there's a cycle of training packages. There's a high level of cynicism out there regarding training packages. There's a high

level of cynicism about how quickly they're reviewed, how much they change, the quality of the content and how well it does cover the industry. They're the critical issues from the framework design side. We find that the catalyst for this whole agenda was really to go back to the employers to say, "What are the critical benchmarks that we need to train to?"

That started way back, 12 years ago, but we still find that probably the agenda has changed a little bit since then. Industry is still participating but they don't have the experience or the knowledge to really give substantial input to the agenda. So what we're relying on—it goes back to the old days—is the RTOs, the ITABs, those people in the middle, the implementers, because they are really the people who can give us valuable input because they know. The agenda is complicated and it takes a bit of effort to actually understand it and what are the critical issues, and it has become complex, with acronyms, with processes and with outcomes.

So, in order to gain valuable feedback, we have to go to people experienced enough to give us the feedback. Training packages themselves have become a very complicated concept, because it doesn't fit nicely with the way we were brought up. You know, go to school, do your exams and leave. It's about outcomes, workplace outcomes and they're hard things to actually get people to understand.

So, in looking at training packages, one of the major issues that came right throughout all of it was the misunderstanding or the lack of understanding of training packages, their potential, their outcomes, their use, their implementation. Whether that's a promotion issue or whether it's simply a professional development issue, I think that, depending on where you stood at the time, it could be both. I got stuck for a while, because there was so much data, and the only way I saw us getting through it was to try and come up with a structure that showed what training packages are, and how well they'd been implemented.

I put in my structure this level of maturity of a training package. Hospitality is an old training package. It's up to the fourth stage of what I said. The first stage is that you develop it; you establish it. In the second stage you make it operational. The third stage is that you review it. The fourth stage is that you re-establish it. That's the Sydney Harbour Bridge painting-type syndrome. It just keeps going around. So as soon as people are familiar with the colour, it's going to change in a couple of years, because it changes that quickly. So old packages like hospitality and tourism have had lots of time to be implemented. New packages such as health and business services have only just started hitting the decks. So that was a critical issue—how mature it is.

So the actual stage of maturity really influenced the implementation. The second one was employment trends. In Canberra we've got a constricted employment base. It's expanding, but it's still focused on government and IT employment. So we find it's both a luxury—in the sense that we can focus a few training packages—and it's also a hindrance as we don't have a wide spread with other industries, particularly the old craft-based ones and the older ones. So future employment was a big critical key about future potential.

The third thing that was critical was the infrastructure and culture of that training package. The way we defined that was: is there an existing culture for VET within that area? For instance, in business services there is an existing VET culture in some areas, but really it's minimal. It's forming; it's not a big one, whereas in health there is an existing VET culture where people are used to getting VET qualifications within, say, areas like nursing et cetera. Or you get a very established VET culture such as in building construction or electrotechnology, where they've had years and years of history.

So if we take a big training package and we say, "Implement it here," it'll stay on the shelf unless there's a culture to pick it up. That culture, if it's the old culture, it's the old apprenticeship culture, and that picks it up and it's moved on.

But now there's a movement, with all those areas that weren't initially covered, with some actually starting to pick it up and say, "Yes, we can fly with this." So there needs to be added incentive. The ironic thing in Canberra is that the biggest potential growth is not in those established VET cultures but in the non-established ones, such as business services and probably the new forms of health training package.

The success stories in Canberra about training packages are things like community services, where they've picked it up and run with it, and transport and distribution where they've picked it up, used the funding that's available and got a lot of traineeships happening. Halfway through the project—it wasn't an original methodology that we planned—we found out that we were not getting enough data so we needed to go to case studies. So we picked 20 case studies to have a look at—things that were working out there—and that was the best way. That's the best data we got. What makes something work? Let's find 20 that are working and highlight the factors and see what they've got in common. That's what the paper really focused on after that. The things they had in common were things like a broker—a business broker, an industry broker, a package broker—someone in between this complex training package and implementation; someone to bring it, to guide it.

With some success stories that are happening, like John James Hospital, we would ask, "Why did it happen?" Someone linked the training package with the enterprise and they took it off. With transport and distribution, why did it happen? You had a broker that used the knowledge of funding available within government, took the package and made traineeships out of it. The critical key is that, if there's no middle person there, I don't know how many of these would have succeeded. We saw four levels of implementation. One is the strategic coordination. That needs to be played by someone like TAE, or a government entity, to say, "Where are we going? Where are we going to put our funding? Which packages have got the most potential?" With 76 packages, really, it's the 80/20 rule. Of those 76 packages, the majority of future potential is going to be in 10 to 15 of them. So that was one issue there.

Then, from that strategic coordination, they'd be able to tell you that, where it is. But underneath that you need an implementer, a broker, and this is the role that a lot of the ITABs are playing now. There's an ITAB review being conducted at the moment and that's coming out with its findings. But for me that role's been filled by ITAB people. They've become the central link between all these players, which include the government—the funding—the industry, the RTOs, the VET in schools.

There was a gap there—a vacuum. They filled it and provided that link of communication, of technical expertise, of creating relationships, of promoting and marketing. Now, if that role is not played by them, I know it sometimes can be played by a major RTO such as CIT, or it can be played by a major private RTO—or it needs to be played by the government agency, at the strategic level.

But if strategic is the first level, the implementer or the broker is the second level. The third level becomes the coordinator, such as the NACs, or even the ITABs as well, and major RTOs. Then the implementers become the RTOs. So you've got a four-tier structure of implementation.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, Brendan, I'll just interrupt for a second. We've had a few acronyms there. RTO is registered training organisation, NAC is New Apprenticeship Centre, and you know what ITABs are—industry training advisory boards.

Mr Mulhall: The only other one I probably failed to mention is group training companies.

MS DUNDAS: So you'd see the bottom level of implementation as the people on the ground, the teachers.

Mr Mulhall: RTOs, teachers, assessors, trainers.

MS DUNDAS: So I guess between those four levels there is a movement of the ITABs playing a role in the bottom three, and the RTOs playing a role in the bottom three as well.

Mr Mulhall: Yes. The essential link at the first level is the coordination between the government and the ITAB. The ITAB moves down to the next level, which gives initial guidance and advice on the training package. That industry broker then moves down to managing the training package and administration, which is the NAC, the group training company or the RTO. The implementation is then done by the group training companies and RTOs as well.

MS DUNDAS: Is this what would be the ideal situation, or is this your assessment of what's happening now?

Mr Mulhall: To me, it's the ideal of what made the case studies work—someone saw the strategic coordination. So I'm recommending that that structure be looked at. That was one of the recommendations that came out of the paper—that TAE develop a unit that would specialise in the planning and coordination of implementation of training packages in the ACT. This unit would bring together the technical expertise to develop and implement strategies to implement training packages.

MS DUNDAS: So, just to qualify that, there are some areas where TAE is providing currently a level of strategic coordination. But obviously, because you didn't have 100 per cent of every plan working, TAE is falling down in some areas.

Mr Mulhall: It doesn't have the expertise or resources for training package. Training package responsibility falls across a few people at TAE. It waters down the level of knowledge you need. The problem you've got with training packages is that you do need both a technical knowledge of how to implement them as well as, you know, the strategic ability to make the links within the area. I know that that doesn't exist with TAE at the moment because of the nature of the way it's structured and training package responsibility going across a few people.

If that doesn't fall, that responsibility falls to the ITABs. So, in a perfect world, you'd have someone doing the strategic work—not focused on any training package but saying, "Where's the potential for Canberra in the main training packages? This is where we need to put our funding." You would review the funding arrangements to reinforce where the potential lies—that is, both providers and ITABs—to say, "Funding should be on performance of the ITAB and the future potential it has within the ACT."

So they're making those decisions. They're making decisions to say, "Here's some best practice nationally. How can we implement it here? What's going on? What's the best that's happening? Let's implement it here."

We're like a little frigate compared to the big boats that exist in the other states. They've got a lot of bureaucracy. We can do things quickly here. We can get to it and say, "Here are the tools. They've been funded nationally; they're sitting on a shelf. All we need to develop is the expertise to implement it—have a few people." So they do that at that strategic level—provide advice to the board et cetera. At the implementing for each training package, underneath that comes the ITAB, the broker between the enterprise and obviously the government agenda, VET.

THE CHAIR: So we can do it quickly, but do we?

Mr Mulhall: Yes and no. There are cases where we have. That's been the driver again. That driver, that broker, has created that—where they've put someone in need of training at John James or other cases, and we've listed 20. Half of them would probably be good cases. Another half had potential to be good cases. But, yes, it's shown that we can—because the other advantage we've got here is that the links are really established; there's good communication between the parties.

It's just that knowledge and that resource up top, together with, obviously, whatever happens with the ITABs. But that's a critical role they play, as the broker underneath. So, to me, if they didn't have that, then there's a vacuum. The training package gets delivered. As everybody knows, there are a lot of training packages. Forty of them are undergoing review this year. To keep up to date with them is incredible. If you could see one person sitting there trying, they'd have a desk this big of training packages they've got to review and implement, because there's funding and they're coming through. So peak time for training packages is now, this year. Not only are the new ones being developed hitting the ground, but the ones that have been developed are being reviewed. So suddenly, I think, the peak is right now and next year—these next couple of years—for implementation.

There's a big ignorant population about the potential out there; it's still there. So that link from there to there—millions of dollars are being spent developing this stuff and it is not being implemented. The cases that we saw that really worked had that broker, that driver. That was a common attribute.

THE CHAIR: For the information of the committee as well, I will mention, just as an example, the first stage of the business services training package. I think it's got another two stages to go through before it's complete.

Mr Mulhall: They're doing No 2 at the moment.

THE CHAIR: Yes. That first stage has approximately 1,000 pages in the training package.

Mr Mulhall: They review, and nobody—not even ITABs—can keep on top of it. We, as consultants, go out and develop them. We'll do workshops all around Australia. Someone will write them and then we'll have them within six months and then they appear. That's the framework. The policy of training is there; it's sitting there. It's the implementation. We give some resources to develop materials like training assessment. But the reality is that the providers need to develop it here.

So, in Canberra, if you're a provider, you develop; you go into a lot of investment to develop materials to implement this and give the qualifications. You've got to have bums on seats. You've got to have people coming through. You've got to have quite a big potential target audience. Particularly private RTOs will pick up some of that, and CIT. But there are another 40 training packages that will have maybe fewer than 20 people involved in them. So—I'm just being rational—you focus your energies and whatever resources on that.

Small business is another issue that came up. They're not picking it up. You've got this complicated bureaucratic document. They see it and they say, "Oh no," to implementing this. So one of the recommendations I made in the paper there, which was based right throughout the workshops, was that to engage small business, which is a lot of Canberra, you need a special strategy where you bring the expertise together. I've called it an assessment and resource centre—cost recovery; they could work on it—where they do assessment services like RPL and RCC, which are recognition of prior learning and recognition of current competence.

They would also provide guidance for training package implementation, particularly to small people who don't have any training expertise within their organisation, which is the majority. You would go there, at a reasonable fee, it could have representatives from CIT, and they, basically, would look particularly at training packages such as business services that have got applicability right across small businesses, large businesses, everybody in the ACT.

So, if you looked at those areas, they offered that service. They also offered an expertise within that area that the ITABs could use. We could create that and say, "There's the benchmark. We're creating some good assessment practices." Assessment is the key to all of this, because it's unknown. People are spending \$500 or \$600 going to get an RPL

process to recognise their learning. Yet with some people—and this is watering down the system—a chequebook assessment mentality is coming through as well.

We have to be aware of that—that this system is getting watered down—because there are RTOs out there that will do these processes very cheaply, give you a certificate 3 over the telephone. It's really watering down the potential of it. So within this we also need to ensure that guidelines are given to RTOs, in going through the new AQTF requirements, that they need to be fair dinkum regarding what they're about.

We're going through a process. I see it like the wild west days—when there was no law and order there. Slowly and surely, law and order is coming in, and we're getting rid of some of the RTOs. This is a problem nationally, not just here in the ACT—those ones that see a dollar to be earned versus that. So that is coming in slowly with the new requirements. So, in here, TAE needs to develop that expertise within ARC, with AREO, to be able to recognise the problems, to see RTOs that are unscrupulous and cross them off the list—to take the risks and those sorts of things that are coming up as well.

So, for me, it was that, from the TAE level, the strategic level, they needed to have an assessment centre that had the knowledge and expertise to help small businesses and implement packages with lots of potential. On the other side they need to really have a level of knowledge and expertise to implement what's applicable for Canberra, share the resources, make the links, and work with the ITABs to push out—as well as to obviously police the implementers, the RTOs. ARC does that.

So I went through the paper and there are two major things. One recommendation says the training packages with most potential are here, here's the future in Canberra—and that was health, business services, public sector and a couple of others.

Training packages that haven't got the potential but have been very good performers, like construction, have got a market already established, so the potential for growth is not great there. So we've outlined them and given the reasons why. They're based on three things: the vocational education and training culture and infrastructure existing, how mature the training package is, and the future employment growth.

The second part of the paper is about the issues that have come right throughout the group focuses, the surveys, the interviews and the case studies. It's a recommendation of about 25 issues that TAE can pick up to minimise any threats and maximise the strengths of training packages with useability within Canberra. So the document became a bit big and bulky, but—

THE CHAIR: A bit like a training package.

Mr Mulhall: It just grew and grew. But yes, at the end of the day, I could mention three or four recommendations: one, the Pareto stuff, focus on where 80 per cent of our result is going to be achieved; two, set up a structure where you've got the links to be established between strategic and implementation, because I know a lot of the other states are finding there's no link there and it's not getting to the people it's meant to be; three, creating a section within TAE that has the expertise that that necessitates, just a small, cost-recovery assessment and resource centre, and this has been tried; and four deals with professional development and marketing of training packages in the ACT.

There are materials out there that are already working. It is consolidating them and making them work further.

Once those things are in, I think it's just a little bit more time, as the culture changes from the old classroom-based one to one that focuses on workplace outcomes, as the health system's focus is on. I think at the moment TAE has those recommendations.

THE CHAIR: So, as to the stage of your review, it is with TAE at the moment, and hasn't been released publicly. Is that right?

Mr Mulhall: No, no. They're doing it. I know that some of their managers met on it last week to discuss the outcomes.

THE CHAIR: So would it be possible for the committee to get a copy of the review once it is actually completed, do you think?

Mr Mulhall: Yes. I can't see a problem with that. I'd have to check with them.

THE CHAIR: We might need to actually write to the minister requesting it.

Mr Mulhall: You'll only read the front bit. It gets quite bulky. There's a six or seven-page executive summary that pretty much summarises what I've said, probably in a lot better terms and a more structured way.

MR PRATT: Just quickly, for clarification, on the second recommendation setting up the structure to—

Mr Mulhall: You know that four-tier I was talking about?

MR PRATT: Yes, the four tiers. Getting that squared away.

Mr Mulhall: Yes. There are four functional areas, or tiers, or levels—and who plays the roles.

MR PRATT: Going on from that, who did you see playing the broker's role?

Mr Mulhall: For me, the ITABs.

MR PRATT: The ITABs—always?

Mr Mulhall: If it's not the ITABs—I didn't get too far into it because there's another review being done on the ITABs themselves. As you know, the funding has been taken away from the ITABs. So I looked at the role that the good-performing ITABs are doing, and there's going to be a vacuum there if they go. I call that the training package broker role, or the industry broker role.

THE CHAIR: At the moment the ITABs get no recognition for that role, do they?

Mr Mulhall: No. It's something that has fallen to them because they have the necessary knowledge, skills and contacts to do it. Who else does it? You could say CIT could do it, but then where's the user choice? It needs to be something independent—they're one of the providers.

THE CHAIR: You have mentioned and there have been suggestions that the role can be fulfilled by TAE itself. I have concern with that, and other people have said that the problem with doing that is that they don't have that expertise, being a government agency as such.

Mr Mulhall: You need two—one TAE to play the role, but you also need the broker underneath. So my recommendations are both, because one has the strategic best practice happening at the broad level; the other has the individual knowledge of the training package in the industry. You need both for it to filter down, because the documents don't sell well. Training packages need a lot of effort, and they need interpretation by experts. They need friendly stuff coming out that requires that approach to go down.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, and sorry that we were late to start off.

JENNY WARDROP was called.

THE CHAIR: You should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal action such as being sued for defamation for what you say at this public hearing. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the committee the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter.

State your name and organisation for the record, and give us your blurb.

Mrs Wardrop: I'm Jenny Wardrop, I'm one of the, I would hope, better performing ITABs, Arts and Recreation Training ACT. There are at least three to four case studies in Brendan's report. First I will give you a bit of background on where I've been so that you can see the different skills I have.

I started as a vocational education and training teacher in the TAFE sector and I was a fashion teacher. From there I moved into a curriculum area, into a learning resources development area of CIT. I also spent some time in New South Wales TAFE. That's where I started my training and my working life. I moved out of CIT to try that different world out there, which I think is very critical in the vocational and training agenda. I'll elaborate a little if people see the public provider as being the fount of all knowledge. There is a different world out there, and there needs to be a voice for that different world. I have a healthy respect for the TAFE sector, so I am coming from a balanced perspective.

I exited TAFE and took up a 12-month contract job as the cultural arts and sport ITAB for 12 months, and moved into Customs for seven months. The board asked me to come back, and I've been doing this role again for the last 18 months. I've come and gone from it, and I've experienced a whole range of very different things.

My ITAB covers 10 training packages, and we've got another three under development. It's a very diverse portfolio. To use words that my board uses to me all the time, I'm the third bottom line, the social capital ITAB, the diverse ITAB, the sole end of Canberra. There needs to be a voice and a role for some of those smaller business organisations that bring diversity.

I arch over things like museums, cultural galleries, libraries, all the sports sectors, writing, journalism—which is the newest training package under development—entertainment and performing arts, another one that's under development as we speak. It's a diverse portfolio.

How does an ITAB keep on top of it? You can't. If you think a new apprenticeship centre can keep on top of that, plus nine other key industry groupings in the ACT, they can't. It's difficult. What have I done? Have I brokered anything? It is case-studied in Brendan's report. Libraries are probably a very good example. Where did that start? It started with a promotional activity. It was funded with a very low budget from TAE of some \$1,500 to get a promotional industry forum. That's where we started.

That forum was in March 2000, and from there we've got operation across the board. To give you a bit of a snapshot about how you can move something fairly quickly, nothing else is happening in any other state in the two sectors I cover—museums and libraries. They all sit back and say, "What are you doing, Jenny, in your state in those two areas?" The private RTO has been instrumental in getting something happening, particularly in the library sector, because the TAFE provider didn't want to do it. It's about this brokering role that Brendan talked about previously. That was a significant role for me.

Whilst you get to some of the detail, you're brokering certain layers of information. What are those layers of information? The qualifications in any training package are very generic. You have to apply. Irrespective of the industry sector, what is that job out there and what is the appropriate level of qualifications? That's what I call the intelligence you take to a training package. How do I do that when I've got 10, plus another three on the way? Strategically, that's where your board members become very important to you.

What are some of the other combinations you might be involving? We're very lucky here in this state. When I go to the national network forums with my national ITABs I realise that. I call us the poor cousin of the ITAB network around the states, because we operate on very low budgets and it's extremely difficult. My counterpart in WA has a \$300,000 budget. I operate on \$60,000. It's very hard to compare horses for courses when it's quite different.

This state is regarded as a key stakeholder in just about every facet of information I provide to TAE. The ITABs have a voice in subcommittees for VET in schools. We are a critical key sign-off in any of the VET programs in the colleges. As they're doing their curriculum processes, it's my role to make sure that they have consulted with industry and that industry is happy with the programs they're putting up, and it's my role to sign off on those, once the panels have formed.

It's the ITABs' role to be a key voice around the course development table of the public provider, CIT, as well as any private training provider. In every example, you're looking at making sure the benchmarks for the training package requirements are met, making sure that industry intelligence and training needs analysis of what's required in the ACT are met by all the providers so that the public purse dollar is being spent wisely.

I could give you numerous examples where the public provider has said to me, "Do not come to our course development table and talk"—I'm going to use training language now—"traineeships and user choice. We do not do it, because the system is complex. We do not want to do it, because the system is complex, the training dollar is inadequate and we have a different marketplace." Libraries are a classic example. Everyone knows what's happening with training with the National Museum of Australia. That is an MOU with a public provider. It's a very good example of training, but the disappointment for me—and it should be a shared disappointment in the ACT—is that it's a certificate 3 in museum practice. Just about all of the cohort should have been a traineeship. It should have been funded under user choice, but CIT didn't want to do traineeships.

In the first graduation we had 65. I went to that graduation, and there would have been easily 20 indigenous graduates in that cohort. Not one was a trainee. I found that quite sad. On the positive, though, we're still getting data. We've still got uptake on that training package that no other state has to this day. We're coming up for our third lot of

graduates from that program. When you look at the stats in the ACT, we've done fairly well on that one.

MS DUNDAS: Can you provide more information about the user choice model? You're saying that people are graduating but they're not trainees.

Mrs Wardrop: It's a traineeship. It's guaranteed training dollars, and it's aimed at putting young people into the marketplace of work.

MR PRATT: Those who can afford it.

Mrs Wardrop: Traineeships?

MR PRATT: Yes.

Mrs Wardrop: I have to ask you a question. What do you mean by "those who can afford it"?

MR PRATT: Disregard that. I was confusing that with another issue regarding youth at risk.

MS DUNDAS: People who are going through programs and are getting a certificate at the end, but they're not doing it in the recognised training system.

Mrs Wardrop: They are. TAE funds from three buckets of money. One is the public purchaser/provider, which predominantly is a bucket that goes to CIT, to the TAFE provider. That funds everything. We'd have no uptake on many training packages if we didn't have a public provider. I want to have this balanced picture. In many of the sectors I cover, I wouldn't have any uptake on any of my training packages if the public provider wasn't there. I want to paint this balanced picture.

On the other hand, there are some examples where the public provider could be working under that next bucket of money, which is called user choice. User choice is a guaranteed bucket of money. It's aimed at getting young people into the work force. In the National Museum, I have an employer that has money. You sign on trainees. You pay them a training wage. Most of that training happens in the workplace, and there is an off-the-job component of training.

With the National Museum example, of the people in training some are young, some are older. They are a mixed age group from mixed cultural backgrounds. There are lots of reasons why they have that diverse range of people. You're talking about the people who guide you around the museum environment. So there is a need for bilingual people. You find that in libraries as well. There are a lot of target groups.

When you look at all of that, some of that at-risk layer would apply there as well. When I looked at that cohort—I had 65 graduating through that—it begged the question: why were some of these graduates not trainees so they were signed up into the workplace? It is about the intent of having continuous employment. There are some reasons. It's based on a contract, but many of them go on working at the National Museum. They've done their bit in the agenda.

The next move for me is to get the National Museum to start signing on trainees, which is a significant shift for the public provider. Because of the MOU, the public provider is saying, “But we don’t do traineeships and we’ve got you in this nice VET program, so let’s keep doing it.” The issue for me is to convince the HR section that we can have some trainees going.

It’s a bit like Brendan was saying. I call it growing the dream or brokering the next stage of that development for vocational education and training. That’s what it’s about. Someone needs to be there to explain a whole range of layers to the employers, because they don’t understand it. It’s very complex.

THE CHAIR: Jenny, you’ve mentioned two of the three buckets of money.

Mrs Wardrop: The third one is industry training programs. That’s where there needs to be a voice for private RTOs, registered training organisations. I’ve got examples in the library sector. I’ll use library as an example, because the private RTO was a national peak association, and the intent was to infiltrate all states with a new training package.

At the beginning of that, we had a private deliverer for the training. The registered training organisation was the peak association. I want to be very clear about this model, because this happens often. They were looking at lower-end training—certificate 2 and certificate 3—infiltrating the library sector where there was a culture of only librarians. So it was university degrees, but they had a need to have technical skilled operational people, positions being filled by primarily admin assistants from the public sector. They saw the package as being a terrific way of getting library technical expertise into the skills cohort of workers. They had something for them which wasn’t the business services training package. They wanted something that looked at the skills for a virtual library and for the function of records management that you won’t necessarily find in other training packages. I think there’s a bit of a mix and match now. They saw the library training package as a great way to change the balance of employment and how things were done in their industry.

No-one doing cert 2 and cert 3, so the peak association picked up that role and became a registered training organisation. CIT decided that they would just do the cert 4 and the diploma. University of Canberra had a graduate diploma, so everyone was happy.

Within six months, the peak association, which was the registered training organisation, folded. I went to CIT. We had just done some sign-ups with trainees Urban Services, ACT Library Service and CIT did not want to engage with. That’s the user choice bucket of money I was referring to. I had to broker that provider of training that was not a registered training organisation to become, reluctantly, a registered training organisation.

This has been case-studied in Brendan Mulhall’s case study implementation for VET in the ACT. That is working very nicely now, and the articulated pathway is there. We have a VET in schools program. The development of the course for a VET in schools program for libraries has also been developed. In every school you’ll find a library, so there’s a great opportunity for that real on-the-job side, but the young people don’t want to go into the library sector. The industry acknowledges that, and there’s a lot of work to be

done with that. They have been doing work with that. It's not just an ACT trend. It's a national trend and it's an international trend. They are getting young people to go into the library sector and see it as viable. What young people are not focusing on is that it's a virtual world. They haven't made that link to IT just yet, so we're doing lots with that.

Where does that lead to—IPTs? Within that model, any new recruits coming into ACT Library Service, if they meet the requirements of a traineeship, are channelled down the user choice pathway. In the library sector existing workers are saying, “We're not qualified, but how do we join the agenda?” There is a need here in this state—I don't know whether Vince has talked about it, but I'm sure Bob Taylor will—to engage with existing worker traineeships. I know a lot of the private RTOs are very interested in engaging with them. Certainly I am one ITAB very keen to see that happen.

In all my sectors I have target groups. I have women; I have indigenous workers; I have people from culturally diverse backgrounds. I currently host the ACT indigenous arts officer and the multicultural arts officer as part of my organisation, so there's a lot of work to be done there. At this stage, there's not much I can do with many of those cohorts, high volunteer layers. If we were doing something within existing worker traineeships, that could totally change a lot of the SATs we're seeing here in the ACT.

Other states are doing it. Recently it's had a bit of bad press with the show on SBS that looked at people like Hungry Jacks who exploited the system. I see the ITABs' role as making sure that the quality remains and that you do the checks and balances. That's some of that brokering Brendan has been talking about.

There is an open playing field and a competitive market edge with training, and we do have interstate RTOs operating in this state. In other states, they're allowed to keep an arm's distance from the ITABs. I'm an ITAB who visits interstate RTOs to make sure I have them on my database so that I can send them information to keep a communication flow going. I do get a lot of information. It's very important that I share information I get from my national ITABs—I am part of a very strong network—with all my registered training organisations—CIT as well as private RTOs.

I come back to carrying the third bucket of money, the industry training programs bucket of money. That allows any RTO to tender for high-level qualifications where the industry puts forward a case under its training needs analysis, the half-yearly outlook that TAE spends quite a lot of work on putting together. I would consider that the ITABs play a significant role in putting that local intelligence together, along with TAE. It is the only bucket of money from which private RTOs can do some of that upper level training, cert 4 diploma level training.

In this state, we have very large national sporting organisations that are the sole representatives for their sport. Currently I've got a project in with TAE. It's a partnership—I encourage partnerships—with the TAE provider and Australian Swimming. No-one in Australia other than Australian Swimming will be doing training for swimming coaches. We've embraced that. We've put forward a pilot project to get some cert 4 training done, in partnership with the public provider and Australian Swimming. If Australian Swimming wants to replicate that across other states, there will be a model there.

What was the role of the ITAB in that? I said that whatever model we came up with, it was about getting value for the dollar that TAE is going to spend with what I might perceive as one sport, albeit a very important sport, in this state. The profile it brings to this stage, certainly in swimming meets at the AIS, is good press for the state. I asked that the core of that qualification be applied across any other sport so that national sporting organisations for AFL, basketball, netball—we've got all of those links with the public provider—could engage with this type of training too and engage in a partnership arrangement so that they could do their sport specific cohort of technical skills. That has been a really positive outcome.

Hopefully, it will be funded. I don't know the outcome. It has been with TAE for a number of months now. I get a number of calls from Australian Swimming, and I don't know. But the only bucket of money that that can be funded under is industry training programs. That is a useful mechanism. It isn't replicated around other states. We do some great stuff here in this state.

I'd like to talk about frustrations I've had in dealing with TAE. Again, I want to present a balanced picture. TAE always deflects to the ITAB for key and strategic information—I've always valued that—far more so than in other states, my colleagues tell me .

ITABs are under review. As TAE is currently structured, there is an industry liaison cell. Much of the brokering I currently do would probably default back to that cell. There are significant gaps in the workers who work there. They don't understand the business or the training agenda they are currently responsible for. I've said this in other forums, so I feel comfortable about saying it here.

I've also suggested that they need some serious professional development. For example, I think if they were to do the certificate 4 in workplace assessment and training that would help them. That's the same benchmark we expect of industry people playing in the agenda.

THE CHAIR: Jenny, how widely would you want that professional development spread, for example?

Mrs Wardrop: I've said this in other forums. I'm quite comfortable saying this. I do want a balanced picture.

MS DUNDAS: I think Karin was asking who in the organisation of TAE. Are we talking about everybody needing this industry—

Mrs Wardrop: The industry liaison cell, definitely. The industry liaison cell has a responsibility to look after specific industries. What will they gain from that? They'll gain knowledge about the bigger agenda. They will certainly have to look at training packages and how you analyse a training package. Right now they struggle with some of that agenda. They'll have to apply it in a context that businesses apply that. If they take on a trainee, they have to give them concrete and real activities to do. They'll have to make judgments about their work.

How do you articulate that into some of the roles you do? It's about giving feedback. It's about looking at performance appraisal. They have to deal with industry negotiations. They often do not understand what industry is asking them. Therefore, they don't give quality information to industry people, who then come back to us. I do a lot of things that probably technically, if I looked at my performance agreement, I shouldn't be doing. I should be doing other things. That's how I bridge and broker, and that's how I do that promotion of a training package and get that engagement at a local level. If I didn't do that, I wouldn't have any uptake on any of my training packages. I really feel I've had to do that.

I feel for the people in industry liaison roles. There've been put there because they've been excess to the Department of Education and Community Services. They are often trying to find the ground with the job they're doing. They're administrative assistants. They have an enormous role. The people I deal with have an enormous industry coverage.

How can we make it different? Yesterday I said, "If they want to come out and work with me for a chunk of time, about five to six weeks, I'm happy to provide a range of experiences and shift meetings to give them a meaningful professional development experience." What do I gain from that? They'll know about my training packages. If I develop some of that knowledge base, I may not get some of the calls that I get.

It's a two-way street. In return for that, I believe I need to go in and shoulder with them to learn about some of the questions they may be fielding so that together we will know how we could be working in a different way. I'm prepared to do that. In being critical, I'm prepared to say there's some other stuff we could be doing in value-adding to the system. In the longer term that's how I see things overcoming some serious PD that needs to happen right now.

Workplace assessment will be an expensive option and may not be well received. They may not want to do that and take that on board. But the other one is a cheaper option, and it could happen tomorrow with people freeing up a little bit of time. I'd like to do that, hopefully it will be taken up. I've put that out. I've said that. I'll let you know.

In the longer term, if that cell takes on some of the brokering activity that I've been engaged with and that I know my ITAB counterparts are engaged with, that serious PD has to be looked at. It's just as serious as some of the PD in the big debate about VET in school teachers. There's a lot of criticism about what some teachers have to do and have to come on board with. The same applies to the TAE cell.

To give a balanced picture of PD, TAE in December last year decided that anyone who was going to go out and do registered training organisation audits would sit through the same audit training for international 9,000 quality assurance training as the ITABs and anyone else within a business regime or within that TAE cell. They would all be doing the same. We're now nearly 12 months down the track. I've been on audit teams with some of the TAE staff. It was expensive PD. I'd say they're reaping the benefits of that. The TAE staff involved in the audits, who are not necessarily the same staff involved in the industry liaison cell, have really come on board with the agenda. Serious PD often works for people. I think the time is right for some of that.

Workplace assessment is the one I know well. It's the one that's quite generic and might bridge some of the gap. There may be alternatives. I think that needs to be explored.

THE CHAIR: Jenny, I don't want to cut you short.

Mrs Wardrop: There are so many other things. I've had horror stories. Outward Bound, successful now, put a skill centre in and it took over 12 months. It was ANTA funding. It was a really tight application that went in. It was fiddled around with because there were staffing changes in TAE. It sat on people's desks. It took over 18 months. I can remember being heavily involved in that at the beginning of last year when I came back into the job. We've only just had the outcome. If there wasn't a voice for the private RTO hammering away with them, it would have sat on a desk.

On the other hand, a skill centre for Lake Tuggeranong went through very rapidly. Again, there was the same frustration. It sat on a desk. Changes to staff meant there was lack of continuity. Often there are a lot of changes of staffing in TAE. Often it's not communicated to the business world. My private RTOs would say to me, "Whom do I need to talk to at TAE? I can't track the right person." In my job I sometimes walk around that floor and I talk to five key senior managers, who will send me back to where I started. There needs to be some sorting out of tasks, key roles, who makes decisions, and communicating with the broader spectrum out there.

If you take away the ITABs, where do the private RTOs go so that they know that when they talk to that one senior manager they're going to get a response and not be sent to five different people around that floor? It's very frustrating for them, especially if they're a new RTO. They often don't know who they've got to go and talk to. They often get bombarded, just as you will be bombarded, with training agenda acronyms and language that they find very difficult to cut through. My industry sectors need to be encouraged, because they're the sole end of town. If they're not doing some of this activity, I can guarantee you the public provider is not going to be doing it.

Currently we're putting through with CIT a diploma in media and communication, coming off the film, TV, radio, multimedia training package, which is where this state wants to move to. There are some good opportunities there. It's an extremely diverse training package. Around the course development table I repeatedly said, "Where is the representative from the schools sector?" I know that the National Museum wants to put on a trainee in the TV production area. I had to work really hard to make sure that those qualifications were nested within that diploma. Why was I concerned about the schools sector? Because they currently have a cert 2, and have had for three years, from that training package and there is nowhere for graduates to articulate through if the TAE provider is not going to do that.

There was a critical brokering role for me to enhance the pathways between school and CIT. CIT, in my opinion, is doing the pathways from CIT to university extremely well. I'm really happy. But there still needs to be a lot of looking after the VET in schools layer forward. Someone needs to be brokering that. It has almost reached the point where if I don't track it it doesn't happen. I track it by making sure I nominate the school person I want to be on the panel. I make sure I minute my concern if they're not at that course reference group when it's happening. I will leave it at that.

THE CHAIR: It's a lot to take in.

Mrs Wardrop: I could write heaps more.

THE CHAIR: If you wrote anything more, the committee would be happy to take it.

Mrs Wardrop: Is there anything specific the committee would like me to address? I'm keen to have the voice of the diverse, little sole end of town heard. You'll never get the high numbers out of my industry sectors, but you will definitely get the diversity.

THE CHAIR: I think that's important in showing that the training sector shouldn't just be about churning out great numbers of people in, say, business administration, even though that is just as important as whatever. It should be about providing quality training within all the different sectors.

Mrs Wardrop: The ITABs are under review. One of the things my board has focused on quite substantially is a strong synergy with sport, business and cultural arts as well as a very high focus on IT and new media. I prefer to use new media rather than IT and multimedia these days.

THE CHAIR: I'd be interested in getting a written perspective on how you believe the ACT travels within the training sector in comparison to other states—the good points and the bad points and where we need to pick up our game.

Mrs Wardrop: In my industries, we are absolutely ahead of the pack. Sport is a good one for diversity. All my training packages are in stage 1, starting to move into stage 2. There has been low uptake across sports. But in this state we're just starting to crack into that with rugby union, basketball, netball. Everyone knows about coaching courses, because everyone can do them as part of their sports. It's the things parents do to be a coach of their son's or daughter's sporting team.

The qualifications sport have had for the last 20 years should have been aligned as part of the training package development. This state has done a lot of that alignment with the Australian Sports Commission and the Bureau of Sport. It hasn't happened as part of any national agenda. That would be a really good one to feed that through, because we've done it here at local level.

Once we finalise that, it will go national. We've been able to crack that, whereas the national ITAB couldn't. Probably my national ITAB wouldn't like me saying that, but that's reality. When that does hit national level, it won't be the ACT that gets the promotion of that. It'll be the national ITAB that gets that.

That's how a strong network between national and state works. I have that happening with sport and with cultural arts. We work together. We meet regularly, and I'm able to feed all of that information out to the RTOs here. I do that. I think that's what puts the ACT on an edge.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, we're going to have to finish there. Thank you very much.

Short adjournment

ROBERT TAYLOR was called.

THE CHAIR: I just need to read the following to you, Bob: you should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections, but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal action, such as being sued for defamation for what you say at this public hearing. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the committee the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter. For the record, could you state your name and the organisation you represent.

Mr Taylor: Robert Taylor from the Utilities and Light Manufacturing Industry Training Board.

THE CHAIR: If you would like to address us on whatever you feel.

Mr Taylor: I have had a look at the terms of reference, obviously, and I some notes. I looked at the terms of the reference point 1 and the effectiveness of admin in the promotion of VET. Of course, I can only speak from my perspective of how I see it. I deal with the training and adult education area which used to be VETA and OTAE and a whole range of names, but it is the same organisation in effect.

From our point of view, I think the promotion of VET in this area is more than okay. I think people are aware of what VET does for the industry. I should mention the national perspectives of VET, particularly the qualifications and training packages—and I probably don't need to explain training packages; but the new competency-based system and training packages which are driven by ANTA. I think the ACT department of education and training via TAE are one of the leaders in taking up national guidelines and implementing packages in their pure sense.

There are no state boundaries to the introduction of the national quals compared to some states, particularly in Victoria and New South Wales who are reluctant to change the system. I think here in Canberra they are quite proactive in that area. I think they make it as seamless as possible. From my point of view, as an industry person, the actual implementation of training packages in the ACT has been quite a happy event.

There are some things that need to be said. I think the ACT accreditation agency, ARC, are effective but some of the quality audits that they do could probably be improved on. I feel at times from an industry perspective, particularly with VET in schools, we want the qualification to be credible in industry. Unless those quality audits are carried out properly and there is validation of RTOs in the school system, then industry loses faith, particularly employers, who say, "Well, if it's not the same as out in industry then is it as good as?" I think that needs to be addressed because it is something that can keep the system undone.

They are some of the things that I looked at. The effectiveness of the admin: from my point of view, we deal with the system in TAE as it involves industry liaison officers and they have sectors in industries to look after. I find sometimes that the rotation of these officers is frustrating in that you just get a person up to speed with your industry, with

the nuances and the rigours of your industry, and all of a sudden they are doing something else. You start again with a new person; and you just start from scratch. This is particularly so in electrical, electrotechnology, water and gas.

If you are not involved with industrial relations, it takes a long time to understand what you can and what you can't do. You get somebody up to speed and all of a sudden they are doing a job in fashion or something else and you start again with a new officer. Industry just runs out of patience with that. I find that I am involved with those liaison officers a lot of the time. They are good people who try very hard, but I think at the mid-management or management level they could stop the rotations. It affects us greatly, it costs us a lot of money.

I think also there is a huge influence on teachers in TAE and I think there has to be a blend between industry and educationalists in that department. It seems to me that a lot of people don't understand where industry is coming from. They have virtually left school and it is quite frustrating. I see it as becoming a bit of a dumping ground at times for educationalists from the department of education and training—or whatever their new name is; I think it is DEST now; adult education, youth affairs or something.

I find the people in TAE are quite cooperative. I get on really well with them. They are frustrated by being rotated and sometimes I think the blend between educationalists and industry people is not right. I don't make any apologies for saying that—that is my opinion.

I find the administrative processes are quite bureaucratic. It is very difficult to respond to new technologies. Particularly when we are focussing on a knowledge-based economy, it is difficult to respond to new technologies when we get held up by the bureaucratic system. In my ITAB I have taken the initiative with the Australian Greenhouse Office and developed some sustainable renewable qualifications for Australia. So we have taken the lead in the national ITAB role. I have developed a bit of a rapport with AGO and we develop national quals for renewable and sustainable energy. It takes a long time to get into the system so it can be effective in the delivery of the training.

It is quite frustrating really in that you develop a qual, and you go through the bureaucratic system and somebody, particularly in the bureaucratic area, says, "Well, it doesn't fit into the system, therefore we can't do it." That is quite frustrating from an industry's point of view when it is a vital industry. In our industry here we are focusing on new technologies like photonics—some of the knowledge-based stuff and R&D. I think TAE are quite responsive but have very huge problems in getting it through the national system. I don't criticise TAE for it but I criticise the bureaucracies in most state and territory training authorities.

They are the sorts of things that I have come across. I have been involved with ITAB for 10 years and I didn't really know what the competencies were when I got involved. This was a new system. I have been involved in the national process of developing electrotechnology training packages, water and gas, so I have sort of been at the ground level and worked our way through.

From an ITAB point of view, I think TAE's performance in measuring our effectiveness has been quite poor. We were given what we used to call operational money, which we call DES, which was a Commonwealth-funded thing years ago. Then it was for an operation. It was actually to get established. I think the criteria was to provide a strategic plan how you were going to implement industry. That has gone from operational money to virtually a fee-for-service type thing, where there is a performance agreement and that has been for probably the last five or six years. We have never been measured against those—not comprehensively anyway.

In respect of some of the criticisms about ITABs from bureaucracy and industry, particularly employer associations, we have never been told that we are not doing the job properly and we have never been measured against a performance agreement. It is quite significant that I used to make sure I put the documentation in according to the performance agreement and I never received any comment back that I was doing a good job or a bad job, or an in between job or whatever. So I assumed that it was going quite well.

I think we have been quite effective because our ITAB here is virtually financially independent. We are doing a lot of work other than the work for TAE. We are doing more work for our other clients, which include industry, community, the apprentices and the trainees themselves. So we have been doing that type of work—pastoral care, aptitude tests, all the things that help apprentices in industry who engage training packages. So we have been proactive nationally as well.

We are at present reviewing the national electrotechnology package from Canberra, so we've got that contract which is a two-year contract. That is a huge job for us, but we have a huge influence on what goes into the package because we actually develop it. So local industry has a huge say in what happens nationally. With this knowledge-based stuff, this knowledge-based economy, there will be new qualifications instigated in Canberra that we will put inside the package. There will be a research and development qual, certificate 4 diploma and advanced diploma level. It has virtually come straight from the ACT. So we will be putting that into the national package.

THE CHAIR: Bob, just before you go on. While you are talking about trainees, there was a comment made earlier by Vince Ball that they were coming across apprentices within their areas who had ABNs. Is this something that you have actually encountered within your area?

Mr Taylor: No. In our area we don't because it is heavily licensed. Obviously, it is heavily regulated—electricity acts and all those sorts of things. So to be a contractor and to be able to work in the industry, to have your own business, you have to be completely qualified and licensed by the building and electrical plumbing control. You have to have this to be able to start up your own business. So you have to get a contractors licence virtually, after a working licence.

THE CHAIR: So the licensing body acts as a policing-type organisation.

Mr Taylor: It just can't happen. Really, if somebody works without that qualification, they are breaking the law. No, we don't have that issue. We have had issues where we have had a lot of pressure from RTOs, and particularly schools, to deliver one part of

a qual. In our industry, to deliver a set of competencies out of a licence qual is like saying, “Well, we’ll teach you to do half the job but you won’t be able to work because, at the end of it, you can’t work without a licence,” so you just can’t deliver it. People don’t understand that. There has been a lot of talk between the industry advisory body and educationalists as to why we can’t do that. But we are tied by regulation, electricity acts and all the rest of it.

You talk about deregulation. In some industries it is good. Others need it and particularly in our industry, where we are working with electricity, I think it is needed—probably streamlined, but needed. We base all our quals on regulatory requirements. So we haven’t got a choice, really; we have to comply with that.

I probably criticise TAE in respect of their accommodation. The perception of going up to the fifth floor in Allara Street and being confronted with a telephone to talk to somebody about VET and apprenticeships is, in my opinion, a disaster.

THE CHAIR: You have to know who you are going to ring in the first place, don’t you?

Mr Taylor: Yes. First of all you arrive there to ask somebody about your contract of training particularly apprentices, young apprentices. You are confronted with a telephone with two doors in front of you with security codes on them. I see that as diabolical. If you are going to talk about promoting VET, why would you do that to your client? I think it is a disgrace. That is my opinion. There used to be a nice shopfront there and it was well used, but economics obviously have got rid of that shopfront. But I just see it as diabolical. If you are going to promote VET, and you are going to provide a service to apprentices, you don’t have a phone there with a list of telephone numbers, and you wouldn’t have a clue who you were going to ring anyway. So I don’t like that at all.

Let me refer to some of the current programs and the extent to which they satisfy community needs. In our industries they do. I think they are pretty good, they are fairly targeted, but the RTOs, in my opinion, rely on class sizes. If you haven’t got enough in the class, you don’t deliver it. We struggle with one-off type courses, particularly renewable, sustainable—people who just want a little bit in skill enhancement. In particular, a major public provider struggles to deliver skill enhancement-type courses—just upskilling, delivering one competency at a time—because of class sizes and they won’t deliver them. So unless you have got 15, go away. I find that quite diabolical, really. But seems to be the go at the moment.

Unmet needs and gaps: I think, as far as mainstream quals are concerned, we are okay for our industries. I don’t think this will be the case if there is anything other than mainstream. I had an incident the other day involving someone who is a switchboard manufacturer. There is a similar course to an electrician’s course, certificate 3 systems electrician’s course, but there were only three, so the switchboard manufacturer couldn’t get that person trained other than in systems electrician, and they wouldn’t satisfy the competencies to be ticked off. That is going to be a problem in a couple of years time because the flexibility isn’t there, they won’t deliver.

THE CHAIR: Is this the TAFE provider?

Mr Taylor: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Are there any private RTOs that do any of these courses?

Mr Taylor: No. Because of the cost of delivery, particularly trade electronic and electrical training, and the consumables and all the rest, the cost is prohibitive to most private RTOs. The private RTOs don't have any problem in delivering the first year of a trade course, because a lot of it is theory. But the moment you get into the higher levels of physics and the workshop-type stuff, you are talking about an infrastructure of \$300,000 or \$400,000. Most private RTOs can't deliver that stuff, so you have got to rely on the public provider and they are fairly inflexible. If it's mainstream, okay; if it's not, take a hike. That is not good enough if you want to be responsive to the industry's training needs.

User choice: if anybody knows what user choice is—obviously you do—it doesn't exist. That is what the RTOs offer.

THE CHAIR: Jenny explained those three different buckets of money earlier.

Mr Taylor: So, you can go along and say, "I want to be a photonics certificate 3," which there is a qual for, and CIT will say, "Sorry." It is probably a bad example, because they have actually responded to photonics. But, say, an automotive accessory person. They won't be able to deliver it because there is only one person in the class. Interesting.

THE CHAIR: Is there any scope to deliver the training flexibly?

Mr Taylor: I have got that down here. I don't think we have put enough resources into flexible alternate delivery methods and I think CIT should be looking at that as a means of satisfying those needs. That is the criticism I would make of CIT.

MS DUNDAS: Could you give us some examples of flexible alternative measures?

Mr Taylor: Well, say in the electricity supply industry, we have developed a CD-ROM for people working on high voltage equipment. That is delivered on site. The ITABs network has developed that. It is developed on site, and it is virtual reality, if you like. I think it was fairly expensive to deliver but it is virtual reality working on live equipment in front of a computer. If you make a mistake obviously you go back to start and start again. But if you know you have killed three people it comes off the computer. Then there is a practical application of that in a simulated-type workplace over in Actew. So we virtual train them and then go into a practical simulated-type environment where they actually have to go up a pole and do it.

MS DUNDAS: Do they come out with the same qualifications?

Mr Taylor: They come with the same qualification, yes. They have to satisfy a whole range of safety issues in there—permit system, a whole range. So if you look at the computer and it comes up that you went over and you put the ladder up that pole, it will say, "Hold on, did you get a permit to do that?" If you haven't gone through the permit system to be able to do that, it rejects you and you have got to start again. It is quite clever. It was done by a company in Phillip and we instigated it here for the national

ITAB. So there are ways. But you have got to think outside the square a little bit and I am not so sure that we think outside the square enough when we deliver here.

We are fortunate enough in our industry that technology changes all the time. Our training up to about six years ago was reactive rather than proactive and we identified that in an ITAB workshop at national level. We, particularly in the ACT, decided we were going to be really proactive in what was happening. With the Internet you can virtually find out what is happening in America and Germany. Particularly Germany suits our industry—it is quite into the high tech stuff. We find out what is happening there and we try to be proactive in what is coming, particularly in areas of smart buildings, photonics, sustainable energy, renewable energy.

Particularly renewable energy now is something that will involve what you would call an electrician because those systems will be connected to the grid. Say you have got a house out on a property and you have got a wind generator: the electricity energy you don't use will be put back into the grid and sold to the distributor. So if you have got five wind generators you can actually make money on your generation. But you need people who are aware of the safety aspects of connecting into the grid—people who have an understanding of the system, how it differs from the conventional methods of generation. So we have sort of gone down the line of making sure in our qualifications that every electrician understands sustainable energy and also can connect renewable systems into the existing grid.

That is proactive because it hasn't happened yet, but it is going to happen in three or four years. It has happened in some areas, but very rarely. We are ahead of the pack with things like that. They are getting ready already and it is going to happen whether we like it or not.

THE CHAIR: You have touched on it with the lack of thinking outside the square, and you talk about it with the TAFE provider. Jenny Wardrop was saying before that while she wouldn't be able to exist without the TAFE provider in town because they provide a lot of the stuff, she has had the situation where the only way she has been able to get courses delivered is by going to the private providers because of the nature of her different industries, and that is after considerable negotiation with TAFE. That leads me into a couple of questions. First of all, you have talked about interactive CD-ROM, so in effect the electro ITAB network have set themselves up as an RTO.

Mr Taylor: We just made it available to RTOs. So it is developed as, if you like, assistance to RTOs.

We have done the same with an assessment method too. We have set up a system, available to RTOs free of charge, where an electrician, an up to advanced diploma level person, fills out a weekly data card. Actually it monitors what they do on the job weekly for four, five years, whatever their qual. So you can actually see where they are exposed to the competencies that you are trying to assess. So it gives a visual and a text analysis of how that person is working and whether they have addressed the competencies that are required to be assessed for the qual. That is available to RTOs free of charge.

THE CHAIR: Okay. I suppose my question in relation to that was: do you think that you are being stymied by not being able to actually deliver?

Mr Taylor: Yes. If CIT said to me, “Bob, go out and get 50 trainees in business equipment traineeship and we will deliver it flexibly,” I could fill their places. But it is very difficult when that isn’t my role. My role is to make sure the training is up to date. It is an industry’s voice to training. But if CIT said, “Bob, here is \$50,000. You go out and get us 50 people,” I could do that in the industry.

THE CHAIR: But you are not looking to actually have the ITAB act as an RTO?

Mr Taylor: No, not at all. I don’t think we can be.

THE CHAIR: You are looking basically to actually have the ITAB being an intermediary?

Mr Taylor: That is exactly what it is meant to be. It is meant to be industry’s voice in training and the government’s voice back to industry. I think we are proactive from the industry side up. We actually implemented government policy into industry—particularly VET in schools and particularly training packages. That was it. That was the government’s conduit to get industry to take up training packages.

THE CHAIR: So the other part of my question was: do you think CIT are able to change?

Mr Taylor: Yes, I do. I have got a great working relationship with CIT. But class sizes are an issue and flexible delivery is an issue, and they are always going to be unless we do something about it. We rely on CIT. I have a good relationship with them. They try and do everything that I ask as far as industry goes, but they are stymied by their systems as well, particularly class sizes. But the actual faculty is satisfying our needs, except we need to do more. I find them quite good but we can’t just stand around. I think we can make it better.

MS DUNDAS: On a slightly different point: you made the point about industry’s voice in training and the government’s voice back to industry.

Mr Taylor: Yes.

MS DUNDAS: There has been a lot of concern raised in the course of this inquiry about communication through the entire vocational training education network—just everywhere. Where do you see the perception that communication isn’t working coming from? Is it because the information that you are getting from government isn’t then being translated properly into industry, or is it that industry doesn’t understand the message, or—

Mr Taylor: It is real interesting and we talked about this before. I sat in a workshop with ANTA, which is the national authority, and they focused on a whole range of how to communicate, if you like, the training packages and the information into industry. They focused on employer associations and ITABs and unions—but more with employer associations than ITABs because ITABs are made up of unions and employer associations. So that balance was there. We had workshops all across the country; we

had them everywhere. We tried to get employers engaged in talking about training packages and competencies. That was okay.

It is a very complicated system if all you want to do is put on an apprentice. I was an employer for 15 years and I had at one stage 100 guys working for me. I didn't really want to know the ins and outs of the vocational education training system as an employer. I wanted to be able to send my person along and be trained to the competencies that I wanted for my business. They spent a lot of money on trying to market it to employers who were really keen on getting on in their business. They spent a lot of money on ITABs to market training packages and vocational education and training. In my opinion, they would have been better off spending the money to be given to the RTOs to market.

As an employer you go to TAFE, for example, CIT, and say, "I want my person to be a systems electrician certificate or electrician," and the TAFE then could say, "This is how it's done. This is the new qual." Because you don't think about training until you put somebody on, there is no need to market the people. As soon as they put somebody on, where do they go to? They go to the RTO. Whilst a lot of my colleagues think that the money should have gone to the ITABs, I don't believe that. I think it should have gone straight to the RTOs where people go to get trained. Then they could have marketed what was happening in the VET system from there. That is my opinion and probably most ITAB people disagree with me.

I see a whole lot of money being wasted in running around trying to convince employers of a new VET system when they are not going to put anybody on anyway and don't need the information until they do. When they need somebody, the only person they talk to really when it gets down to it is the RTO. It is like anything else: you take notice when you need something; you don't take any notice when you don't need it. I think it was a mistake. A lot of money was wasted. That is my opinion.

I see that with NACs. They haven't got a clue. They ring me constantly in respect of how my qualifications work. Their staff rotation would be such that if they last six weeks it is a miracle because they pay a pittance to their field officers. Somebody might get trained up in that NAC organisation about electrotechnology, which is complicated—there is licensing, there are industrial relations issues, there are awards, there are EBAs; it just goes on and on and on. You can't expect somebody that is not an industry person to understand that.

So I have got an agreement in place now with Caloola, that when they sign up somebody from my package I attend the sign up because invariably if I don't they put them in the wrong qual. So I have looked at every sign up and given it the tick to make sure they are in the right qual. Now, that is a pain in the neck. They get paid to do these sign ups; I don't. It is a real imposition on my time when I could be doing something else.

THE CHAIR: Jenny mentioned also that there is no way that the NACs, the new apprenticeship centres, could have a clue as to what is involved in every training package.

Mr Taylor: No. Impossible. You can't. I don't understand Jenny's training package. I understand the principles but the nuances in everybody's industry is different, particularly when there are industrial relations issues and particularly when the difference between a certificate 3 data communications person and a certificate 3 systems electrician is three competencies. They wouldn't know the difference. One works with extra low voltage, which looks the same, and one works on low voltage, which is the dangerous stuff. So somebody over here could be working on an extra low voltage, 50 volt below, that won't hurt anybody and somebody over there could be working on 50 volt to 1,000 volt, and they put them in the same qual. Doesn't work.

MR PRATT: It's dangerous.

Mr Taylor: Dangerous, and these people don't know the difference.

THE CHAIR: It can end up leading to industrial deaths.

Mr Taylor: But it is not even that. It is just that you have to know the rules of the package so that when you go to the RTO you can assist with what goes in it. And poor old NACs don't understand that.

MR PRATT: What if the money was there for channelling to RTOs to make that the main employer VET package—shall we call it the education or the information process where government and the industry might want to keep employers informed about what is available and how the system works and what the advantages are of tapping into it?

Mr Taylor: There is a role for ITABs in that role because ITABs are both employer and employee organisations. You often hear the argument that industry said such and such and it turns out the National Electrical Contractors Association said it. Well, that's half the equation because the CEPU, the workers, are represented by a union and the advantage of an ITAB when a product comes out of an ITAB is that it has been through that process. So it is signed off by both employer and employee bodies. If you go down the employer path, then the moment you get that signed off the employees need to be consulted. With an ITAB, that is done, finished, complete—whatever comes out is going to happen.

Sometimes the employees want something and the boss objects. It doesn't happen. Sometimes the boss says something and the employees object. It doesn't happen. Anything that comes out of an ITAB, that's done, and that is the advantage of having bipartite organisations in training. Otherwise it just doesn't happen.

It is interesting that I did a part-time apprenticeship report three years ago on a traineeship in electrical VET in schools and one of the parties wouldn't sign it off. It went for two or three years before I negotiated a sign off between those two parties, but I got the outcome. But it took that long to negotiate through EBAs and industrial relations. Anybody else wouldn't have had a chance. If it had gone to an employer association, they would never have got it through. If it had gone to an employee association, they would never have got it through. But we were sort of the intermediary and managed to get it through. That is the advantage, obviously.

MR PRATT: Can you just tell me a little bit, please, about how your ITAB functions in respect of analysing the ACT job market? What are the trade qualification needs? Where are the gaps in terms of where the ACT is going to, the strategic planning? Can you just give a quick run-down on that?

Mr Taylor: Sure. I am an ex-electrical contractor, so first of all I analyse how the market is going to go, and I do that in water, gas, electricity supply and also electrotechnology, which is basically electrician, advanced diploma. My first step is to go to the capital works program, and I look at the capital works program for the next 10 years. Every time I talk to my employers I ask them for a make-up—and I have a standard pro-forma. I ask them questions like “What area of the industry are you working in?”, “What do you perceive you’ll be doing in five years?”, “What skills have your employees got?”, “How do you see the market in the next five years?” So it is a one-pager and they just fill that out, and I put that into a database. You can see where the industry is going by, first of all, the capital works; secondly, by the focus that the companies have in who they employ and where they perceive the skills gaps are going to be in the next five years.

So with everybody I interview, I have a little list—I take it in my pocket and they get a bit sick of me, actually. I say, “Can you just fill that out.” It is a matter of tick, tick, tick, and I do that with every interview I do with the employer and with our union reps. So I do that constantly and my project officer does the same. After a while it builds up and you can see where everything is going. It is just, I think, a common sense approach, rather than send out a questionnaire which nobody fills out. Unless you are sitting with people, if you get 10 per cent return on a questionnaire you are doing really well. So that’s a disaster. But if you do it as you go, at the end of the day you have got probably 300 pro-formas filled out for the year, 300 different companies, and you can see where the industry is going. It is not hard.

Also our apprenticeship profiling system tells us where they are going to. We use that because you can tell from where the apprentices are being placed when they are doing their work structure where the industry is heading. So we monitor, via our profiling system, where the market is leading our industry and you can tell by the way the apprentices are placed and the activities they are undertaking. We pre-empted that there would be a data communications boom two years before it started and we were up and going ready to satisfy that. We had actually been proactive in that and making sure it was in the electives of the electricians program.

Also we have regard to the regulators who keep in touch with those. Really, it is industry consultation. But we made a mistake in the first three or four years where we used to send out surveys. That was a disaster, that didn’t work.

MR PRATT: Too much paperwork?

Mr Taylor: Yes. It was an all singing and dancing type document and people just didn’t want to fill it out. We actually offered a prize to the Barrier Reef as an incentive to fill it out and we still only got 10 per cent back.

MR PRATT: They must have been pretty sick and tired of going to the Barrier Reef.

Mr Taylor: It was interesting because we thought, “Let’s do something a bit innovative to get them to send the information back.” Now we don’t do it. We take out a one page every time we talk to them. We ask them to fill it out, we take it away, and it works. It is the best thing we ever did. That has been for the last five or six years. Otherwise you are just groping in the dark; you take a guess.

THE CHAIR: Any there any other questions? Thank you very much, Bob, for your time.

MR PRATT: Yes, thanks very much.

THE CHAIR: If we come up with any further questions, we will give you a call.

Mr Taylor: Very good. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 2.16 pm.