



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING  
AND YOUTH AFFAIRS**

(Reference: [Vocational education and youth training in the ACT](#))

**Members:**

**MS M PORTER (Chair)**  
**MR S DOSZPOT (Deputy Chair)**  
**MRS J JONES**  
**MS Y BERRY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**WEDNESDAY, 26 MARCH 2014**

**Secretary to the committee:**  
**Mr A Snedden (Ph: 620 50199)**

**By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory**

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

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### ***Privilege statement***

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

**The committee met at 1.03 pm.**

**BURCH, MS JOY**, Minister for Education and Training

**JOSEPH, MS DIANE**, Director-General, Education and Training Directorate

**COVER, MS LEANNE**, Deputy Director-General, Education and Training Directorate

**GOLEBY, MS ANN**, Director, Training and Tertiary Education, Education and Training Directorate

**MITCHELL, MS BETH**, Director, Student Engagement, Education and Training Directorate

**DODD, MS JENNY**, Deputy Chief Executive, Canberra Institute of Technology

**STENLAKE, DR NICOLE**, Executive Director, People and Organisational Governance, Canberra Institute of Technology

**FUZZARD, MS RHONDA**, Manager of Student Support, Canberra Institute of Technology

**THE CHAIR:** Good afternoon, minister. I would like to welcome you, Ms Joseph and your officials this afternoon to the first hearing of the inquiry by the education, training and youth affairs committee into vocational education and youth training in the ACT. This is the first public hearing, as you probably know, and we will be holding further hearings on the reference in the near future with a number of groups and individuals who have made submissions to us. The committee has published nine submissions on its website to date. A copy of the committee's hearing program for today and tomorrow is on the table near the door.

I welcome you, Ms Burch, and thank you very much for appearing before us this afternoon with your officials. I also welcome officials from the Canberra Institute of Technology. CIT has a major role to play in vocational education and training in the ACT, and the committee notes that a significant part of the government's submission deals with that role.

I draw your attention to the privilege statement that is in front of you, on the pink card. I am sure you have all read it before and are aware of the implications, but could you signify that you have read it and that you are aware of it.

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much. These hearings are being broadcast and streamed. I welcome any opening remarks that you might want to make, minister.

**Ms Burch:** Thank you for the opportunity to come along and provide information to you.

The submission that we have put in has been a very strong collaboration between the Education and Training Directorate and Canberra Institute of Technology. The submission focuses on providing a comprehensive picture of publicly funded vocational training in the ACT and the diverse range of options available for youth, the effectiveness of the ACT's VET sector in achieving the territory's major

objectives for skills and workforce development, including assisting young people to make successful transitions from school to work or further education and training, increasing the skill levels of our population and ensuring that all working-age Canberrans have an opportunity to develop skills and capabilities that they need for participation in our community.

Evidence in our submission reveals that ACT youth have achieved exceptional outcomes in education and employment when compared to the rest of the nation. Publicly funded VET programs accessed during school years and after leaving school have contributed to those results.

VET qualifications allow for better employment opportunities, higher wages and the prospects of achieving higher skills and qualifications. I take this opportunity to recognise the Canberra Institute of Technology's important contribution to servicing the training needs of the Canberra region in a role that spans high-level training and improved outcomes for disadvantaged learners as well.

VET in our public schools supports the successful transition of our young people from school to employment. The Australian school-based apprenticeships, in particular, provide an opportunity for students to engage in practical paid work in parallel with completing both the nationally recognised training and the year 12 certificate.

The challenge that now confronts the ACT is to sustain and improve the high attainment levels of our youth in the face of contracting commonwealth spending and the likely impact on entry-level jobs in the Australian public service and supporting industries. To meet this challenge the ACT government recognises that an equally strong focus must be kept on ensuring that the skills required for a more diverse, productive economy are delivered by the ACT VET system and supporting participation in VET by those who are vulnerable or in need.

Fundamental to the ACT government's strategy is addressing the language, literacy and numeracy needs of students seeking to participate and succeed in VET programs. The government's submission describes a wide range of language, literacy and numeracy programs available at CIT. CIT is a major provider of adult literacy programs across Canberra, targeting jobseekers, apprentices and culturally and linguistically diverse students.

VET has always been a priority for this government. This is demonstrated by the increase in VET options and significant VET infrastructure investment since 2001. The next couple of years will be a challenging time for Canberra's economy. Young people are especially vulnerable to changes in economic conditions, and it is the youth who are not fully engaged in work or study after leaving school who are at greater risk of insecure futures.

Quality VET outcomes for youth and equity groups will create the skilled workforce needed to support and encourage investment and innovation in our economy, and this, in turn, will create more diverse employment opportunities for Canberra youth. These strategies are at the heart of ACT government planning and priorities for VET.

In conclusion, I take the opportunity at the start—because we always disperse quite

quickly—to acknowledge the efforts not only of the Education and Training Directorate but also of the officials at the Canberra Institute of Technology.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. I would like to acknowledge that a member of our committee is absent today. Mrs Jones unfortunately has undergone some surgery in the last couple of days, so she is unable to be with us today.

**Ms Burch:** Send her our best wishes.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much. We certainly will do that. I might start off with a question. Minister, you mentioned during your opening remarks the fact that we have great success in keeping young people in education to year 12. It is part of what we do to enable young people to go on to further education, and we have a good rate. My first question is: how do we manage to do that? What is it about our ACT education system that assists our young people to go through to year 12 and not leave perhaps in year 10? How is that going to assist us to face those issues that you mentioned about the difficult time that we are possibly going to face in the near future or maybe in the mid-term future? I heard some reports on the radio about unemployment rates around Australia for young people. Do you want to explore those while you are answering that question?

**Ms Burch:** I will give an overview and then go to the two officials to my left and right around the particular programs. The ACT has certainly had a very strong performance in keeping youth connected through schools and also through alternative education programs. Any jurisdiction will have students that disengage from school, but we have always had a focus on those vulnerable youth through youth transitions and youth commitments. I think it is a combination of having an eye on individual students and making sure that we have the right response to their needs, whether that is by way of stronger support within the formal school structure or alternative education programs or mentor support through ASBAs or other training opportunities.

**THE CHAIR:** Can you say for the record what “ASBA” is?

**Ms Burch:** The Australian school-based apprenticeships program. Again, every jurisdiction has to keep an eye on youth unemployment. We do better than other states, but there is a concern that, should our economy contract, the vulnerable in our community—that includes youth—will be disadvantaged because those traditional opportunities for entry into graduate programs, public service and others, may not be so easily attained. I might go to ETD in the first instance and then to CIT for the programs they do.

**Ms Joseph:** The year 12 attainment rate in the ACT has been 90 per cent or above for a number of years, and it is above that of other jurisdictions in the country. A number of diverse programs and experiences come together to support students to transition at least until the end of year 12.

We can look back at the change in the leaving age. We have had compulsory education up to the age of 17—I do not have the exact date in front of me—for the last four years in the territory. Together with that, schools have really focused on the need for a diverse range of vocational educational experiences and skills and

accredited VET in schools programs and quality provision in all programs through schools. We see vocational learning embedded from an early age in some of the primary schools. Horticulture, gardens and produce to be cooked are one small element in that regard.

We have career tasters and work experience provided from years 9 and 10, and, in particular, focus programs, either within our schools or through partnerships with different agencies, for younger people at risk. Obviously, as well, I refer to embedding work studies in the Australian curriculum and what I would call the mainstream traditional school program.

I would also point you towards our current strategic plan for 2014-17, where we are really focusing on the individual. So whilst we have a 90 per cent success rate to year 12, our challenge is to make sure it is as close to 100 per cent as possible. Our strategic plan for education and training looks at individuals and makes sure everything is done to progress those students irrespective of their background, their circumstances or the place where they go to study.

We link that not just to educational outcomes but also to the economic outcomes of the territory, as well as looking at our ambitious targets around increasing the number of high-performing students, reducing the number of students who are not achieving, increasing the number of children who benefit from early childhood education and care and, importantly in this arena, increasing qualification levels of the whole of the ACT community.

That is particularly where we partner with CIT and a number of other agencies around our national partnership in skills and workforce development at the moment and looking at structural reform as well as at different training options and packages.

**Ms Dodd:** Over 40 per cent of CIT students are 24 or under, with a significant percentage of those being over 17. When we are looking at youth, that is an important part of the place that CIT plays in that discussion around youth. We only have two per cent of our students who are under 17 and they are in very specific programs.

Of the cohort of youth, they range across all the programs that CIT delivers—not specifically for youth but across the whole 400 courses that we have on offer. A couple of programs are worth identifying specifically. I will identify two and I will ask my colleague Dr Stenlake to talk specifically about our Indigenous program. With the Access10 program, there are at times people who have not been able, despite all our focus on keeping people in schools, to complete their education to year 10 at school and they are able to access that learning through CIT. Many of those students then go into an ACT schools college to complete year 12. Of course, our year 12 program has had, over the last five years, a higher percentage of youth in it than it had prior to that, accessing year 12—although it is in the category of post-17. That is a program that enables younger people who have not been able to acquire year 12 to come back.

It is important to note that right across every single one of CIT's programs, over 40 per cent are in that category, and are right across the spectrum of everything that we do. I will hand over to Dr Stenlake to make mention of the Yurauna Centre.

**Dr Stenlake:** I am Executive Director of People and Organisational Governance at CIT; the CIT Yurauna Centre falls within that portfolio. At CIT we are very committed to providing educational pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I am pleased to report that we have seen very significant growth in our student numbers, both in programs more broadly across CIT and in programs that are delivered within the CIT Yurauna Centre.

One of those programs which Jenny was referring to is the Access10 program. This allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to undertake their year 10 education in a culturally sensitive environment. CIT Yurauna has a very strong family feel. There is a lot of additional support for our students, so as well as teachers that are actually employed directly in the delivery of those programs we have other staff who are employed in support roles in terms of providing student support, counselling and general advice on life skills.

Many of those students are successful first time round in completing their year 10 qualification. But we also see that sometimes you get students that are not quite ready. They may disappear for a time, but they do come back. That is something that is very encouraging for us: many people, once they have not succeeded in an educational opportunity, are reluctant to return and repeat the process, but we are not finding that within our Yurauna Centre. Often the student was not yet ready. When they are ready, they will come back.

Another thing that we are quite proud of is that the reputation of CIT Yurauna is well known in the community. What often happens is that if we have one successful student, the next thing we know we have brothers, sisters, cousins and other family members accessing CIT Yurauna for that same opportunity. We are very much seeing that if we can get one success story, that can multiply and make quite a significant contribution to the community.

**Ms Burch:** I might go to one of your questions about employment. There is a well-understood pathway of students attaining through school and going to either higher ed or vocational training. And they succeed. But it is important for us also—I made comment earlier that I think Yurauna and Access10 are one of those—to pay attention to young folk that are disengaging from school. If they disengage from school and get off that fundamental plank of skills and training, they will be disadvantaged. Certainly, under any pressure, they will be the first ones to be disconnected from jobs and be unable to get into jobs.

Let me go to some of our alternate programs for training. As I look through it, I remain impressed that we are able to provide alternate programs for training. They are in the submission, on page 58. It is worth mentioning some of the alternate programs that we bring into place, because if we do not look after the vulnerable in our community, we are not paying attention to what we need to do. There is the Access10 program. The Galilee school out at Lions Youth Haven is a great alternate program. But it is also the youth engaging, the re-engaging boards, where ETD and local businesses come together, based on the school networks, to make that absolutely strong connection. It is one part of the puzzle to have the training; the other part of the puzzle is to have that access and that facilitation into a job through the connection to



local businesses.

**Ms Dodd:** At CIT, for every single one of our programs, we have an industry advisory group. As part of our restructure last year, we connected our industry advisory groups more strongly with our CIT council. So there is a relationship now where we have our overall council speaking with a broad sweep about ACT industry and so on; then, at each of the college levels, they have one, two or three advisory groups that are specific to people from that industry area that are providing that localised flavour on what is needed in the skills development arena and also, as the minister said, providing opportunities for jobs and work experience through the process of the learning.

**THE CHAIR:** How does that information about where the skills shortages are get fed up from the industry groups to you or to the senior people in CIT so that those decisions can be made? How does that supply and demand thing work?

**Ms Burch:** It is being in close contact with the local industry and having communication with that. And there is FINE; I might go to Jenny Dodd and then to Ms Cover for that. It is about making sure we get it right. In a time of economic flux, we need to be ready for what our needs are now but not take our eye off training, so that when the economy kicks up again we have actually got the workforce in place. The FINE list, which is around the industry needs assessment of the skills base, goes to the serious thinking about what CIT does when it is developing its statement of intent. Do you want to add to that?

**Ms Dodd:** The ACT skills list, which is produced by the Education and Training Directorate, informs CIT's thinking about where we put our hours of training to meet the ACT's skills list. In 2013 we paid a lot of attention to the ACT skills list. As members of the committee will be aware, our statement of intent came through much earlier than it has in the past—a full six months earlier. We are putting a very concerted effort into marrying what our program areas are saying they want to deliver with what the ACT skills list is in terms of using government-subsidised training places for those environments. We have a lot more scrutiny, and a lot more granulation is occurring in that regard, to make sure that we are meeting the skills list. I might pass across to Leanne Cover to talk about it from an Education and Training Directorate viewpoint.

**Ms Cover:** As both the minister and Ms Dodd have said, we have been working on a tool to assist us in this area to develop what we know to be the needs list, if you like, for employers, so that we can match our funding to those industry needs. I might just ask Ms Goleby, who looks after that section, to take you through how we have developed that with industry.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. I realise that we need to move on very shortly to other people in the committee, but this is a crucial question in talking about vocational education and training—that we understand the relationship between the skills that are needed and the education that is provided.

**Ms Goleby:** In trying to be brief, chair, the process that we went through involved deep community and industry consultation, and modelling on top of that, to come up

with the skills needs list for the ACT. This is not going to be a stagnant list; obviously, needs will change, and that will continue to be addressed in reviewing the list.

As the minister said, this is going to allow us to best target, and get best value for money for, the government spend on training. But if we focus it back onto the participants, it is going to give very clear information to people who are going to access vocational education and training that, if they make choices in this space, not only will they be supported financially in having that funding available for that training but they will be most likely to get a job. As Ms Dodd was saying, in the refocusing within CIT as well, that gives really explicit information to students that this research that has led to the list is, if acknowledged by the participants, going to give them a much-heightened probability of getting a job at the end of that training.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. That was a very interesting introduction to what we are inquiring into. Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you.

**MS BERRY:** Are you asking a question or a supplementary?

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have got a supplementary I can ask.

**MS BERRY:** Okay.

**MR DOSZPOT:** But I do have a question that needs to set the scene a bit as well.

**THE CHAIR:** Ask your supplementary, Mr Doszpot. Then we will go to Ms Berry's supplementary and come back to your substantive.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you. Good afternoon, minister, Ms Joseph, Ms Dodd, Dr Stenlake, Ms Cover and Ms Goleby.

**Ms Burch:** We are all here to serve, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** The question that I want to ask regarding the Access10 program you talked about is this: how many students are actually engaged in that Access10 program at the moment?

**Dr Stenlake:** I do not have the data in front of me. We can provide that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** Maybe we can get it later.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Yes; that is fine.

**Ms Dodd:** There were about 70 at the graduation.

**MR DOSZPOT:** This is specifically aimed at the Indigenous community?

**Dr Stenlake:** No. The Access10 program at CIT is delivered in two ways. There are 49 students studying Access10 at CIT that are under 17. That will include those that

are in the program that is delivered through Yurauna. But not all the students are under 17. There are significantly more than that that do the Access10 program at CIT. It is delivered in two cohorts. One is through the college of trade skills and vocational learning and then there is another group that is delivered through the CIT Yurauna Centre.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Is this the same Access10 program that currently runs in many of the colleges in Canberra?

**Ms Burch:** That is Connect10, as I understand.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Connect10, sorry. Is it the same sort of concept for both?

**Ms Joseph:** It is similar, because it is around either getting some qualifications at the year 10 level or starting on VET qualification pathways. Within schools, particularly at year 7 and 8 levels, we have achievement centres. They are for students who we would perceive to be at risk. We have got three centres currently—one at Canberra High School, one at Campbell High School and one at Wanniasa School. Each centre is capable of catering for a maximum of 18 students at any one time. The centres focus on intensive academic and social skills support to build the confidence and competence of the students. In addition to that we have Connect10 programs. They are for year 9 and 10 students. And we support up to 20 students in those centres who have really disengaged from mainstream education. The aim for those students is to re-engage with schooling and also to explore training or work options.

Currently we have three programs. They are located at Lake Tuggeranong College, University of Canberra Senior Secondary College Lake Ginninderra and Dickson College. The enrolment for the start of semester 1 in 2013 was 37 students in total. I have not got this year's statistics at this stage. And together with that, as the minister alluded to before, we have programs like CCCares, the Galilee day program and other programs where we work with different partners depending on the needs of individual students.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have seen—

**THE CHAIR:** Just a second, Mr Doszpot. In relation to that list that you gave us now, the schools the programs run out of, I thought you said three and read out four.

**Ms Joseph:** University of Canberra Senior Secondary College Lake Ginninderra.

**THE CHAIR:** So that is one place. Sorry to interrupt you, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you. Further to the question regarding Connect10, those students that do not really get to re-engage within the educational system at the high school and college level—does that give them entree into the Access10 program? Is that the idea—that one leads to the other? Or are these two separate programs?

**Ms Joseph:** It could be both of those examples. But primarily we are making sure that, where students are disengaged, we are asking what the best option is. Dependent on their age, obviously, where we have some year 7 and 8 programs, it could be in a

Connect10 program or it could be a specialised program within the school that the school has organised itself. When those options, particularly for our year 9 and 10 students, do not work, CIT is a very good option for them.

**Ms Dodd:** The Access10 program is actually a CIT-developed program. Other training providers can access that program and deliver it. It is specifically a CIT-based program for those who have been disadvantaged in learning and have not been able to acquire their year 10. CIT does not really encourage very young people to come to CIT; we are an adult learning environment. We do our best to encourage the young to continue at school; that is the most appropriate place for them. That is reflected in the fact that only two per cent of our students are under 17. We would not want that figure to grow, because we have an excellent schooling system where those younger people should be, in a proper, nurtured environment. But the Access10 program is a CIT-developed program specifically designed for students who have been unable to get through the other programs.

**Dr Stenlake:** I might just correct my numbers, if I may. It is 14 under-17s in the Access10 program and an additional 18 students in CIT Yurauna. So that is 67 in total.

**Ms Dodd:** Who may be older than 17.

**Dr Stenlake:** No; they are the under-17s in Yurauna.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Berry, you have a supplementary.

**MS BERRY:** Minister, in your opening statement you talked about how the ACT government and the ACT community manage a change in the economic circumstances of our town and how we make sure that we provide our youth with as many opportunities as possible to be employed straight up rather than ending up in the vacuum of unemployment. Do you think that—given that the ACT government’s stimulus package will include a lot of opportunities for construction employment, with the VET system and looking into the future—we are ready to be able to provide that training to meet the needs in that sector? I suppose that also goes to older people retraining—people who are losing their jobs and retraining for other work.

**Ms Burch:** The answer to the first part of your question is yes. It goes to a combination of working through the industry list and also recognising the construction authority and their response to training needs for those in the construction area. One of the absolute gems about vocational education and training is that it is for anyone at any time in their life to upskill, to change professions. It is a very responsive, easily accessible training mechanism. You can be 30 and need to change your job or upskill to better position you for employment opportunities.

**Ms Dodd:** Construction, which I think is what you are referring to in terms of the industry, is a very significant part, in particular, of our apprenticeship-based program. More than 50 per cent of our apprentices are involved in a construction-related industry. It is a very significant component of what we do. In order to try and strengthen our delivery methodology in that industry arena, which, as you have identified, is a fundamental industry for the ACT, part of our restructure last year was to embed our Access10 program within the college of trade skills and vocational

learning. What we were trying to specifically do there was to bring closer to the industry base where the skills needs are in high demand some of the opportunity—allow the sorts of students who may not have had much exposure to industry to see and be part of a college that is also driving into the apprenticeship arena. We have melded together most of our apprenticeships and all of our construction-related apprenticeships under one college now, with Access10 and year 12 also embedded within that college.

CIT has excellent employer relationships. We have 89 per cent employer satisfaction across the apprenticeship arena. In terms of being able to meet the needs of the construction industry, I think we are very well placed. We have a very good relationship with the TFA, the trade funding authority. In that regard, I think we are there. We have some state-of-the-art facilities, probably the envy of many jurisdictions. And on top of that, we are pushing into workplace learning, where that is appropriate, in terms of apprenticeship programs. That is integral to how an apprenticeship is delivered. So I think we are well positioned. One of our challenges in the ACT is always getting economies of scale for niche programs, because we are small. That will continue to be a challenge, but in the broad-level construction industries and trades, we are well positioned.

**Ms Burch:** I might ask ETD to talk on apprentices and ASBAs, the school-based apprenticeships. But also, with our local trades training centres coming online, it really does make that connection from school into VET training and into industry very strong.

**Ms Joseph:** An Australian school-based apprenticeship, an ASBA, happens whilst you are at school. You do some general school studies as well as VET qualifications. It can give you dual qualifications, if you like. Under that system, there are over 200 different qualifications that are available. I refer you to pages 50 and 51 in our submission; they highlight the top five ASBAs that commenced in 2012. Construction was one of the highest levels that we had for our ASBAs, with 85 students commencing their Australian school-based apprenticeship in 2012.

In addition to that, we have the trade skills centres in schools program, formerly the trade training centres. Trade skills centres are intended to increase the proportion of students achieving year 12 or an equivalent qualification, to address skills shortages in traditional trades and emerging industries, and to improve the relevance and responsiveness of trade training programs in secondary schools.

In the ACT we have two trade skills centres. One is the Tuggeranong sustainable living trade training centre. I think the construction of that has been completed. There has been \$8.16 million put in to establish that trade skills centre. Funding has been provided to refurbish the facilities in six public high schools and colleges in the Tuggeranong network to bring those facilities up to industry standards to support the school-based apprentices and also VET in schools subjects.

We have just been informed, on 23 January this year, that there will be a trade skills centre for the Belconnen region. A total of \$8 million of funding will be going to that regional trade training skills centre. It will enable facilities across seven government high schools and colleges to be refurbished to industry standard and it will be

essential to maintain compliance with national RTO standards. Some of the really exciting things that schools are able to do within their facilities through their registered training organisation, RTO, status help diversify the pathways and ensure that we are linking into industry needs and also skilling students to be able to access jobs, whether that is directly from school, after going through CIT or another training provider or after going through higher education.

**Ms Burch:** Just to close that loop off, I might ask Jenny Dodd to talk about the initiative on better linkages between employment and training that we have started. It is absolutely anchored at that point between employment and training.

**Ms Dodd:** I will speak to it, but it is an initiative of the Education and Training Directorate, to whom we submit applications. At the moment we have submitted a series of applications; we have got through the expression of interest stage and we will now go forward to a full application. The concept is that the training provider and industry are linked together to provide some specific support. We are doing that across a range of our programs. We would have an aged-care application which would look at specific training programs. We have also got a range of other ones that are in the process now of being refined to go forward to the full submission. If the minister is okay with it, I will ask Ann to give the detail of how that program was constructed and what your objectives are.

**Ms Goleby:** I think Jenny has done an incredible job, actually. The notion is in the title—linking up all of the players in the sector so that they can bring to bear what they do best in a linked way, and linking with an RTO to provide that opportunity. We have conducted a number of different things to make that happen—job services, agencies, disability services, RTOs and the list goes on.

As Jenny pointed out, it also includes employers. I think we have to come back to say that employers have to become an integral part of this. We can only have apprenticeships if there are employers ready to take on apprentices. And we can only have opportunities prior to that if we actually provide those opportunities and include the employers. So one of the other things that we are trialling this year is providing some funding in our priority support program for supporting work placement opportunities, for supporting wraparound services. The better linkages program is another aspect of that. There are many things for a person who is finding it difficult to get into education and to stay there and to go on to succeed and ultimately get a job. There are many supports that sound very simple to those of us that are not experiencing those disadvantages, but there are things such as getting transport to the organisation to undertake that training. And once there, they may ask, “What do I do with my children?” So some of the other wraparound services are providing support for families so that the adults in those families can access education.

Without speaking to the proposals that are coming in, I can say that they are as diverse as your imagination. The idea was to challenge RTOs and other service agencies to work together and to think of really innovative, diverse, outside-the-square opportunities. I would just mention some of the really simple ideas of paying for a bus or picking people up, but the list goes on. We also need to work very carefully with industry, working to make sure that the opportunities are there for these students to have real experiences whilst they are taking on those opportunities.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much. Again, they are very substantive answers to those questions. You had a substantive question, Mr Doszpot.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have a substantive question. Minister—and, obviously, I would like answers from both CIT and the directorate on this—the University of Canberra had proposed a merger with the CIT some 18 months to two years ago. During the course of those discussions I was briefed by Professor Bradley at one stage, who made some very strong recommendations regarding the fact that if the merger did not go ahead with the University of Canberra, for whatever reason, she thought it was very important to CIT's future that CIT became more autonomous. With the strategic plan that you are talking about, has this option been considered by both the CIT and the education directorate?

**Ms Burch:** We are certainly well aware of those discussions between UC and CIT. What we have done—and it is a work in progress—is to look to the structure, the governance arrangements and the act that controls and manages CIT. I know that the advisory board at CIT commissioned an independent consultant to have a look at that work. I have seen that and I am considering it. But we are also now working with ETD about how we can progress and position CIT.

First and foremost, it is about making sure CIT have the ability to be flexible to respond to need, to respond to the changing training needs of our community, to be able to respond to the national framework around VET and skills reform, so that they remain a competitive player. They are our largest provider in the region. They are, significantly, the single largest public provider in the region. Whilst we may have 120 other RTOs that facilitate training in the area, certainly CIT takes the lion's share of that trade. So we need to make sure that CIT is given the wherewithal to respond to those needs.

It is a work in progress, so I would like to leave it there. There are still a number of matters under consideration. But, rest assured, as a minister, as a directorate and as an entity in its own standing, we are of a single mind about making any change that is needed to make it responsive to the future needs of our community.

**MR DOSZPOT:** My question was to Ms Joseph and Ms Dodd as well, minister.

**Ms Burch:** I think I have answered on behalf of Ms Joseph and Ms Dodd.

**MR DOSZPOT:** It sounds very autonomous to me, then. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Berry, do you have a substantive question?

**MS BERRY:** Yes, I do. I have a question regarding housing for young people who are accessing training through the VET system. You were talking, Ms Goleby, about wraparound services. Is housing something that has been considered for young people who may be coming into the town or have not got any housing and who live here, particularly in that construction sector for young men?

**Ms Cover:** I might make some general comments to start with and CIT might talk

about some of the initiatives that they undertake to assist students with accommodation. Institutions as large as CIT obviously have a number of facilities that they can access which have reasonably priced accommodation for young people.

Some recommendations have also been made by government around work to be done around trying to position accommodation options for young people—not specifically for the building and construction area. Of course, across government we work with our colleagues in other directorates. Ms Goleby was talking about those wraparound services. We are looking at how we can link up the education offerings—when a person is looking at going into accommodation that has been provided by government, how we wrap around those other services to make sure that is successful. Of course, housing is part of that package as well.

**Ms Goleby:** I cannot put my finger on it, but there is actually an initiative. I can get you some information on it. There has been some accommodation built, supported by apprentices, for housing apprentices. It has just opened.

**Ms Burch:** I know we made an election commitment around supporting it, and I think it is the industry itself that has stepped up to provide this. I think it is on a community housing basis but there is an industry partnership approach. I also know that—whether it is still current—for some time one of the local industries also supported accommodation through Havelock House for apprentices. We can bring the detail back to the committee. CIT does have a program that it can explain.

**Ms Dodd:** The new initiative is that a house at Curtin has been remodelled to enable a number of apprentices from the regions to live in the house. There are some volunteer house parents that have moved into it. It was their initiative. They had a son in the same situation. They were from Wagga. That has been supported by industry, and I think more broadly than that, to enable apprentices to live in that house. It is early days; it has just been finished. There is a group of apprentices living there and they learn to cook. Our culinary director is going to volunteer her time to help them to learn how to use knives. So there is a real community flavour to it in terms of that.

It is something that does challenge apprenticeships in terms of that opportunity for housing when they come to the ACT. We are doing as much as we can to try and facilitate resolving issues where we are made aware of them in terms of the needs for housing in that arena.

**Ms Burch:** We will bring the detail, if we can, back to you.

**THE CHAIR:** We will take a five-minute break.

**Meeting suspended from 1.53 to 2.07 pm.**

**THE CHAIR:** We will reconvene. Minister, you have an answer to an earlier question, I believe.

**Ms Burch:** Yes. There was a question about apprentice housing. On 19 March there was an open day for the apprentice house. It is a partnership between Creating Homes and Communities CHC Affordable Housing and the ACT Building and Construction



Industry Association. It was designed to provide affordable accommodation for ACT apprentices who are experiencing hardships or difficulties in finding affordable accommodation. Rent is at a fixed rate, or 25 per cent of the weekly wage. It is a brand-new house in Lyons. At the moment it has four bedrooms and storage space for tools and equipment. It is the first project of its type, and CHC are hoping to expand it to other areas in the ACT.

Over the coffee break I also reflected on a number of other projects through Housing and CSD and supporting youth, linked to education, employment and training. We will gather that up and give it to the committee as well.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. That sounds like a really good initiative.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Minister, during the break the committee had a bit of a discussion. Personally, I am not totally happy with the answer you gave us to the question I put to you. I was happy with your answer but the fact is that on every other question you have sought the advice of your officials. I am asking you to reconsider giving your officials an opportunity to answer the question. I do not expect them to go to any extremely confidential issues that you do not want to talk about, but the question is a fair question, and I would like the answer both from a departmental point of view and from CIT's point of view.

**Ms Burch:** With all due respect, Mr Doszpot, if the answer is—as it is—that we have done the work, I am happy for Jenny Dodd to talk about the overall view through the CIT restructure or the realignment, but it is a work in progress. As I said there has been a governance review undertaken by the advisory council. We are considering that work, and it is really an internal work in progress at the moment. Ms Dodd might want to talk about the restructure.

**Ms Dodd:** I will. The national skills partnership has had a range of key, high-level objectives: quality, transparency, access. There is also the role that the public provider plays within the national skills partnership. In the context of all the environmental changes that CIT finds itself in—and that is one of the very significant environmental changes that we are facing—last year we did a thorough review of our structure. That had been based on a paper that Mr Marron had presented in December 2012, and in 2013 I implemented and put, if you like, for want of a better term, flesh on the bone of what that would look like and the implementation of it.

That took us down a pathway where we reviewed a lot of things. One of the things we reviewed was our governance structure, including our internal boards and committees and how they worked in making internal decisions, and then how we were placed in terms of being able to meet the national skills partnership.

As the minister said, that led us to get a consultancy in towards the end of last year—because it was the final stage of the work we did—to have a review of what our governance structure looks like. That report has been delivered. It was commissioned by the CIT advisory council and sent to the minister, and it now adds to the reflections that the minister will make around where to now.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you very much.

**Ms Joseph:** As the minister said, it is a work in progress. I do not have anything extra to add. I could talk a little bit more about the national partnership in skills and workforce development, and about the quality, access and equity, transparency and efficiency, as reform initiatives in the VET sector in total.

**MS BERRY:** You talked a little bit before—and I would like to ask about it as a substantive question now—about the satisfaction levels of employers. Page 35 of your submission talks about satisfaction levels with the quality of training of 87.5 per cent, as opposed to employers that choose private providers, at 72.6 per cent. This was with regard to CIT as a training provider.

I am interested in that, because in my previous work before I came here, people in early childhood education particularly were talking about the different levels of consistency in outcomes from different providers. Some people would have a much higher quality trainee in their workplace; they may get one from another provider and the level was different. What do you think CIT does better in providing those quality outcomes as opposed to the private providers?

**Ms Burch:** That is a wonderful question, Ms Berry. I will ask both Dr Stenlake and Jenny Dodd to go to that. I think it underpins the quality of work that comes out of such a large institution and the offerings they have at CIT.

**Ms Dodd:** Earlier on we talked about the industry linkages that we have. We work very hard on our quality of training to meet the skills needs of industry. It is about the emphasis that we place on actually meeting our employers' needs. Also, I think it is around the quality of our teaching staff. I cannot comment particularly on why our satisfaction levels differ from those of the private providers. All I can do is talk about what CIT does and what I think we do well, which has helped us to achieve the sorts of satisfaction levels that we have got.

The single most important thing that comes out of any survey that we do, be it learner satisfaction or employer satisfaction, is around the relationship in terms of the quality of the teaching. At CIT we have a very rigorous program that ensures quality of teaching and learning. We do that with a process called the program review and improvement process. At the beginning of every cycle of learning, during and at the end, there is a cycle of review and improvement.

That adds to the very serious adoption that CIT has taken in terms of industry validation of assessment. We spent a lot of time on making sure that where we are heading in our learning and teaching and our assessment processes is meeting industry's needs.

The other aspect is the importance we place on our teaching staff having vocational competencies and also education qualifications. In our sector that means they have to be dual-qualified, dual-experienced, they have to have come from industry and they have to bring those industry vocational competencies all the time.

There are a range of strategies. The conversations we have are particularly important around professional development of teachers, and the investment that teachers have

within our agreement, so that they access professional development and they are continually refreshing and renewing, as well as running whole-of-organisation professional conversations around what it means to be a quality teaching and learning provider.

You may recall that about two years ago John Mitchell, who is a researcher in the vocational education and training space, spoke about CIT and made the comment that if there was a top eight in vocational education and training, CIT would be up there. I think it is the way in which we bring together all those dimensions that produces the outcome.

On top of that, we have a teaching and learning framework which has a series of goals that all of our colleges and all of our programs are reporting against all the time. We not only have the planning processes in place in terms of whole-of-organisation, but also we do the monitoring, control and the accountabilities to make sure that we are delivering. We then check via the employment satisfaction levels, to check that we are going okay.

Within that teaching and learning framework there are specific targets that we have; in fact our target is even a bit higher than that. That is what we are aiming for—to get to 90 per cent and above employer satisfaction with what we are doing. So I think it is about the prioritisation and then having a series of strategies that go from learning to achieving it.

When we did our restructure, and then we went on to do our new strategic plan, we spent a lot of time consulting with industry, and industry were invited to our strategic planning breakfast. They were invited to give input. We changed some of the language of our strategic plan to say that it is about education as well as skills development. We are an educator and a skills developer, and we focus on that broad sweep of employability and capability that comes out of being a quality teaching and learning environment. Nicole might like to add something extra.

**Dr Stenlake:** I might expand a little bit on the development of our teachers. Within the CIT restructure, in one of the changes that was made the teacher education team was moved to the people and organisational governance division. We are looking through that space to have an increased focus on learning and development across the whole organisation, to bring together the teacher education team with the learning and development team, and to get the best of both worlds. As well as developing the skills of the teachers that are relevant to teaching and assessment, we are also broadening out their capability in terms of being employees—working effectively in a team, negotiating, dealing with conflict and those sorts of things.

We are doing quite a lot of work in the development space in enhancing the skills of all of our employees at CIT, whether they are working directly in a teaching role or in an educational support role. CIT as an organisation has a lot of expertise, particularly in the online learning space, which allows us to deliver training to anybody within the organisation in both a cost-effective and time-effective way.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you have a supplementary, Mr Doszpot?

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have a supplementary for Ms Dodd. We received a number of submissions to this inquiry. Have you had a chance to look at some of the other submissions that have come in?

**Ms Burch:** They have only just been published, as I understand it.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Okay.

**Ms Dodd:** Yes. Unfortunately, I only received them this morning.

**MR DOSZPOT:** This is an area that I guess you have to contend with every day. It is to do with the commercial viability of courses and so forth. Mr William Dudley has put in a submission regarding his concerns about the high fees being charged by Canberra Institute of Technology for some vocational education and training courses, particularly in comparison to educational providers in other jurisdictions. Mr Dudley was talking about the Advanced Diploma of Graphic Design course, which one of his family attended this year. He stated:

This year CIT increased fees for this vocational course to the point where students are looking at a debt of just under \$27,000 for a two year Advanced Diploma that previously cost a fraction of that amount.

Apparently, when his daughter did the same course a few years ago, she paid just over \$1,100. Do you have a comment to make on why such a high fee is necessary?

**Ms Dodd:** I will make a short comment first, and then I will pass to Dr Stenlake, who has been liaising on this matter as well. Firstly, we mentioned FINE before, the forecast of industry needs list. Graphic design does not appear on that in the ACT. As we discussed earlier, we have been moving to make sure that what we are doing is meeting the skills demands in the ACT. That also means—it is, and has been for a long time, Liberal Party policy—that individuals on higher level qualifications will wear some of the cost or be able to contribute to the cost. The course itself has not gone up in cost. It is the proportion of who pays what that goes up.

In terms of the individual then contributing to some of those costs, that is possible when they can access VET fee help. In a small jurisdiction like the ACT, we made a decision that it was either all in for VET fee help or not. If we split the market that way, we would not get what we needed in terms of how VET fee help would be able to play out. So we made a decision to move a couple of our programs into VET fee help. Graphic design was one of them. I have a lot of empathy for Mr Dudley's concerns. It has continued to be able to be a viable program for us under VET fee help. It is not on the ACT skills list. So it is an important part of their being able to access a loan.

We also, importantly, made a comparison. It was not just against other states and territories, because their needs are different, and that is important to note. Their skill needs are different and their skill lists are different. If you look at the skills list in New South Wales, graphic design is actually on the skills list there. They are a bigger market as well. They are able to then offer, potentially, both an option for VET fee help and an option otherwise. We were unable to do that in the ACT when we made

that decision to move that way. We compared against our private providers and what they were charging as well, and looked at how it was going to play into the competitive environment. That is some of the rationale that sat behind the decision on where we went. I am now going to cross to Dr Stenlake to add anything that I have not been able to explain.

**Dr Stenlake:** Thanks, Ms Dodd. That is quite a comprehensive answer. I just want to put this issue in context to begin with. You have probably heard already this afternoon that there are some very significant processes that are in place, and there is extensive consultation that both CIT and the Education and Training Directorate engage in in determining the skills needs and making decisions regarding the funding of programs within CIT.

This particular issue that you have raised has been dealt with already in a number of forums. I wrote to Mr Dudley on 4 June. The acting chief executive, Ms Dodd, sent a further letter on 6 December, addressing his concerns. In addition, there were 21 questions on notice that CIT answered on this particular issue for the Select Committee on Estimates 2013-2014.

In terms of putting this in context, I just want to note that this relates to one individual. What CIT, and also the Education and Training Directorate, are trying to do is look at serving the ACT community and region, and making decisions.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sorry, could I just interrupt you. When you are saying it relates to one individual, is there only one individual doing this course?

**Dr Stenlake:** No, there is not one individual doing this course, but this is the only complaint we have received on this matter.

**MR DOSZPOT:** How many students have you got doing this course?

**Ms Dodd:** I think there are about 80. There are just over 40 in year 2 of the program. Remember that 85 per cent of CIT students are part time, so often it is very hard to pinpoint exactly where they are at in their program. There are close to 50 and there is another proportion of people that have started in year 1.

**Dr Stenlake:** I might just read a bit from the letter that was sent to Mr Dudley in regard to explaining the two primary drivers for the decision to move this program to a full cost-recovery model: “One of these drivers was to increase student access to the program, as the availability of VET FEE-HELP means that students pay less upfront than previously and only have to repay the loan when they are earning sufficient income to be able to afford it. And even then, repayments are only made for a limited amount each year, again depending on the income.”

So one of the drivers for making this change was increasing the accessibility of this program to all individuals. It also means that a level playing field was set. Previously, although the fee was a lot less than the actual cost of the program, because of the level of government subsidy, there was quite a significant fee, which was difficult for some students to find. Also, students had to be able to access their own computer and there was particular software that was needed to be successful in the program. By changing

the funding of this program, all those things were included in the delivery, so that every student, irrespective of their economic background, was able to have equal chance of success in the program. That was one of the primary drivers. I think that is one of the reasons that we have not received complaints from any of the students—because many of them are finding that the changes that we have made are to their advantage rather than to their disadvantage.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Are you saying that this matter has been handled now and you have written to—

**Dr Stenlake:** Yes; I personally wrote to Mr Dudley on 4 June, and an additional letter was sent on 6 December.

**Ms Dodd:** Could I make a comment on that?

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sure.

**Ms Dodd:** I was acting chief executive, as you are aware, last year. I wrote to Mr Dudley towards the end of the year, as Dr Stenlake identified. I received a reply from Mr Dudley. That was towards Christmas. The reply came to me. I had invited him to come in and have a conversation. He thanked me for that offer, but declined it at that point in time. In that reply, he did acknowledge receipt of the letter.

I would like to make two other comments, because I think they are important in the context of this. Part of my response to Mr Dudley was that he is right at the beginning of an era of change. That era of change is around that individual contribution to learning, in particular where a program may not be deemed to be on the ACT skills list or on the skills list. We made a decision that we would trial that with graphic design under VET fee help, because until income-contingent loans are available on diplomas and advanced diplomas, which in the ACT will not be until 1 January next year, we are unable to offer them except as full commercial programs. Graphic design was the first one we went through.

We also know, from some work that we have done, that where a loan is made available, 93 per cent of people will take the loan. The majority of people who are in our category of discussion today will take the loan. We know that there is an attractiveness about the loan to young people. It is a situation where we are looking at all our programs. To date there have been two options for us, government subsidy or full commercial VET fee help. There will be a third option available in January, and in 2015 we will be reviewing all our programs across what that means.

This is an important part of change in vocational education and training. An income-contingent loan will now be available from 1 January in all diploma and advanced diploma programs. That changes how people start to contribute to the programs. What that means in the long term is still policy in place.

This is an important area. I was at the VET in schools consultation with Minister Sussan Ley, who made the comment about the way in which accessing how people are paying for programs is shifting and the individual's contribution to some of the learning is increasing. It is a big area. It is not something we have taken lightly. As the

minister said, we are looking at ways in which CIT is a sustainable business model moving forward. We have to be making decisions that allow us to be a sustainable business model moving forward.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you. I have a final question on this; I am not quite sure if I understood you correctly. You were saying that you have met with Mr Dudley?

**Ms Dodd:** I offered to meet with Mr Dudley and he declined my invitation.

**MR DOSZPOT:** To the best of my knowledge, he has not withdrawn his submission; I am simply reflecting what was said to us in the submission.

**Ms Dodd:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I am not aware of any other change of heart that he may have—

**Ms Dodd:** Of course, the timing of his submission would have been pre my final letter to him and his response to me.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I will leave it on the basis that I will take your answers on board. We may have to seek some advice from Mr Dudley. It is one person, but obviously he has written a fairly significant submission on his point of view.

**Ms Burch:** Would it be worth it if we could provide, if you have any questions on notice, the other information to the committee that has been provided to other committees?

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister; that would be helpful.

**Ms Burch:** We will just provide a copy of those.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I will keep open our option as to whether we will provide some further questions to you on this in case those questions are not answered.

**THE CHAIR:** I had a supplementary as well. Mine is around the availability—I know it is the other side of the coin—of employers to take young people through the various programs. I recall that on previous occasions when employers have come before us and talked about skills training, there has been some reluctance on the part of some employers to take, particularly, young people because, to quote, they find it “very time consuming”. They said that there used to be a lot of older tradespersons who were very much willing to mentor young people through, but a lot of these older persons were no longer in the industry and therefore were not available. Minister, is there any experience of difficulty in sourcing employers to take young people?

**Ms Burch:** It is dependent on the economic climate of the community as well, and what industry and trade are out there. At a recent industry lunch, a similar thread to that conversation came out, about the preparation of our apprentices to be job ready. In the main, the industry said that they were job ready. But then there was also the need to understand that, whilst you might get your ticket through the apprenticeship, mentoring on site or on a job is almost like lifelong learning. I think there was some

reflection from the industry that they have to have another internal look at themselves and make sure that they position their own industries and companies to provide those opportunities.

There is a risk that, if we get into an economic downturn, the youth in the very early apprenticeships—the start-up apprentices, the first-year apprentices—could be at risk. Industry, rightly, needs a skill set to get on and to do a job. I might go to CIT to respond to that in terms of your apprenticeships and placements in industry to do their training.

**Ms Dodd:** At this point in time, we are not experiencing that. It is a downturn in the market. In our business, sometimes we see training in non-apprenticeship-based programs when there is a downturn, as people re-skill to gain new qualifications for different job opportunities. Of course, in the apprenticeship area, we do sometimes see the employer base not as willing or as able to take apprentices. At this point in time, our numbers are holding well. We are not seeing anything in that arena. If anything, our user choice numbers are doing quite well. But that does not mean that, as the economy shifts and changes a bit, in particular in our Canberra market at the moment, we will not see some shifts. It is a direct reflection of the economic wellbeing of our community or the pressures at the economic level. I will pass to Dr Stenlake, who might like to add to that.

**Dr Stenlake:** I might pick up on your point about mentoring, because you may not be aware that over the last year or so the VET network has been rolling out a program—CIT has certainly been involved—called MAAP, which is the mentoring Australia's apprentices project. People across the community, including retired or transitioning to retirement tradespeople, offer their time to mentor apprentices. That is a new initiative that has been in place over the last couple of years.

Reflecting on Jenny's comments, we have not seen that downturn. Obviously we are very mindful that teachers are often the first person that the apprentices talk to, and often they can support those apprentices informally in helping them to find another position. We have not had those issues come to our attention at this stage.

**Ms Burch:** We can ask Ann to speak about ETD's commitment to this area.

**Ms Goleby:** I guess we are coming at it from a bit of a different angle in our experience in working with employers, from the Education and Training Directorate perspective. There is an initiative, the joint group training program, whereby this government puts in \$300,000 annually to support group training organisations.

Broadly speaking, it is like a labour hire situation. The apprentices are apprenticed to that company and then that company places the apprentice with different employers. They tend to be small employers that cannot offer the full breadth of training required under the qualification that those apprentices are seeking, such as carpentry, for example. It might be in a narrower field.

That is not always the case. Sometimes the host employer takes the apprentice and they complete their entire apprenticeship with the host company. There are 10 or so of those companies operating in the ACT. It does not mean they are absolutely based in



the ACT but they are operating within the ACT.

Under the joint group training program we provide support to those companies under a number of criteria. Basically it is used in a way that they see fits the circumstances of the apprentice they are supporting—to make sure that they are well placed, that they get the range of experiences, mentoring et cetera. They are some of the options that those companies use to support those apprentices.

Having said that, we are finding that there are starting to be challenges in that space, particularly in the construction industry, and seeing some downturns in that space. We are right now looking at that funding that we have available to see if we can support those companies to hold on to those people whilst they find them another host in this downturn. That is something that we have been starting to work on this week.

**THE CHAIR:** Pages 72 and 73 talk about people with disabilities and culturally and linguistically diverse people. Mrs Jones is not here, but she was particularly interested in this area of culturally and linguistically diverse people. It talks about the stats being a lower rate than in other areas. Minister, with the programs that have been talked about before with the wraparound services, are those the kinds of things that you are doing in order to support people with disabilities and support people from diverse backgrounds?

**Ms Burch:** I might ask Beth Mitchell to come to the table. We will go first to Jenny Dodd or Nicole, around the work that is happening at CIT.

**Ms Dodd:** We might ask Rhonda Fuzzard to come up as well. She is our manager of student support and can give a little bit more detail. CIT has an area where we support people with a disability. We are looking at some new and interesting ways of providing that support. I will get Rhonda to speak to some of those new innovations that we have in that space. It is certainly an important part of our student support program and students register into that arena.

**Ms Fuzzard:** We certainly have a large number of students who nominate that they have a disability. In a year we probably have a couple of thousand who identify as having a disability. Not all need reasonable adjustment or some type of assistance. Nonetheless we are quite large in our capacity. In our apprenticeship areas we deal with quite a few students who have disabilities, from hearing impairment and deafness through to issues around dyslexia, language and literacy.

We look at quite a variety of ways in which we can support students as best we can, and also at what research is coming out with models that are successful for students with a disability. We are certainly moving away from some of the older, more expensive models of one-to-one support. Research has shown that it is not necessarily effective for individuals. We are trying to make sure that we use a lot more assistive technology for people. We run tutorials that we will sometimes offer even for students outside disability as well. We work with teaching colleges to run specific departmental additions, tutorials and some in-class support. We certainly run some in-class support where we have particular cohorts and groups when we are dealing with students with a disability in particular areas. We get those in various things, and we might put in an extra teacher and things like that.

We have significant success in some areas of disability, which is quite heartening to see, but we are in a change. Currently, as I said, we are looking at all the research and looking at the change needed to support these students.

**Ms Mitchell:** A lot of what Rhonda just said certainly applies to ETD as well in terms of how we work with students with disabilities in year 11 and 12, and in getting them to access vocational training and supporting them. I could also give an example around EALD, or culturally and linguistically diverse, because you asked about that.

We have the same multidisciplinary approach, if you like, for all of our students. Our careers officers in every college will work with, say, year 11 and 12 students, if I take that example. If you have a student who is from a refugee background, we know that and the career adviser knows that. If they are doing structured workplace learning and want to get a placement in the construction industry, I have numerous examples that I can recall where that student has been placed in a workplace where the construction person understands the needs of working with someone whose English is quite minimal.

We have used apps, translators and things on the iPhone or whatever to help sort out the language difficulties. The employers really welcome that. They are a bit reticent at first, then they actually love it. We have had requests for that student to come back again and again. We have had students from a refugee background being offered full-time jobs when they leave college, and they have got their cert II or cert III in construction. They come back to speak at graduations et cetera. I can think of one case where he has bought into the business, and he is now going on to do mechanical engineering. This was not construction; it was a mechanics one. But there are loads of different stories like that. Also, with our student equity funds, we support students if they cannot afford things like the steel-toed workboots or whatever. We can purchase those, and off they go to their VET placement.

I have focused on the EALD thing. I hope that answers the question but I can expand on it if you need me to.

**MS BERRY:** I have a supplementary regarding the adult migrant English program. In the submission it talks about this program including a home tutor scheme. Can you explain for the committee how that works practically on the ground?

**Ms Dodd:** It is funded within the program that we have a staff member who coordinates and runs that. She is a wonderfully dynamic member of the CIT workforce. But then it is about volunteers. She coordinates a series of volunteers, a lot of volunteers, who come in and provide that home tutor support to the people who are enrolled in the adult migrant English program.

I went to one of their social engagements not so long ago, and there were a lot of people in the room who volunteered. Predominantly, not exclusively, they are often retired people who are prepared to give back in this voluntary capacity within the ACT. A student is aligned with a volunteer home tutor, and they work with the student specifically in their home. The tutor goes to the student's home predominantly to work with them to help them to improve their literacy skills.

We have a website that has a lot of resources and materials that the home tutor can draw on. So they are not left at sea to run their own race here. It is well coordinated and well structured in terms of our resourcing and support for them in helping them to utilise some resources to help the person involved in the adult migrant English program to be able to get the most out of that experience. So it is a supplementary component to that.

**Ms Burch:** Can I provide some information to you. The government gives out different awards at a multicultural award night at the end of each year, and CIT vocational college won the multicultural education award for their commitment to supporting migrants and others that have come here to make Canberra their home. So well done to all of the group.

**THE CHAIR:** A substantive question, Mr Doszpot?

**MR DOSZPOT:** I have, thank you, Madam Chair. It is a disability-related question, which was covered from a certain point of view, but I would like to take a slightly different tack. What courses does CIT, as Canberra's major VET provider, offer students with a disability?

**Ms Burch:** Just to refine your question, are all courses offered or open to students with a disability? I would have thought—

**MR DOSZPOT:** It is a pretty open question.

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**Ms Dodd:** CIT is a vocational education and training provider. It is about industry competencies and industry outcomes. I think that is an important part of being aware of what that means. That means that assessment programs that are offered in the programs that we offer have competency-based outcomes.

The predominant number of our students are enrolled in certificate III or above. An important aspect of our delivery into the ACT is that we are industry-led, industry-driven and industry-appropriate. Students who have a disability—and I will ask Rhonda to speak on this in a minute—are open to enrol in any of our programs. It is important to understand that within that context it is about competency outcomes. It would be wrong of us to be enrolling students in programs where those competencies were not attainable to them.

We are about vocational education and training. As Rhonda highlighted—she gave a lot of examples before—we have a huge support program to support students with a disability. Specific programs for people with disabilities, though, are quite small. I will defer to Rhonda to give you a little bit more detail.

**Ms Fuzzard:** With any student coming in who identifies in advance, we have disability advisers who will work with students to look at what programs they are interested in, to try and match them up to something that suits their needs and their real interests. We will also work with them throughout courses when sometimes

people discover that it is beyond them. What we do not want is people failing, so we work quite closely with many students with disabilities.

We do, however, run some particular groups for specific groups of people with disabilities. We run some in business administration at the certificate I and certificate II levels that we have large cohorts of students with disabilities in, and we are able to provide additional support there. Again, part of the issue faced by people with disabilities, and by us as well at the vocational end, is finding employers to take on people with disabilities.

As I said, we have some very high success rates with some of our students with a disability. With students with an autism spectrum disorder, those with Asperger's, we have quite a high success rate once we get them into the correct course. Similarly, we are probably one of the only RTOs in the region that take in numbers of any significant level—or even one—of students who are deaf or hearing impaired. It is a highly costly process to provide Auslan interpreters for the students' needs. We currently have around 18 students who are deaf, requiring some form of Auslan. Many of those sit in the administration and business area, although our student who was deaf in the trades area, in plumbing, a year ago took out the awards in New South Wales for plumber of the year. We thought that was pretty fantastic, and we had contributed to his ability to succeed. We also have a number of students who come through in horticulture areas at a lower level, at the certificate II level, who have disabilities. But again, the problem many of them face is getting employers to take them on.

**Ms Dodd:** And additionally we have a program with Woden School; we have run that for a number of years.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Thank you for the answers on that. I would like to take it to another level, if you do not mind.

**Ms Burch:** Certainly.

**MR DOSZPOT:** We received submissions from a number of other organisations. The ACT Council of P&C Associations have also put in a submission on this topic. Their question was this. Obviously, there are a lot of organisations such as CIT that are registered to deliver courses through the Australian skills quality, ASQA, regulations. To maintain registration and receive funding, they must deliver courses that comply with ASQA standards. Unfortunately, parents are struggling with finding courses described by ASQA aimed at students with intellectual disabilities. The issue is that courses taught outside those described by ASQA will not receive the necessary funding. Do you have an answer to that dilemma that parents are faced with at the moment?

**Ms Burch:** What I would like to explore with the answer to that is, first, recognition. First, there are another 120 RTOs across the ACT that provide training opportunities. It is about providing relevant real training that will benefit the individual. I think that is the important part of it.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sorry, minister—

**Ms Burch:** And also a connection—

**MR DOSZPOT:** If I can stop you for one moment, you are absolutely right, but CIT is the major provider of VET education, isn't it?

**Ms Burch:** Yes, but we cannot dismiss the opportunities that may better suit individuals that are on offer through the RTOs.

**MR DOSZPOT:** I would not like to dismiss that, but the point is this: if CIT, at the level CIT is operating, cannot, for various reasons, provide that sort of service, how are the smaller RTOs meant to?

**Ms Burch:** I am not quite sure if we are not providing the service. Anything that is offered, it is my understanding, is recognised. Anything that is offered through CIT is indeed recognised at a cert I, II, III or IV level.

**MR DOSZPOT:** For intellectual disabilities?

**Ms Burch:** It is around the competency of the award. To get the award, you have to meet those competencies, whether you have a physical disability or an intellectual disability. Ms Fuzzard spoke about tailored support to a number of those students. We can come back to that; I might ask Rhonda to come back to that a bit more. But I would also like to go up this side and talk about the priority placement programs and the other connections through our training opportunities through our college system and also, broadly, across the other RTOs.

**Ms Goleby:** If I could start on the priorities support program, that program has \$2.5 million of funding each year, and one of its absolute focuses is opportunities for people with particular needs.

**MR DOSZPOT:** That program is at the CIT?

**Ms Goleby:** No.

**MR DOSZPOT:** Where?

**Ms Goleby:** I think CIT did win one of those programs this year.

**MR DOSZPOT:** So \$2.5 million is the overall—

**Ms Goleby:** It is the overall budget. This year—I have got the exact figures—we had 108 applications from 36 RTOs. I think we were able to fund in the region of 30 or 40, for about 1,5000 students. It is a competitive allocation of funds done through due probity of a competitive process. The opportunities that we are seeking from the RTOs is applications to provide opportunities that meet the particular needs of students for whom educational experiences have not been positive and have not led to either qualification or employment in the past. In that program, priority is given to applications that are going to support people with particular needs. That is the first thing.

The second thing is that there is additional funding available to meet particular needs, be they intellectual or physical disabilities—for example, supporting youth at risk. I touched on this earlier when we talked about those wraparound services. Some students are only able to access what we call a skill set, which is a subset of a whole qualification. We are expecting RTOs to analyse what they think can be achieved with the type of challenges that these students bring with them. That is setting them up for success rather than setting them up for failure. I think that is what Ms Fuzzard was really heading towards—saying that we need to work very carefully with these clients to work out what it is that we should be offering them in an RTO setting to set them up for success. Rather than saying, “You did not achieve the whole certificate III,” we want to say, much more positively, “You achieved the three competencies that we set out with you to achieve.”

If I can just top on that, the funding that is provided under the user choice program, which is the funding arrangement for Australian apprentices, also brings with it additional support. So there is a base fund for all apprentices. On top of that, there is a loading if that apprentice has a disability, if that person is an Indigenous person or if that person is youth at risk, for example. In addition to that loading, there is additional funding to support particular needs where those particular needs have been exposed. Again, they tend to be in areas of that additional support for people who have particular needs, which can include the disability side of the challenge that comes with—

**MR DOSZPOT:** My questions here basically reflect what parents have written through the ACT Council of P&C Associations. Their experience in this area is far greater than mine or ours, I should imagine. But—

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Doszpot, it appears to me that the answer may be a bit more complicated than you thought. There may be more information that the minister might want to provide on notice. As we have only got five minutes to go—

**MR DOSZPOT:** Sure.

**THE CHAIR:** I think it might be a good idea if we leave it at that and see if Ms Berry has got questions if you do not mind—

**MR DOSZPOT:** I was going to say exactly the same thing.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**MR DOSZPOT:** There are a number of questions that I would like to provide from these parents.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**MR DOSZPOT:** It is in the submission as well. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Can you take that on notice, minister. Mr Doszpot can put his questions on notice.

**Ms Burch:** You would like us to make reference to the P&C submission?

**MR DOSZPOT:** We will give you the questions, but you can reference them as well in the submission.

**Ms Burch:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. That is a great help. Ms Berry?

**MS BERRY:** I was just going to ask a question that I think can be answered fairly quickly regarding the CIT central courses. I was down at the CIT in Bruce and saw their program “Caring for your pets”. I know that that is a fairly successful program, and that children get a lot out of that. Are there any ideas for programs for an expansion of that sort of program or other like programs that are not—

**Ms Dodd:** It was only one of four we did last year. We have begun conversations. As part of our restructure, we have transitioned so that we have two careers officers at the CIT. The role of one of those careers officers now has a very specific liaison role with schools. She has been tasked to start this year’s discussions around the central programs for year 9 and 10 students. That was one of four. We will begin those conversations. We think it is an important part of what we do, and we will see where that tracks for this year. Does that answer the question?

**MS BERRY:** Yes. I was particularly interested, and I have not seen it, in “Avatars and animation” and what that actually involves. I guess that was something that engages children to come and do some—

**Ms Dodd:** IT.

**MS BERRY:** Yes.

**Ms Dodd:** To do some IT. To some extent our teachers come up with what competencies they will package and what they will offer. One of the things in “Caring for your animal” was that when we first ran it—not the first time, but in 2012—we deduced that we were actually offering the competencies at too high a level. Last year we brought those competencies down to certificate II. It was important that the students actually were able to achieve the competencies, so we look at the cohort of students and what we are trying to achieve there. So yes, we are continuing those relationships with schools, and they are good relationships.

**MS BERRY:** And that gives kids a positive learning experience, and then perhaps may get them engaged more.

**Ms Burch:** If you mention “avatar”, they will look at it differently.

**Ms Dodd:** Yes, that is right.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much, minister. We will make sure that we get any questions on notice to you as soon as possible. You have obviously taken some for

today. What decision did the committee make about turnaround? Ten days is usually fine once a *Hansard* comes to you.

**Ms Burch:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** You will get a copy of the *Hansard* and you will be able to let us know if there are any issues with that. Minister and officials, thank you very much for appearing this afternoon. Ms Joseph, I appreciate you coming and giving us your time.

**Ms Burch:** Thank you.

**The committee adjourned at 2.59 pm.**