



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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

(Reference: [Inquiry into vocational education and youth training in the ACT](#))

Members:

MS M PORTER (Chair)
MR S DOSZPOT (Deputy Chair)
MR A COE
MS M FITZHARRIS

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 8 APRIL 2015

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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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 10.05 am.

RYAN, MS LYNDAL, Secretary, United Voice, ACT Branch

WHITTY, MS ANNA, Executive Director, Children's Services, Northside Community Service

THE CHAIR: Welcome to this hearing of the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs on vocational education and youth training in the ACT. We are holding the sixth hearing today on this reference and we have 14 submissions on the website. A copy of the committee's hearing program is on the table inside the door.

I would like to welcome the first witnesses for today, Ms Ryan and Ms Whitty. The second witness today is the Minister for Education and Training, Ms Joy Burch MLA, with her officials from CIT and the Education and Training Directorate. The pink card that is in front of you is the privilege card. Are you familiar with its contents and are you happy to say that you understand the implications of it?

Ms Ryan: Yes.

Ms Whitty: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Do you have some opening remarks that you would like to make before we go to questions from committee members?

Ms Ryan: I would like to ask a question. In some of the statements that I am about to read, particular training providers are named, and some of the statements made about those training providers are not favourable. I understand for the purposes of this hearing that that is quite acceptable and appropriate. These are statements from workers with direct experience of that, but if you would prefer that I did not identify those individual training providers, I could simply refer to them not by name but just refer to them as X and Y et cetera. I am looking for some guidance, I guess, in relation to the appropriate way to proceed.

THE CHAIR: Are you talking about naming a person or naming a provider?

Ms Ryan: I was not intending to name any individual person, just the companies.

THE CHAIR: I think that is fine.

Ms Ryan: Thanks very much.

MR DOSZPOT: Can I qualify something that you just asked about? This is an inquiry. Obviously, we are not just looking for pats on the back to organisations. If you have concerns, we want to hear them as well. You are protected under privilege regarding what you might say. I am not asking you to do that, but you should freely make whatever statement you want to make.

Ms Ryan: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Do you want to make some opening remarks?

Ms Ryan: Yes. I would like to explain the nature of our union and our coverage, for those who are not familiar with us. Our union covers a vast range of service sector workers, primarily in the private sector. In our submission we particularly identified some of our large areas of industry coverage. In the property service areas we cover cleaning and security. In the community services areas we cover parts of aged care and all of child care—or early childhood care and education, as we prefer to refer to it. We also cover all of the hospitality industry. These are very large areas of our industry coverage, but I thought it would be helpful for people to understand our perspective in relation to training.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Whitty, do you want to make any opening remarks?

Ms Whitty: Not at this stage, thank you. I will introduce myself. I am a United Voice member and also the Executive Director, Children’s Services, at Northside Community Service. I am an early childhood teacher and I have worked in the early childhood sector for the last 20 years. I have a very broad range of experience with RTOs.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Seeing that this is an inquiry into vocational education, obviously we are aiming our questions at that part of your representation. How many members do you have, broadly speaking, within the educational sector?

Ms Ryan: In the education sector or do you mean—

MR DOSZPOT: Taking early childhood into account as well.

Ms Ryan: I am sorry?

MR DOSZPOT: In the training sector.

Ms Ryan: Our members receive training. We do not have coverage of anyone who is actually delivering training. Primarily, our interest in this is that our members and potential members across the whole range of industries that I described are customers, if you like, of registered training organisations. They are certainly targeted for entry level training. The turnover in those sectors is very high; therefore the demand for training is particularly high. Most of those sectors have minimum requirements in terms of training. For example, to hold a security licence in the ACT you must have at least a certificate III. There is a very high commercial demand for that certificate because you simply cannot gain employment in the security industry without that licence; therefore you have the prerequisite training.

MR DOSZPOT: Could I qualify my question? What I am asking is: how many members do you have who receive some form of training through RTOs?

Ms Ryan: I would say not just our members but in the whole industry—for example, in the security industry there are around 4,000 security officers who are licensed in

security. We see about 300 security officers every year who have received training and then we have many more conversations with existing security officers who are members or potential members. So we would have at least 100 conversations a year with security officers who have received training.

In relation to hospitality, the industry is huge and there is a very high turnover. In that sector most of the workers receive responsible service of alcohol training. That is a requirement to serve alcohol in the ACT. In addition members and potential members employed at the casino and all the clubs in Canberra are required to have responsible service of gaming training as a minimum.

In the early childhood sector, which is obviously an enormous and growing sector, the minimum requirement now is certificate III training, but to be in charge of groups of children you would require further training. You would require a diploma or teaching qualification.

With all of those sectors the requirement for training is very high because it is a prerequisite for obtaining employment. There are still quite a large number of people who are unemployed in the ACT, so people attempting to move from being unemployed to being able to gain full employment are obviously those people who are targeted by registered training organisations as clients. Equally, employers who are trying to find suitable staff to deal with the very high turnover in these sectors also have an interest in making arrangements with—and many do have arrangements with—registered training organisations to help support the training of their staff.

MR DOSZPOT: Are any of your staff involved with special needs type areas—say, hearing impairment? Do you have people who need special skills in that—sign language, for instance?

Ms Ryan: Registered training organisations that are able to deliver services to people who have special needs are pretty limited. To my knowledge only the CIT is able to provide those additional services. I am not sure of that, though.

MR DOSZPOT: Do you have any staff who are required to be trained in, say, Auslan sign language?

Ms Whitty: Yes, absolutely. It depends, obviously, on a child's individual and specific needs. If the team of staff did not have that skill, we would have to outsource training for them so that they were skilled, in order to move the child into the education program.

MR DOSZPOT: Roughly how many people would fall into that category?

Ms Whitty: Probably within any centre—and I can only speak for the four north-side centres—there would be at least two children who had a diagnosed disability that then required additional qualification or training for staff. We are able to apply for the inclusion support, the federal funding, to raise the ratio in the room when the child is there. But the actual targeted or specific upskill—

MR DOSZPOT: Is that just on the north side or would that include all of Canberra?

Ms Whitty: Do you mean per cent? I would say probably that would be a fairly consistent average.

MR DOSZPOT: Consistent?

Ms Whitty: Yes, absolutely. Sometimes you tend to find that if a particular centre has a good reputation, word gets out, or particular agencies might refer children to a centre because they understand that they have a qualified team of staff there who could, for example, support children who have autism. You might have a slightly higher ratio, but I would say two per cent would probably be an average.

THE CHAIR: Just to clarify what you are saying, Ms Whitty, you are talking about all children with any kind of disability, not necessarily a child with a hearing disability?

Ms Whitty: Yes, with any disability, or any disability that required above and beyond what teams of educators are qualified and trained to support and deliver. In my experience that would be a fairly reasonable average.

THE CHAIR: Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: I wanted to go to your submission and to the people, members or non-members, that you come across that get training and then find the training is so inadequate they cannot actually get employment. Can you talk us through an experience, particularly in the security industry and the early childhood sector? That would be great.

Ms Ryan: The examples around security services—and I will move back to early childhood education in a moment—show that the bulk of security officers in the ACT will secure employment in government-owned buildings or tenanted buildings and the largest client is probably the commonwealth government. They are the gentleman you see as you walk into most government offices, the guys there in white shirts and ties. They are contract security guards and all of them have to have a minimum qualification of cert III in order to be licensed.

There is another group of security officers who are employed in nightclubs, as what are generally referred to as bouncers, or at special events—Floriade, the Multicultural Festival and so on. But because security officers must have a clear police record in terms of police checks and often have additional requirements for permanent residency or citizenship we see large numbers of security officers who we know will find it exceedingly difficult to obtain employment in the security industry.

MS FITZHARRIS: So the RTOs play no role in it; they provide service to anyone?

Ms Ryan: Because registered training organisations are paid by the participant or sometimes get a subsidy based on the numbers of people that go through, it is not in an RTO's interest to advise their clients, "Yes, you may do this training and, yes, we may be able to certify that you have completed the training. On that basis you may also be able to get a licence but you actually will not be able to gain employment."

There is simply not enough demand for security officers that do not have permanent residency or citizenship. I think that is a tragic set of circumstances for those people who think, “Okay, I don’t have any skills or I don’t have much in the way of education in this country, even if I do have overseas qualifications. What can I do to obtain employment? I can pay for this course; I can go and undertake the training. At the end of that I can go and get my licence. Great, I am ready. I am ready to be employed now.” But, in fact, they will never obtain employment because the requirement in government buildings is actually that you must have permanent residency or citizenship. And we see lots of people in that terrible circumstance.

MS FITZHARRIS: Do you know how much they pay for the cert III training?

Ms Ryan: Around \$250 and then \$70 for the police check and another \$70 for the licence. I think it is around those figures. I would have to double-check to be sure, but it is something like that. It is a tragedy for the individual.

THE CHAIR: Could I clarify with you about other forms of employment that they may, in fact, be able to qualify for? For instance when I do a mobile office at Florey, if I do one in the evening, there is often a man who stays there from quite early in the evening all the way through the evening, in front of the pharmacy.

Ms Ryan: Yes.

THE CHAIR: They have people who patrol this area.

Ms Ryan: Yes.

THE CHAIR: There are other people that you will notice, quite often in large shopping centres.

Ms Ryan: Yes.

THE CHAIR: That kind of employment would be available to them?

Ms Ryan: Yes, that is possible. That is available to them, but it is the smaller sector of the market. Yes, they could probably obtain employment in retail and possibly, as I say, in bouncing or at some of the embassies which do not have the same restrictions that Australian government buildings have. But it is really a much smaller area of employment and the bottom end of employment, I suppose.

THE CHAIR: Did you want to go on to talk about child care?

Ms Ryan: Yes, I would. I would very much.

MS FITZHARRIS: Could I ask a question on that? Maybe it relates to the childcare sector as well, around language and the literacy. In terms of being a security guard, are there employment requirements other than the general requirement to be able to communicate, I guess, but—

Ms Ryan: In relation to most security positions that, in office buildings, would have

what they call standard operating procedures, you would need to be able to read and understand those. They will have processes. So there would be certainly a requirement for computer and literacy skills in those sorts of positions. What we see sometimes is that people's level of literacy is so low that in order for us to obtain their name and address they have to hand you a document where that is written. They would not be able to write that themselves. And so we then question how it is that they have been certified as a certificate III. It just throws into question how they were able to understand the course content and what was required in that position. That is a concern.

We certainly support people from non-English-speaking backgrounds moving into employment. We think it is really important that we remove discrimination barriers. We do not think that they should have a level of literacy above what is required for that particular position as a means of discriminating against these people. But they really do need additional support in that area.

If I could turn now to the early childhood education issues that we have had, this is a particular case in relation to a childcare centre in Forde, Little Learning School. The company is currently being prosecuted by the union in the Federal Court for a range of underpayments. We were alerted to the issues of the—

THE CHAIR: If it is before the court at the moment it is probably best not to talk about the organisation's name.

Ms Ryan: Sorry. There you go. I would have thought that was in the public domain but other information is not. I do not intend to talk about those particular proceedings in any detail whatsoever but I do want to talk to you about what happened there in relation to training. I do not need to talk to you about the underpayments. That is part of a separate process. I would like to talk to you about the issue of the training.

THE CHAIR: They are not being prosecuted for anything to do with the training?

Ms Ryan: It is peripheral to the issue of the payment but I think we can put enough distance between one thing and another. Some of the workers that wanted to be here today were employed at this particular centre, under traineeship arrangements, and that is the relevance to what is being discussed today. During their employment they were receiving training to the minimum standard required under the licensing conditions, which is certificate III.

Each of them would like to have been here but, thankfully, after their dismissal from this particular organisation, they obtained employment elsewhere and that is why they cannot be here today. But they have provided some statements in relation to the training that they have received.

Grace Montgomery has said in relation to her training:

'Time [off the floor]—

to attend training—

was scheduled frequently but only ever actually occurred rarely. This was because of operational requirements. To the best of my recollection the time in which I was given study time between the months of March to September 2012 ... was one hour off the floor, around once per month.”

‘All of the training was conducted online or by correspondence and the training provider came onsite about once a month.’

In July 2013 ACCCO became the new training provider—

she was with another one—

In February 2014 I received a training provider, Academy of Training.

What happened to this particular worker was that there was no consistency in terms of the training. The training actually was not provided in any real sense other than one hour off the floor once per month.

MS FITZHARRIS: Sorry, was the employer organising the training?

Ms Ryan: It was a work placement and the employer was organising the training for those workers.

MR DOSZPOT: And just on that, how many providers are there in the field that can deliver that service?

Ms Ryan: Hundreds.

MR DOSZPOT: Is there any request made as to where your members should be trained?

Ms Ryan: They really were not in control of that.

MR DOSZPOT: But can you be?

Ms Ryan: I do not know, but I could be.

MR DOSZPOT: But I am simply asking: if you have got issues with certain providers but you know other providers can provide a good service can you not make sure that—

Ms Ryan: We would be happy to, I guess, recommend or highlight issues that we have had and recommend to our members to the extent that they have control of that, but they often do not because the employer will ultimately have control over that. There are statements from other workers, but for the sake of time, and I know that Anna wants to talk about this particularly—

MR DOSZPOT: Is CIT a provider in this area?

Ms Ryan: Yes, CIT is a provider in this area.

Ms Whitty: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: So you would have no problem asking employers to send people to CIT for training, I should imagine?

Ms Ryan: No, I would not have any difficulty. Different people have different experiences of different training providers and I think you want to specifically talk about some of your experiences.

THE CHAIR: Ms Ryan, you can table the rest of those statements if you like, if you are able to do that.

Ms Ryan: I might do that, for the sake of time. In summary, I want to particularly highlight that these workers were not necessarily even given workbooks or any supervision. Sometimes they were advised to chase up, through the registered training organisation, a website that no longer existed. So their experiences were particularly bad. But what you also need to know is that even with this outrageous situation they were all signed off as having the certificate III.

THE CHAIR: If you would like to table those?

Ms Ryan: Certainly.

THE CHAIR: Ms Whitty, you wanted to add to this particular area? We do need to go on to Mr Coe shortly.

MR DOSZPOT: Sorry, just one thing Ms Ryan said there. If certain qualifications were passed without going through the correct sequence, was a complaint put in about that?

Ms Ryan: The workers, at the end of their qualifications, were sacked and it sort of put us in a different space altogether. With this particular employer, when people reached their minimum qualifications, they had their employment terminated so that they could employ other workers without qualifications, for the purposes of paying them lower traineeship wages. That is what we allege. By the time that this all came to a head there was no point in complaining about what had happened in the past.

MR COE: Not to cast judgement on the training situation, but if the fact is that these people were then subsequently employed, does that mean that they did, in effect, receive experience and skills such that they could be employed elsewhere?

Ms Ryan: Some of them actually sought qualifications, as they sought out their own training subsequently or they sought their own training in the evening. But, clearly, we do not know the commercial arrangements between the employer and the training provider all through that period. That is not transparent to us at all. But certainly people were prepared to sign off that people had received that certificate III without actually delivering any service.

MR COE: Does United Voice have an RTO?

Ms Ryan: No, we do not.

MR COE: With regard to something in the submission that we discussed earlier, the second last paragraph of page 1 states:

In addition their visa status makes it almost impossible for them to obtain legitimate employment in the ACT security market.

However, didn't you say that they could work, in effect, in the private security market, for private customers? Surely that is deemed to be legitimate?

Ms Ryan: It really does depend on the visa status. For example, if you are on a student visa you are on a limit of 20 hours a week. That prevents you getting legitimate employment; it is not to say that you do not get employment. People do get subcontracted employment. It is an area where subcontracting and illegitimate practices are well known and well documented by the Fair Work Ombudsman. So I do not think that there is any doubt that there is an illegitimate market for employment in the security industry.

THE CHAIR: Ms Whitty, you had not actually added your comments to the childcare issue?

Ms Whitty: The only thing I would like to add to what Lyndal has already said is that my experience has been that there is a very large variance in the content that is delivered, say, particularly for the certificate III and the diploma qualifications. Dependent on the training organisation that is actually providing it, there seems to be a very broad range of content, which, from a practice perspective, is really concerning and slightly alarming. Even though someone might have been granted their certificate or have been signed off, often they do not come with the knowledge or the skill that I would expect of someone who has that particular qualification. It generally tends to be dependent on where they have done their training.

It is also interesting—and I know Lyndal mentioned this when she read out one of the statements—that the mode of delivery of the qualification also varies greatly, depending on the training organisation. Even though they might say, “Yes, we will have a trainer and assessor come out, once a month,” my experience has been that that does not consistently happen. And then what it does is place extreme pressure on an overly stretched workforce as it is, because then it becomes the responsibility of the centre director or the teams in the classrooms to sign off on things or go over course content with the students at the time. The only other contribution that I would like to make is that the actual content or the rigour around what is being delivered varies greatly, which I think is a concern for our sector.

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe, did you have a substantive question now?

MR COE: I guess whether it is education, security or any industry, how does this differ from any other form of education whereby people take a punt that it is going to lead to further opportunities later on? There is no guarantee that somebody who gets a university degree is going to be able to get a job later on. Whilst I accept that often these people are in a lower socioeconomic cohort, how does it differ from any other

development?

Ms Whitty: I can only speak for early childhood. Because we have such a huge demand for staff—there is such a staff shortage—if someone does have a qualification or someone does have a certificate III and they apply for a job, generally they get it. It is not difficult if someone does have the qualification. So, for me, whether someone will be employed or not is not the question in early childhood; the calibre or the quality of the experience that they have had and the quality of the skill that they will come with as a result of their qualification are the issues.

Because there is such a shortage of qualified people working in the early childhood sector, people will be employing anyone if they have the certificate. And then, once they are employed, you are going through that probation period and you start to realise very quickly what they understand the role to be and that the skills that they have are not up to standard.

MR DOSZPOT: Just a supplementary on that. What we are simply trying to determine—and we are not trying to give you a hard time on this question—is, if the training given to your members is not adequate, do you have any formal mechanism to complain about that? Who would you complain to about training?

Ms Whitty: Generally, directly to the training provider. Centre directors will often complain. I think they feel confident and capable in doing that, but it appears that that does not—

MR DOSZPOT: Does the department of education play a part in this at all?

Ms Whitty: Yes. We will notify the children’s policy regulation unit, the people that assess and rate us, and say, “We are having ongoing issues with a particular training organisation.” But that, to my knowledge, is the extent of where any complaint or grievance about that has gone. What tends to happen within the early childhood sector in the ACT, because it is such a small jurisdiction, is word of mouth. People start saying, “If you can possibly avoid this RTO, do so, because the quality of what people have experienced is not so great.” It is not a great course of action, but I think when people are on the ground that is the way the word gets out.

Ms Ryan: There does not seem to be any regulator that actually looks at this, so everything is driven through complaints—word of mouth. RTOs have the ability to change trading names if they get a bad reputation under one particular trading name and so on. For the public to have confidence in overall training there does need to be some regulation of the training that is delivered. I do not imagine that this is an easy area.

MR DOSZPOT: What percentage of the people you are talking about would be trained through, say, the CIT?

Ms Ryan: I really do not know. I could not give you that answer. I do not know.

MR DOSZPOT: The CIT is regulated; it works through the department of education. So if you are looking for somewhere where you can control the education side—

Ms Ryan: I really do not know, and I do not know how their costs compare to other costs if they are having to compete in a deregulated market. If I recommend to a worker that they go to CIT and the costs of doing so are prohibitive to them in some way, they might say, “Actually, I can do the course online, thanks very much, and a lot cheaper.” That is probably what would happen.

MR DOSZPOT: Have you received any complaints from your members regarding, say, the CIT being too expensive or the quality of training?

Ms Ryan: I have not but—

Ms Whitty: The feedback that I have had most recently about CIT is that there is still inconsistency, and it comes down to the person delivering the subject in each of the qualifications. Yes, that would be the main concern that people raise, that still there appears to be inconsistency. It is difficult, I imagine, at universities if there are particular lecturers that deliver particular things in a certain way. One thing that does concern me is that some of the staff that we have at Northside who are at CIT have experienced a seeming lack of mapping of the national quality framework to current practice. It may be discussed in brief in some of the courses, some of the subjects that they are doing, but they do not rigorously go into what the national quality framework looks like in practice in a classroom. That becomes really problematic because, obviously, that is the main framework that we work within and need to be compliant with at all times. So there seems to be a bit of a disconnect between the framework and the course content.

MS FITZHARRIS: Could I follow up, Madam Chair?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MS FITZHARRIS: With the national quality framework, do the CPRU, I think it is, and Education regulate on behalf of the commonwealth?

Ms Whitty: Yes, they do. The CPRU here in the ACT regulate that on behalf of the commonwealth. So they do both our—

MS FITZHARRIS: But they regulate the centres, not the training provision?

Ms Whitty: Yes.

MS FITZHARRIS: Are you aware of how ASQA then regulate the RTOs?

Ms Whitty: No, actually, I do not know whether they do. I know they have a list of university qualifications that they say are endorsed. If someone has an early childhood teaching degree, there are only a certain number of university degrees that they will recognise as being an early childhood teaching degree, but not the RTO, sorry.

MS FITZHARRIS: Are they largely the concerns that you have and that you have seen expressed in centres and through members? Is it largely around people wanting to enter the workforce and get that first qualification so that they can start working in

the workforce, or is it over the course of someone's career? Or is it more that, because of the skill shortage, the demand for courses is—this is a cert III, is that right?

Ms Whitty: Cert III, yes, and diploma.

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, and a diploma. So it is mainly in that—

Ms Whitty: It is, yes, in that earlier stage. Actually, having said that, that may not always be the case because, if someone has a certificate III and they maybe work for five years in an assistant role and then they decide that they want to become a room leader, they will go on and do their diploma qualification. It may not just be at the entry stage of their career.

Concerns were also raised by staff who are already qualified, particularly nominated supervisors. Centre directors, who are legally responsible for ensuring that a centre is compliant with the national quality framework, are often pulling their hair out, saying, "I cannot believe people are coming out with their certificate IIIs yet their understanding of quality education program practice and how to construct or deconstruct a curriculum are minimal." They, too, are putting their hands up and saying, "What is happening? Where are people taking notice of this?"

MS FITZHARRIS: From my personal experience going into our children's childcare centre, the staff tell you what they are currently studying or have studied.

Ms Whitty: Yes. That is great to hear.

MS FITZHARRIS: As a parent you have confidence in the fact that that is consistent.

Ms Whitty: Yes.

Ms Ryan: I did not want to miss the opportunity to mention that this is replicated in aged-care services as well.

THE CHAIR: Yes, okay. So similar experiences?

Ms Ryan: They are very similar experiences to early childhood education in that people do want their staff to have minimum qualifications. There is high demand, so it is not a question of people not being able to get employed. The question then is what service is being delivered. What understanding do those staff have of their responsibility to very old people or ageing people or very, very young people? That is a particular concern for us.

THE CHAIR: Just a quick question to clarify the payment of the courses. We talked before about who arranges the training. You are saying it is arranged through the employer. Does the employer then pay for the course or is it the student who pays for the course?

Ms Ryan: There is a mix of whether the costs will be passed on to the worker or whether they will be absorbed by the employer. But also the incentive payments have a bit of a role in this as well. There are incentive payments for training providers in

the commonwealth system that target long-term unemployed people and other people in particular classes—Indigenous people, people with disabilities and so on.

There is a real interest from some training providers to access those funds. Their first consideration will be to target particular groups, access commonwealth funding and sign them off in the quickest amount of time. Without some proper measures in terms of what is actually being delivered, that is obviously the logical thing for some people to do—to target those people who are least likely to get employed at the end of the day.

THE CHAIR: And an age profile? Are we talking about a certain profile, like young people, or are we talking across the range of age profiles for people going into training?

Ms Ryan: Primarily younger people, I would say, in early childhood education and in aged care, but you do get people returning to work after having children, and in both sectors it is predominantly women.

MS FITZHARRIS: And a high proportion of migrants?

Ms Whitty: Yes. I think you mentioned earlier the language concerns.

MS FITZHARRIS: Is that similar across early childhood?

Ms Whitty: Very, very similar.

MS FITZHARRIS: Again, the experience with child care.

Ms Whitty: Yes, it is not uncommon. I have often had people come in and they will bring family members to fill out employment forms and things because they are not able to do that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your time this morning. I do not think you took anything on notice, but if members have further questions they will get those to you and you can get the responses back in a timely manner. You will get a copy of the transcript and you will be able to check it for accuracy.

Ms Ryan: Thank you very much. I am a little concerned that the document I tabled—I thought I would just be reading through it—has a number of typos which are embarrassing to me. So if there is any way that I could correct that, it would be nice.

THE CHAIR: We will give it back to you now and then you can return it to us. Is that acceptable?

Ms Ryan: That would be great. Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: We will adjourn now for morning tea.

Sitting suspended from 10.47 to 11.09 am.

BURCH, MS JOY, Minister for Education and Training
JOSEPH, MS DIANE, Director-General, Education and Training Directorate
MILLER, MR DAVID, Director, Training and Tertiary Education, Education and Training Directorate
BLOM, DR KAAREN, Acting Director, Learning and Teaching, Education and Training Directorate
COVER, MS LEANNE, Acting Chief Executive, Canberra Institute of Technology
GRAYSON, MS CAROLYN, Deputy Chief Executive, Canberra Institute of Technology
KAY, MR SHANE, Chief Operating Officer, Canberra Institute of Technology

THE CHAIR: I welcome Minister Burch and the officials who are here this morning. Thank you very much for appearing before the education, training and youth affairs committee's inquiry into vocational education and youth training in the ACT for the second time, minister. You are all familiar with the pink privilege statement that is before you. Could you indicate that you are comfortable with that?

Ms Burch: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms Burch: If I may, thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to provide more information about vocational education and training. I have been informed that it is close on 18 months since we provided a submission, but there is always growth and development in this sector, so I thank you for the opportunity.

In order to achieve the best possible outcomes for the territory, the government has been carefully shaping its thinking around aspects of skills reform, including contestability in the VET market. We are fortunate to be in a position to look at reforms undertaken in other jurisdictions and have that inform our way forward here.

As was detailed in the skills and training policy directions paper last year, our VET strategy is based on four key principles: strengthening engagement with industry, business and other stakeholders; targeting government funding to support training in areas of highest needs; ensuring training delivered in the ACT is of a high quality; and providing better access to training, with additional supports to promote completions, particularly for those experiencing disadvantage.

Our approach to VET ensures that all working-age Canberrans have an opportunity to develop the skills and capabilities that they need for participation in the community. The fact that our youth have achieved exceptional outcomes in education and employment when compared to the rest of the nation is testimony to the strength of our sector.

I would like to take the opportunity to recognise the Canberra Institute of Technology's contribution to servicing the training needs of the region. CIT has, for many decades, been central to ensuring that Canberra has the skills it needs to thrive. CIT continues to play a critical role in the provision of VET across the region.

In November last year the Assembly approved a set of amendments to the legislation governing CIT. These changes, which include the establishment of a new governing board, will take effect from 1 July this year and give CIT a more business-oriented governance structure. Other changes occurred last year when we updated the ACT Training and Tertiary Education Act. The amendments give the Director-General of Education and Training the ability to facilitate recognition and quality assurance across the sector.

The new ACT vocational education and training administration records system, or AVETARS—which everyone is quite excited about; I am sure they created it just so that they could talk about AVETARS in the office—went live on 5 January this year. It provides vastly improved data capture, increased efficiencies and automated payment, and also allows for data integration with the commonwealth.

VET in schools has been the focus of attention at a national level over the past 12 months. I have asked the directorate to look at the roles that schools play as RTOs across our city. The directorate is looking currently at undertaking a review that will provide me with advice about the roles of RTOs within our school sector.

On VET funding, in addition to the substantial funding that the government provides directly to CIT, which is about \$70 million annually, the ACT allocated just over \$13 million in user choice funds, paid directly to RTOs to support training.

This year we saw the introduction of Skilled Capital, which is a \$21 million investment over three years to skill Canberrans in sectors that are key drivers. This targets our funding to support training in areas of high need. It is fully contestable, thereby allowing all RTOs that meet our eligibility requirements to seek funding under this program. So far, over 1,200 students have enrolled in Skilled Capital since enrolments opened this year.

Finally, I am happy to go to questions. I would just say that VET is an important part of our community, in skills training and in providing opportunities and ongoing development and learning for young and old alike. I want to thank the officials from CIT and the Education and Training Directorate for the work they do in this area.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister. Before I go to other members, I would like to go to the area of the RTOs. You talked about looking at those RTOs that are providing services, particularly VET in schools. Do you have any role in overseeing RTOs that provide other training opportunities, such as to apprentices outside the VET in schools system?

Ms Burch: I will go to one of the officials, but the line of sight, through our accreditation, certainly makes sure that any RTO delivering any service or any training meets the relevant accreditation. It is my understanding that our colleges at the moment are all registered as RTOs. But some apprentices will be leaving school. If you are a carpenter, there will be another RTO and you will undertake your training through that. That would meet the requirements under the Australian apprenticeships model as well.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, I presume you have seen the two submissions that were sent to this committee and which we looked into last Wednesday. Do you wish to make any comments on those submissions?

Ms Burch: As I understand it, there have been a number of submissions made to this inquiry. Which two are you looking at, Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: Last Wednesday's meeting dealt with two in particular.

Ms Burch: That would be the Australian Vocational Training Academy, for example, and a submission by Mr Dunstan. Would they be the two you are referring to, Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: Correct; they are the two I am referring to. Do you wish to make any comment on that?

Ms Burch: I will go to Diane Joseph.

Ms Joseph: In a public hearing I do not think it is appropriate to address a specific RTO's complaint. There have been ongoing matters of dispute with the Australian Vocational Training Academy Pty Ltd which have been addressed through various complaints mechanisms since 2011. In 2014 many of AVTA's complaints against the directorate were referred to the ACT public service commissioner for independent consideration. In August 2014 the public service commissioner concluded that AVTA had not provided sufficient evidence to warrant further investigation into claims about the directorate and staff. Despite this finding, the directorate has continued its attempt to resolve these longstanding issues through a number of complaints processes and by referring the matters to an external mediator. The directorate continues to engage in extensive correspondence with AVTA in response to the issues raised and other matters.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. Minister, are you aware of concerns expressed elsewhere or of lack of confidence in CIT trainers or training?

Ms Burch: I am aware of it. You bring it to my attention at every opportunity. You bring lots to my attention, usually trying to highlight perceived shortcomings of CIT. My response to you is that CIT is a quality organisation. It has rigorous systems in place to make sure each and every one of its trainers has adequate skills and training to do their job.

MR DOSZPOT: This is a public inquiry, Ms Burch, so the points I am bringing to your attention—

Ms Burch: I am aware of that.

MR DOSZPOT: are not what you would call our normal argy-bargy. I am simply asking you questions that have been brought before this committee.

Ms Burch: I have answered the question, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. How regularly do you meet with CIT executive management to receive briefings on issues affecting CIT staff and its course offerings?

Ms Burch: Regularly.

MR DOSZPOT: Is that weekly?

Ms Burch: Depending on what it is. There are fortnightly briefings. There are fortnightly written briefings. If there are matters of concern, I will meet them as often as I need to, to get to the bottom of it.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

MR COE: How many times have you met to discuss, say, bullying claims?

Ms Burch: Is there a bullying claim in front of us at the moment, Mr Coe?

MR COE: How many times have you had briefings to discuss bullying?

Ms Burch: This year?

MR COE: I do not really mind whether you want to turn it into a year, two years or three years.

Ms Burch: Mr Coe, as you would know, there were some allegations of systemic bullying within CIT over a number of years. We have spent considerable time and effort on that. The ACT public service commissioner had an independent review and investigation of that. Clearly, I was well briefed on all of that and I am more than happy to bring a copy of that report to this committee. It found no systemic issues of bullying and went on to say that the learning that CIT had from that, the process it put in place, was actually service leading. So I congratulate CIT on that.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, at what stage is the selection of the new CIT board?

Ms Burch: I am getting some briefings on what that membership would look like.

MR DOSZPOT: Have you identified candidates or are you in the process of identifying candidates?

Ms Burch: We are fine-tuning the candidate list and going through a process at the moment.

MR DOSZPOT: Can you tell us how that list is being tabulated? Is it people referring people to you or are you picking people yourself?

Ms Burch: There are recommendations coming to me and we are making an assessment based on the requirements of the institute's board that are set out in the amendments to the act.

MR DOSZPOT: Is there any public advertising for the members or—

Ms Burch: No, there was not.

MR DOSZPOT: Is there any reason why not?

Ms Burch: Because I chose not to do that.

MR DOSZPOT: Do you believe that is in the spirit of what you explained to us about the way the board would be picked?

Ms Burch: I sought advice from the Director-General of Education and Training, from the acting CEO of CIT, from the Director-General of Economic Development and from Kathy Leigh, the Head of Service.

MR DOSZPOT: Of the previous board, how many—

Ms Burch: There is an advisory board; it is not a governance board.

MR DOSZPOT: Is it still the previous board that is in place?

Ms Burch: We have not changed the existing structures.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you. That is all for the moment.

THE CHAIR: Ms Fitzharris.

MS FITZHARRIS: I was wondering, minister or director-general, whether you can explain the regulatory environment for vocational training. Some of the evidence that we have had has been around governance and regulation, particularly for private RTOs.

Ms Burch: Around accreditation and how we assure the community that they are trained, skilled and accredited?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes, and that the application of a framework, the national quality framework, is as consistent as possible, particularly in the early childhood sector.

Mr Miller: I am happy to start on that. My colleagues from CIT might want to chime in at some point. I guess there is a multi-layered approach to the regulatory environment within the VET sector. In 2011, I think, a national regulator was established, which is the Australian Skills Quality Authority. It is effectively responsible for the registration and oversight of all registered training organisations.

I would then come down to the state level. For access to government-subsidised programs we have a structure set up, or a contracting arrangement with RTOs, to deliver government-subsidised training. Private RTOs, as well as the CIT, if they choose to access our contestable training funding, go through an application process to obtain this ACT funding agreement. It is a fairly elaborate application process

because we have a fairly high standard for what we want to see in RTOs who are going to be accessing a government subsidy to deliver training in the ACT.

Part of what follows from a regulatory point of view is that we have established standards and compliance guides about what we expect from RTOs in the delivery of training, particularly in terms of government-subsidised training programs. There is also a compliance and monitoring framework that we have established which is, I guess, the audit, compliance and checking that RTOs are delivering training in accordance with the standards and the contract that they have signed up to. ASQA, as the national regulator, also do their own audits to consider the quality of training provided by registered training organisations.

It is, I guess, not an additional complication, but you also have your licensed trades. And you also have the role of the regulators that exist within the ACT. For electrical and plumbing there is also a further process. It is not enough, effectively, for students just to complete the qualification; there is also an endorsement that needs to occur, through the regulator, for them to be fully qualified to be a licensed electrician, for example.

MS FITZHARRIS: Accreditation to access the government-subsidised training places?

Mr Miller: I would not say accreditation. We would say that if you had an ACT funding agreement, that would make you eligible to access government-subsidised programs that are administered through the directorate. You do not require that, obviously, if you are accessing the training profile funding delivered through CIT. That is separate from the programs that we administer through the directorate. There are the contestable programs that we administer. RTOs need to have our funding agreement to be able to access that subsidy. Then there is a vast array of training courses that are provided, also through CIT, through their direct allocation from government. It is also worth noting that CIT access our contestable programs as well. They are certainly the dominant provider in both of the main contestable programs we have going at the moment.

MS FITZHARRIS: There will be other RTOs that do not access your programs, for example, as well?

Mr Miller: Yes. There are a total of 160 registered training organisations in the ACT that currently have an ACT funding agreement. The figures vary. Only about half of those are generally accessing government-subsidised training at any point in time. A lot of those are RTOs that might be based in other jurisdictions but have sought to have the possibility to then deliver government-subsidised training in the ACT if they choose to do so in future. I think there are just under 100 RTOs delivering government-subsidised training in the ACT.

We are actually going through a process at the moment of accepting applications for our new funding agreement. Part of our focus on quality has been about continually strengthening the ACT funding agreement and raising the standard that we expect from RTOs to be able to deliver government-subsidised training and access our contestable programs. RTOs are in the process of lodging their applications at this

point in time. Applications opened, I think, on 10 March. That is because the current funding agreement runs out at the end of June this year.

THE CHAIR: I have a couple of supplementaries for Mr Miller, and I know Mr Doszpot does as well. Just to clarify what you have just told Ms Fitzharris: there are some RTOs in the training sector here in the ACT that do not have a relationship with you and there are some that do. Is that correct?

Mr Miller: Yes. I did not really refer to that, but there are certainly a lot of providers who only deliver fee-for-service training. They do not require a funding agreement with us because they are not accessing a government subsidy.

THE CHAIR: Or have commonwealth money that they utilise?

Mr Miller: Yes. There are some avenues for commonwealth funding for training, but typically that occurs through employers. The commonwealth generally focus on providing support for employers to engage training.

THE CHAIR: The employers then engage the training?

Mr Miller: That is right. That might occur on a fee-for-service basis, which means it is not eligible for ACT subsidy.

THE CHAIR: So you do not have any role in overseeing their training delivery or looking at these other ones that do not have a relationship with you?

Mr Miller: That is right. Not the fee-for-service, but as a registered training organisation they have to adhere to all the standards that are in place under ASQA, the national regulator.

THE CHAIR: And ASQA do that. How do you divvy up the regulation between you and ASQA? Do ASQA have a role in regulating the ones that you regulate as well? How do you sort that out? Are there demarcations?

Mr Miller: In reality, it is a blurry line in some cases, but the distinction is that ASQA are auditing against the standards that are set in place under the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act. There are a series of standards that all RTOs are obliged to adhere to. That is the focus of ASQA auditing and compliance activities. From our point of view, we are auditing against the contract that we have in place for RTOs accessing government-subsidised training and the standards and our schedules to that funding agreement that we have in place. Whilst there are elements of crossover, there are some fairly clear distinctions between the two focuses for those compliance frameworks.

THE CHAIR: With regard to the auditing against the contract, people have to put in reports on a regular basis as to how they are meeting their contract; is that correct?

Mr Miller: Yes. Again, it is a multi-pronged approach in terms of how we manage compliance. Similar to the way ASQA have shifted their focus, we try to have a risk-based approach to our compliance framework so that we are focusing our auditing and

more time-consuming compliance activities on those RTOs that might be considered high risk for a whole range of reasons.

THE CHAIR: They report regularly. It was my experience, when I was in the not-for-profit sector, that if you have a contract with government you have these reporting milestones.

Mr Miller: Sure. There are obligations that they need to meet regularly. There is an annual internal review tool that we require all RTOs to complete as part of the compliance framework. There are obviously processes and things that they have to do in order to obtain payment. In terms of the submission of appropriate documentation—as we have moved into our new system they obtain payments through the submission of files that record the training activity that has been undertaken—there are lots of rules around the sort of information that they need to provide to be able to access that funding.

From a compliance point of view, there is an internal review tool that they have to complete annually and a broader compliance framework that dictates to us or helps us set out our compliance schedule and audit schedule over a given period, based on higher risk RTOs. It might be related to complaints or issues that have been brought to our attention either through apprentices or through employers that have had concerns. That might impact on the risk rating that we maintain for RTOs and bump them higher up the priority list for an on-site audit or a desktop audit, where we would request a range of information be provided as evidence that they are adhering to the standards and all of the obligations under the contract.

THE CHAIR: So if ASQA had a concern about an RTO that was operating under a contract, would they notify you? And vice versa: if you had one that you were concerned about, would you notify ASQA?

Mr Miller: We have an MOU in place with ASQA. There is a level of automatic exchange that occurs between us and ASQA. If there are matters that are raised with us that we do not believe are our responsibility—because it might not be about the contract or the fulfilling of the contract; it might be more about aspects of the standards that fit under ASQA’s authority—we certainly refer all of those matters to ASQA. We have fairly regular conversations with various colleagues at ASQA.

We are also constantly looking at ways to improve the MOU and the standard information exchange that occurs. I think that the revised standards and changes to the act that have been discussed quite recently should also improve the information exchange that we have with the national regulator, which I think can only improve the information exchange and our ability to work in concert with one another.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. You had a supplementary question?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, a supplementary similar to Ms Porter’s question. You mentioned a total of 160 RTOs. Does that number include the fee-for-service ones as well?

Mr Miller: No, that is the number of RTOs that have an ACT funding agreement.

MR DOSZPOT: So how many fee-for-service ones would there be in the ACT?

Mr Miller: I do not know, to be honest. A lot of the RTOs that have an ACT funding agreement would also offer fee-for-service delivery. For a lot of RTOs, government-subsidised training might only be a proportion of their training delivery. A lot of them also deliver fee-for-service. We do not have an immediate need to target the fee-for-service market if they are not accessing government-subsidised training. I am sure there are some national statistics in collections around that have the details about fee-for-service providers.

MR DOSZPOT: If you had concerns about a fee-for-service provider, what would the process be for you to act on that concern?

Mr Miller: The main point would be to refer that matter to ASQA. Depending on how the information came to us, there would probably be an amount of investigation that we would undertake to try to seek evidence for any claim that might be made against a fee-for-service provider, but we would refer that matter to ASQA for their investigation.

MR DOSZPOT: Would you ask for a specific action from ASQA? Is it desk audited? How would you handle it?

Mr Miller: No. In terms of the compliance activities that ASQA undertake, that is entirely up to them. We provide the information to them and raise our concerns. They, like us, would have their own process for assessing the risk and the relative risk of different issues that have come upon their desk. They would have their own audit schedule and compliance schedule for activities that they were trying to do. No doubt, if they believed the issue was serious enough, it would attract some kind of compliance and an audit would be anticipated.

MR DOSZPOT: If we are talking about the 160 that work on the ACT government's subsidised training, what process would you have there? If you had a concern, would you, again, refer it to ASQA or is that something that you would do yourself?

Mr Miller: It would depend on what the issue was. For all of those RTOs, even if they have not actually accessed government-subsidised training, they are required to submit an internal review tool to us, which is a kind of baseline. If there are complaints or particular issues that have been raised by an RTO, we would conduct a similar kind of investigation to ascertain any evidence.

MR DOSZPOT: By an RTO or by anyone? Say if a student—

Mr Miller: It would be more focused towards complaints that are made by students and employers about issues that they have with a registered training organisation.

THE CHAIR: Just to finish on this particular area: through you, minister, do you have an idea whether or not the quantum is growing or getting less in terms of the matters that you have to deal with in referring to ASQA?

Mr Miller: In terms of our referrals to ASQA, I do not think there have been any particular peaks or troughs since ASQA have come to be. There have been a number of referrals. Sometimes following an audit activity that we have undertaken, if we have identified things that we believe are the responsibility of ASQA—they might be about particular aspects of the quality of training that is being delivered—then that would lead us to provide that information to ASQA. There have been very few instances that have not come about through an audit that we have conducted, where we have referred matters to ASQA that we have been notified of through other mechanisms.

THE CHAIR: You are checking processes that you are doing on a regular basis?

Mr Miller: Yes.

MS FITZHARRIS: A follow-up, Chair.

THE CHAIR: Yes and then we need to go to Mr Coe after that.

MS FITZHARRIS: Further to the regulation, from a student's point of view, how will they assess the quality of the training that is being offered? If on the one hand they are a student looking to receive training and if on the other hand they are an employee or a prospective employee and the training is provided through the employer, is it "buyer beware" now that it is a fairly open market and there are a lot of offerings?

My question is based on evidence that there is a significant range of quality and training particularly in the early childhood sector. It was not clear in the evidence that we were given whether they were RTOs that might be regulated by the ACT government or, indeed, by the commonwealth, particularly though employer-mandated RTOs. From the students' perspective--

Ms Burch: How does the student know that the training they are getting is quality and will be held in regard in the industry?

MS FITZHARRIS: And that they will be able to get a job at the end of it because the employer will assume that they know A, B, C and D and that they will learn A, B, C and D and be able to prove that to their employer?

Mr Miller: Obviously, providing improved consumer information has been one of the key aspects of focus for us under the skills reform national partnership. We developed a new website that was launched by the minister towards the end of last year that is heavily focused on our new funded training initiative but provides information about the RTOs that that are eligible to deliver training and what programs or what qualifications they are actually eligible to deliver. We would say that, because of the focus we have on the entry point for RTOs in the ACT to access government-subsidised training, if they have met the requirements to obtain an ACT funding agreement they have already met a certain standard. So we would say that there is a benchmark there. Obviously there are processes in place for students to raise particular concerns they have about an RTO directly through the RTO in the first instance and certainly with us if they have any concerns about the quality of training

provided.

I know there has been a lot of recent media attention on some aspects of the quality of the VET market, particularly around RTOs signing students up for loans in qualifications that they are not likely to be able to complete, for a whole range of reasons. Effectively, it has been considered to be a grab for cash by RTOs who have levied and required students to take out a significant loan which they will never be in a position to pay back. That is something that ASQA, as the national regulator, has certainly paid keen attention to and is cracking down on through some recent legislative amendments that they have put through to the NVR Act as well. With all of those things we are also very conscious of their impact on the sector. We work really hard at having a really high bar for people to deliver government-subsidised programs in the ACT.

Ms Burch: None of the RTOs that are offering services here have been anywhere near in question, as far as that push to change around the VET FEE-HELP goes. I might ask Ms Grayson to talk about industry satisfaction with training as well.

Ms Grayson: Further to Mr Miller's comments, at the national level ASQA has some quality indicators, and within those quality indicators are the satisfaction surveys by learners and employers as well. So, annually, all RTOs are required to have their students surveyed and employers surveyed and that data is held nationally and is being uploaded into the My Skills website. So information to the consumer from RTOs, broadly, is available there.

MR COE: Minister, would you please give me an update on any concerns and any actions we have taken regarding electrotechnology courses at CIT?

Ms Burch: I can go to Leanne Cover to give you an update about where we are transitioning to. I think there are close to 200 students coming through.

Ms Cover: We are working constantly with industry, the various industry advisory bodies, employees, apprentices and the electrical licensing regulator here in the ACT, like we do with all programs. Each of our college areas has advisory groups which are made up of various members from industry, employees and some of those other groups we have already touched on that help to provide feedback and advice on an ongoing basis. Those groups meet regularly. Members of the advisory council also attend those meetings, when they can, just to exchange information. That happens across all areas. As in all areas, the electrical trades area does have an advisory group that is happy to look at any issues that are raised or feedback that we receive on changes to training packages.

When there are changes being looked at at a national level by the administrative skills councils, which are responsible for endorsing training packages, industry is represented through those councils. At those junctures we often get together with industry representatives and discuss whether those training packages are right for the ACT and what that would mean for us at CIT if we were to deliver them. And obviously, under ASQA, as Mr Miller and Ms Grayson talked about with compliance in the ACT, CIT has to make sure that it is delivering the correct training packages and the most up-to-date, within time limits which are set by ASQA as well.

MR COE: But specifically regarding the electrotechnology courses, have you received any complaints or have you had any concerns raised with you about the quality of those courses?

Ms Cover: Are you referring to Mr Dunstan's submission specifically?

MR COE: It was flagged in his submission.

Ms Burch: I think so. I will go to Ms Cover, but I think in CIT's electrotechnology training, certainly when Electro Group moved 270 students across, there was a significant impost and transition that CIT worked through over the latter part of 2013 and last year. It had to go in and assess 270 apprentices: where their skills were and how they matched the course offering, which is well regarded through CIT. Whilst Mr Dunstan has made some comment on that, Ms Cover and Ms Grayson, I think, could talk at length about what they have done to ensure that each one of those 270 students was assessed, mapped and given skill gap training to get them on the road to complete their apprenticeship. I would have to say that, amongst those 270, there would be some that would be frustrated about the timeliness of that. That is unfortunate. Nothing has come directly to me, other than a sense of 270 extra apprentices in CIT that were at various skills and capacity levels that needed to be assessed and plugged in individually. Ms Grayson and Ms Cover can go to some of that detail.

Ms Grayson: The process that was undertaken in early 2013 was to review the records and the evidence that was provided by Electro Group to these 270 students—or roughly that number—that came across. The students, the apprentices, were being trained in a couple of outdated training package qualifications and it was quite complex to map the qualifications that they were undertaking through to the current qualification, the training package that CIT was delivering. With that mapping that took place, our curriculum experts from CIT Education Services were involved and worked with the teachers from the electrical area to ensure that the mapping of units was appropriate, as outlined within the training package, or that the process for skills recognition was an appropriate process to move through.

As the minister has commented, in some cases some of the apprentices might have feared that there was a little bit of undue time taken. However we and the teachers were quite conscious that, in this particular licensed trade area, we needed to ensure that the apprentices' skills and knowledge had been recognised and gap training had been organised to bring them up to speed in particular units of competence for the new qualification. That did take some time, however, and that was when this specific electrical trades advisory group was put together. About 10 members from small employers, large employers, host organisations, industry groups, as well as the Electrical Trades Union and the industry training board came together on a monthly basis to work through the particular issues that arose.

So the process in 2013, still continuing through 2014 and now in 2015, means less frequent meetings. But through that time we had qualified staff, we had licensed electricians, we had the regulator involved in the discussions and working through the operational issues to ensure that the around 270 Electro Group apprentices were slotted into the very comprehensive and sequenced training that CIT delivers and

were placed in an appropriate position to continue their training within the CIT structure so that it led them through to the final capstone assessment. That final capstone assessment is the last assessment that they need to complete. Their employer, who is the licensed electrician, needs to actually endorse that their apprentice is ready to undertake that final assessment.

On the panel that views those who are deemed eligible, we have the industry regulator. We have also representatives from the industry skills councils, as well as CIT staff, to ensure that those apprentices have the skills to go to their final assessment. In that final assessment there is a theory and practical component. The regulator is involved in that assessment as well.

MR COE: Has ACTPLA, as the regulator of electricians in the ACT, raised any concerns or flagged any need for improvement in the courses?

Ms Grayson: No.

MR COE: Has the ETU?

Ms Grayson: The ETU has been involved in the industry advisory group right from late 2013, through 2014 and also in 2015. Through those meetings that were held monthly with the employers and the union representative, those issues were worked through. There were issues that have been raised, as happens in all areas, and they have been worked through.

MR COE: Mr Dunstan said last week in the public hearing—and I am sure you will have seen it—that there could be unsafe electrical tradespeople working in the ACT as a result of the issues of the last two or three years. Do you accept that as a possibility, minister?

Ms Burch: What I accept is that we have CIT delivering accredited training—and it is a well-regarded, recognised RTO. Following capstone assessment, they are assessed by industry, by regulators, to meet the requirements to go on and be licensed. So in plumbing and electrics, you go through your certification, you go through your training and then there is still time before you are licensed to operate independently. And at no point has ACTPLA, the regulator, raised any concern. It would seem that it is only Mr Dunstan.

MR COE: Mr Dunstan claimed that some students who were not properly qualified or were not properly trained were allowed into capstone in 2013. Do you have a response to that?

Ms Grayson: In response to that, as I have indicated, in the early stages, where we were dealing with the records from Electro Group, the documentation that came through needed final clarification. The actual qualifications were not awarded until all of the documentation had been sorted.

MR COE: Mr Dunstan said that he had a particular concern with the G107A course, to do with the selection of cables, and he said that the poor selection could lead to a fire. Then he went on to say that there was a similar scenario in Queensland and they

had to withdraw 300 qualifications in Queensland. If that can happen in Queensland, does it mean that there could be a situation in Canberra whereby qualifications, despite what you said about the industry and capstone assessment, could still be given when people are not actually fit for training or for work?

Ms Cover: I am not aware of the Queensland issue that you are referring to there. As Ms Grayson outlined, Mr Dunstan has raised a number of observations and issues with CIT around the transition of those 200-odd apprentices in 2013-14. On each occasion CIT has met with Mr Dunstan. We have worked through any issues that he has raised. Where appropriate, where, by way of example, he suggested additional or new learning resources be added to the program, we have made changes to the program to reflect that feedback. As I said earlier, we are very confident about the process that is used with the employer, the student, industry, the licensing regulator and industry representatives on things like the ITABs. They are all part of that assessment throughout the process and then with the final capstone.

MR COE: Are you able to provide us with a response to his concern about the G107A course?

Ms Cover: Of course the CIT will respond to any recommendations or findings that the committee would like to ask us to respond to.

MR COE: Sure, but the purpose—and one of the benefits—of the minister being at the tail end of this inquiry is that you can respond to concerns which have been raised. Mr Dunstan raised some serious concerns, and in the absence of the minister—

Ms Burch: You would like a formal response, would you?

MR COE: In the absence of hearing the counterview, we are only going to hear from Mr Dunstan, so—

Ms Burch: We provided you with a counterview just then.

MR COE: Specifically regarding the G107A course, why would he highlight that course in particular as being something—

Ms Burch: That is an interesting question, but we—

MR COE: It is indeed, and that is why I am asking it.

Ms Burch: We will get a reply in writing for this committee.

MR COE: Thank you. Given the seriousness of the concerns that Mr Dunstan has raised, I think it is in CIT's best interests and, indeed, the government's best interests to address the concerns. They are very serious and, in the absence of a response, these concerns will be left unanswered.

Ms Cover: We do take these types of concerns very seriously and we will be looking very closely at any information that Mr Dunstan provided to the committee and assessing—

Ms Burch: The accuracy, like I said, and providing a response.

MR COE: Given it was about a week ago that Mr Dunstan gave his evidence, are there any particular statements that he raised that you want to specifically address today?

Ms Burch: There are a number in there. Rather than cherry-pick them, I think we will provide a written response to the committee.

MR COE: And was it always the intention to provide a written response to Mr Dunstan's evidence last week or is that something that is just being discussed today?

Ms Burch: That is something that has come up now. I got a letter on 13 March asking me to come back to the committee. Mr Dunstan appeared on 31 March. So my agreement to appear before this committee happened before Mr Dunstan came in. Mr Dunstan put a submission in, the same as the Vocational Education and Training Academy. As I understood it, both put in late submissions that were accepted. It is the prerogative of the committee to accept witnesses' submissions. That happened on the 31st. We have made a commitment to come back to the committee with a written response.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister.

MR DOSZPOT: I have some supplementaries flowing from Mr Coe's comments. I would just like to take you through them sequentially. Mr Dunstan referenced to the committee the CIT educational review into electrotechnology that came about after dissatisfaction among staff, students and employers. The review was to address the quality, consistency, efficiencies and flexibility in delivering an assessment process of the course at CIT and to recommend opportunities for improvement. In December 2013 a draft implementation plan was circulated. What is the status of that implementation?

Ms Grayson: Different aspects or components of the plan have been rolled out and are being continually rolled out. A benchmarking exercise has taken place and a range of mapping exercises, learning resources, are being looked at. Workplace assessment options are available, so components of that plan have been put in place.

MR DOSZPOT: "Project plan action items" as of November 2013 suggests that all items had been marked as completed, in progress or not to be done. Does that document remain accurate in that sense today?

Ms Grayson: I do not have that document in front of me. We are working through the components that we have identified in that—

MR DOSZPOT: In the response, if you could clarify that.

I have just a few more questions on that. Mr Dunstan claimed in his evidence that he was asked to help run some of the gaps classes in the electrotechnology faculty. Is that

correct?

Ms Grayson: I understand that Mr Dunstan was a trainer in a component of the gap training.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Dunstan further claims that he found there were not sufficient resources to run compliant classes. Is that correct?

Ms Burch: That he claimed it or that there were sufficient resources, Mr Doszpot?

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Dunstan claimed that he found there were not sufficient resources to run compliant classes.

Ms Burch: We would believe that there were.

MR DOSZPOT: So what was the correct story, then?

Ms Burch: But Mr—

MR DOSZPOT: If he claimed that there were not sufficient resources to run them, how was it—

Ms Burch: And we are saying that we believe we have sufficient resources.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay. So what appropriate gaps training was delivered to those students who required it?

Ms Grayson: The gap training it depended on what the students had completed prior and what their skills recognition actually demonstrated, so there were a couple of gap training classes that took place, and there would be slightly different training taking place in those programs.

MR DOSZPOT: And who delivered the training?

Ms Grayson: It would be CIT staff.

MR DOSZPOT: And can you tell us what qualifications those trainers had?

Ms Grayson: All of the CIT staff have qualifications required by the training package and also the enterprise agreement.

MR DOSZPOT: In your response will you list the trainers' names and their qualifications?

Ms Burch: I do not know if that is appropriate, Mr Doszpot. You have a witness in front of you that has made quite a number of comments that CIT will work through. We have already committed to providing a formal response. On one of your questions alone, he says there are not enough resources and we say there are. CIT is the largest public provider. It is well regarded, with a high satisfaction rate for industry and students alike.

I am not saying that we are going to dismiss everything that Mr Dunstan says, but there are thousands of students that go through CIT and many hundreds of trainers, and I do not think it is appropriate that we provide this committee with the names and details of each and every trainer. Suffice to say, though, that we will give you a commitment, an assurance, that anybody we put in front of a class is skilled and qualified to do so.

MR DOSZPOT: I still have a number of questions to go through.

THE CHAIR: We will go to Ms Fitzharris now and will come back to you.

MS FITZHARRIS: In terms of Electro Group folding and the influx of 270 apprentices, is that something you come across all the time or was it quite a significant one-off event? What would have happened had CIT not been able to provide the training to those apprentices? Who else might have picked it up?

Ms Burch: In short, it was a significant event and, in short, CIT did the right thing by each one of those 270 apprentices and worked on an individual level to make sure that those who wanted to get to the end and be a sparky were skilled and trained to do so.

MS FITZHARRIS: And in the absence of CIT?

Ms Burch: It would have been extremely difficult and they could have gone interstate.

MS FITZHARRIS: So there is no other provider that could have picked up any of them?

Ms Burch: Electro Group and CIT are the two large providers for electrotechnology.

MR DOSZPOT: Mr Dunstan also claimed that some students who were not appropriately qualified—I think Mr Coe has already asked this from one aspect—were allowed into capstone in late 2013. Would you like to comment on that and its accuracy?

Ms Grayson: I understand that did take place. The employers, the regulator and the industry representatives viewed that the apprentices could go through into the capstone training and undertake the capstone assessment while documentation was being brought together so that the apprentices were not disadvantaged in time. As I mentioned earlier, there was quite an imperative to meet the students' and the employers' needs in a timely way. At some stage there was some dissatisfaction with the time being taken, so the capstone panel that is made up of the regulator, industry, and CIT staff deemed that it was appropriate for them to undertake the training, which takes several weeks, and during that time the records were brought together.

MR DOSZPOT: Do you believe that electrotechnology courses at CIT now deliver the full complement of training that is required under current laws?

Ms Grayson: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Are all units of the electrotechnology course now compliant with the latest requirements?

Ms Grayson: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Are all CIT trainers delivering this course fully and appropriately qualified to do so both in terms of being a certified trainer as well as a licensed electrician?

Ms Grayson: In that regard, under the training package there is no requirement for the trainers to be licensed. The training package endorsed by ASQA specifies for individual states to refer to state regulation. In the ACT there is no requirement that the trainer is licensed; it is the employer of the apprentice who needs to be licensed. In regard to your question, yes, our staff are qualified.

MR DOSZPOT: Does that mean that the employer would constantly have to be overseeing what the apprentice was doing?

Ms Burch: The employer.

Ms Grayson: Yes, the supervisor. They are in an apprenticeship, so the apprentice comes to college one day a week or whatever, but the majority of the time is spent on the job, yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Who is currently overseeing the RPL process?

Ms Burch: It is an industry work panel.

Ms Grayson: With the skills recognition team within the electrical trades department there would be the skilled and experienced and qualified teachers who would be overseeing that, as well as support, direction, guidance and monitoring by the CIT Education Services curriculum team, who are skilled in the training package requirements.

MR DOSZPOT: Referring to the “he said, she said” type comments we were talking about before, Mr Dunstan spoke about a meeting attended by an executive manager of CIT and Mr Mick Koppie from the ETU earlier this year, and he claims that the executive manager said to him at that meeting, “You may want all these qualifications taught, Ian, but we can’t afford it.” Is that true?

Ms Burch: We are delivering a registered, accredited training package that is recognised and regarded by industry, and the students that qualify through CIT have an opportunity to do their journeyman year—I do not know if sparkies call it a journeyman year—and then they have to be assessed for their competence and their capabilities before they are licensed through a regulator. Plumbing and electrotechnology, I think, are the only two licensed trades, so there is absolute rigour, as there ought to be, around the skills development of these apprenticeships, and they are not awarded their qualifications unless they are able to do the job.

MR DOSZPOT: Further, Mr Dunstan referred to an email that he had received on

4 August 2014, suggesting that the result of a meeting between Mr Dunstan and senior executive CIT staff was that the content of a particular unit of the electrotechnology course was suitable to fill the gap for a number of Electro Group apprentices. He disputed that assertion and advised CIT and provided documentation to support his claim. The document he refers to is written by the deputy chief executive officer of CIT, Carolyn Grayson.

Ms Burch: Rather than go through a blow by blow, Mr Doszpot, with due respect, we have 25 minutes here, and the letter to recall to this committee was not to go through a blow by blow of Mr Dunstan's comments. We have given a commitment to the committee to reply.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, we have every right to ask these questions.

Ms Burch: You can. We will go through *Hansard*. If you have particular questions that you think we will not find through going through Mr Dunstan's *Hansard* of 31 March, please provide them to CIT. Other than that, we will provide in writing a commentary through here.

There are other matters around Mr Dunstan that it is not appropriate for me or CIT to raise here with the committee that I think it would be useful for the committee, in confidence, to be aware of.

MR DOSZPOT: Was Mr Dunstan hired to look into these issues of ensuring that the training that was carried out was compliant with regulations? Was he not hired to do that?

Ms Burch: No.

Ms Grayson: Not to my knowledge, no. He was employed to be a trainer.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister, for agreeing to come back with that response to Mr Dunstan's submission and his statements as a witness before this committee. Thank you for also agreeing to take—as you would always—questions on notice from this committee. I think in the interest of time and of members having a chance to ask other questions, we will move on from this. I will go to Ms Fitzharris now.

MS FITZHARRIS: Could we go back to VET in schools. Minister, earlier you indicated that there was some work underway in that area. Obviously it has been some time since the submission was made. Are you able to give us an indication of what that work looks like, where it might be heading and when it might—

Ms Burch: As the appropriate official comes forward, I will say that our colleges are RTOs, but as the requirements around being an RTO, rightly, get more rigorous, and as do the standards that make sure this training is of a standard that the community expects, I have asked the directorate to review whether each college individually needs to be an RTO or whether there is a way of having an umbrella approach, to take a bit of unnecessary red tape out of schools. Individually they need to comply with ASQA standards. I will ask Dr Blom to talk about that.

Dr Blom: Minister, are you happy for me to talk about the consultants?

Ms Burch: Yes.

Dr Blom: We have already advised our schools that the consortium that the directorate has engaged to undertake this review of VET in ACT public schools is a consortium out of Victoria University, led by Professor Stephen Lamb. One of the lead members of the consortium is Berwyn Clayton, who won the lifetime achievement award for VET research at the national training awards last year.

The consortium consists of eight members, with expertise ranging from finance and resource management through to training. It is an opportunity that the minister initiated, acknowledging some of the complexities for our nine senior secondary schools that are maintaining RTO status at the moment. It will look not only at that but also at pretty much every aspect of VET in schools, from delivery to management.

MS FITZHARRIS: Can you give us an indication of what other jurisdictions do with VET in schools?

Dr Blom: That is also the first piece of work that the consortium is undertaking for us—a review of what other jurisdictions are doing. Mr Miller, in his response to you earlier, talked about how the work that they have done in skills reform benefited a lot from looking at what other jurisdictions were already implementing. So we will do that as well.

Members might be aware that last year the education council had a working group that specifically focused on reviewing and renewing the national framework for VET in schools. All jurisdictions and the commonwealth contributed to that, and that is a fairly significant piece of work. We can provide the committee with a link to that publication. That will certainly inform the work that we take forward from here, and all of our schools are already making use of this document. It is particularly useful in working with parents around understanding some of the complexities of what the VET sector offers.

Ms Burch: With VET, there are school-based apprenticeships where they are starting early in their formal apprenticeship, but there are also varying levels. It might be a cert I, a cert II or some competency level of vocational education and training that is offered through schools.

Of last year's year 12 graduations, 60 per cent also graduated with some form of vocational education and training. The BSSS, when it reviewed its year 12 attainment levels, also identified the need to really drill down on VET and have a clearer picture about what vocational training or other opportunities schools may offer as opposed to industry recognised, pegged training. That is in the mix of this work as well.

Dr Blom: It is, and the BSSS will be a key stakeholder in this review.

MS FITZHARRIS: In any given year, how many children are doing vocational education in school, as a proportion?

Ms Burch: It is significant. As I said, the year 12 cohort graduated not only with year 12, but 60 per cent with some form of vocational education and training. We have the trades training centres now in schools, and that goes from automotive industry to hospitality. Students are taking advantage of that and leaving school with a cert II in barista work, an introduction into panelbeating or some such thing. All of this is useful skills development for the individual and it is also linked into careers and job opportunities beyond school.

MS FITZHARRIS: Are you able to track this journey for those students?

Ms Burch: “Where are they now?” does a little bit of that.

Dr Blom: There is a little bit of destination surveying. One of the challenges in measuring the activity that happens while they are still at school is that some of them, as the minister said, are undertaking qualifications through their own school. We see that recognised in the BSSS report each year. Some of our students will go to CIT and pursue a qualification, and that is not reflected in those BSSS results. So, in fact, young people in our schools are doing even more activity than what appears in those BSSS results.

Ms Burch: Each year we do a “Where are they now?”

Ms Joseph: We have just initiated a longitudinal study for our school leavers, to not just see where they are immediately after they finish school, irrespective of when they leave school, but to do a longitudinal study over at least two years to see where they actually end up, in what form of employment, to make sure that we are minimising part-time, casualised employment or no employment, and to make sure we are maximising employment opportunities with substantive training and qualification opportunities as well.

Ms Burch: The introduction of the USI, the unique student identifier, means that once they enrol, whether they are at school or not, in a vocational education recognised training package, they keep that number. It is almost like microchipping the students, and we will be able track them through. It is not quite microchipping, but it will give states and the commonwealth an immensely rich set of data.

MS FITZHARRIS: Can I ask about the accessibility dog at CIT that was mentioned? I take it there is actually a dog?

Ms Burch: There was. The submission was 18 months ago.

MS FITZHARRIS: It said it could detect stress levels, and I wondered if I could get one!

THE CHAIR: Detect what?

MS FITZHARRIS: Stress levels in students; is that right?

Ms Grayson: I have just forgotten the dog’s name. One of our student counsellors was very keen and passionate to assist students. The counsellor wanted to encourage

the students to open up and found that having the dog with them was another way for them to make a connection with a student. Lisa was able to take the dog around, visit and assist students, and make them feel a little bit more comfortable, so they actually moved in to the counselling session. However, we no longer have the dog.

THE CHAIR: I hope the dog is still alive.

Ms Grayson: I do believe the dog is still alive.

THE CHAIR: I would also encourage in the future that you look at animal assistants; I think it is good for one's mental health.

Ms Burch: Happy dog aside, this also draws me back to what was not in place when we last appeared before the committee, which was Skilled Capital, and the focus on supporting completions. Some of the concerns around the VET FEE-HELP included RTOs being paid on enrolment and the enticement to get numbers on the books, whereas through Skilled Capital our focus is on completions and wraparound services for those that might want to get a trade—even going back to giving basic foundation skills to make sure that they can complete. If the committee has an interest in that, Ms Grayson might be able to talk about that.

Ms Grayson: In regard to Skilled Capital, the numbers and opportunities for students are certainly there. Students are encouraged to undertake a foundation skills assessment so that the wraparound services can be determined—whether they need additional services to assist them in the range of programs that have been taken up.

Mr Miller: The minister is exactly right. The increased focus we have had on getting students to complete qualifications has been built into the design of the Skilled Capital initiative. This is one of our core planks and one of the key initiatives that we have designed and developed under the skills reform national partnership, which is about improving productivity outcomes for the ACT. It has a strong focus on training people in areas of skills need that are more likely to lead to improved outcomes. That focus has been supported by a range of additional supports and loadings built into the funding that is available to RTOs training under this program, to provide those sorts of supports that will assist students to complete their qualification.

The minister made reference earlier to some of those issues around students being signed up for VET FEE-HELP, around students being signed up for programs that, realistically, they were probably not likely to complete and that they were potentially being exploited, from a funding point of view for RTOs. The point of Skilled Capital is to make sure that all of the supports that are available through the program to enable students—particularly students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds or with particular needs—to be provided with the additional support that they require are available throughout the training.

As Carolyn referred to, there is an assessment that can be conducted to assess somebody's need for additional foundation skills. There is what is called a foundation skills training package. We have built into the funding for this program for each student, if it is deemed necessary following assessment, that we will fully fund six units of competency from the foundation skills training package—if that is what is

deemed necessary to support that student to complete that qualification. There is also additional funding available for wraparound services for supports that might be needed for youth at risk, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders or for mature age people who have been long-term unemployed. There are a whole lot of target areas where we have been able to build into the program additional supports to make sure that any of those perceived disadvantages are not barriers to accessing training through this program.

THE CHAIR: We heard from some witnesses earlier today that sometimes people that have undertaken training through various RTOs have then gone on to work in an organisation where the employers have found that they could not actually fill in a form because of their lack of literacy and numeracy in English. One presumes that part of that assessment that you are talking about is an assessment of the student's literacy?

Mr Miller: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Are the literacy services that are provided part of the package that you are talking about—

Mr Miller: Yes.

THE CHAIR: to assist the student to show that they can reach the required standard to be able to understand the course? One assumes that if they cannot read the course material, it is a bit difficult to complete a course.

Mr Miller: That is right. That certainly informs the assessment of whether or not it is appropriate for a student to be undertaking that qualification and what supports they might need—whether they would be better directed to a different course or a different program that might be more suitable for their current skills or whether, through this provision of additional support, they would be able to achieve that qualification. The foundation skills training package has been around for a little while now. CIT was at the forefront of the use of the foundation skills training package. They have done a lot of programs and courses that have had a very clear focus on achieving strong literacy and numeracy outcomes for students.

Ms Grayson: CIT has been at the forefront of encouraging students interested in programs—even before they actually enrol, when they are making a selection for the qualification of their choice—to undertake the assessment prior to that, to give themselves a little bit of an indication. In some cases the person wanting to enrol may not feel comfortable with taking the online assessment, so that can be done face to face as well. It is something that we are rolling out and it is available to all students at CIT.

Ms Burch: With Skilled Capital, there are a number of RTOs that have been deemed eligible to provide training. CIT is one of them. There is a lot of focus on and interest in community care, as I understand it, and aged care—offering training across a number of RTOs. So that is good.

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe.

MR COE: I have a question about the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act. How is it that CIT assesses that they are compliant with the various legislative changes and notes which ACTPLA puts out regarding safe practice for apprentices?

Ms Grayson: Within the training package there would be units of competence that would refer to the legislation that would be covered, as you have mentioned. It would be incorporated within the training and the assessment.

MR COE: I am not necessarily talking about the teaching; I am actually asking how CIT complies with that—what systems are in place to ensure that CIT is compliant with the various requirements of the act.

Ms Burch: Through audit and governance, I would imagine, Mr Coe.

Mr Kay: We have a range of mechanisms and relationships with government to keep on top of legislative changes. We have quite a lot of formal and informal arrangements and are on a lot of mailing lists. Many of our staff are closely involved with their different industries across the ACT. We have a central governance and auditing role as well.

MR COE: What sparked my question was that earlier we heard that someone may not need to be licensed in order to teach a subject. I was wondering how that could comply with the supervision guidelines which are included in the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act.

Ms Burch: That is on-job training supervision?

MR COE: Yes. Surely if the work which is being done, in effect, in the classroom is wired work and is of an electrical nature, does that not mean some supervision requirements would come into effect, as determined by the act?

Ms Grayson: With regard to the training package requirements for the delivery of training and assessment, it is not required. With regard to the ACT requirements, trainers and assessors are not required to have a licence, but it is the supervisor in the workplace. The delivery that CIT undertakes for electrical training is campus based. We have theory and practical and a simulated environment on campus.

MR COE: That is simulated—

Ms Burch: I think there is a difference. I think the question you are going to is that within a suite of training there would be some practical competency training. The question is: is that a skilled electrician that is providing that training?

Ms Grayson: Staff within the electrical trades department are licensed electricians.

MR COE: I am just curious as to how that could comply with the direct or general supervision requirements for staff.

Ms Burch: Not all training requires a licensed supervisor. If you look at all of the

competencies, some are occupational health and safety. You do not need to be licensed.

MR COE: My question is not related to the education standards but, in fact, to the electrical standards as contained in the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act. Therefore, if electrical work is being done, surely that would come under the supervision requirements as stipulated in that act, let alone the education requirements.

Ms Grayson: With regard to the work that the apprentice does on campus, it is the knowledge component, the theory component, and practical exercises. The actual work is done out on site. If there is a workplace assessment undertaken, it is evidence of what has taken place on site and is brought back. The supervisor, as the licensed electrician, would sign off on that evidence.

MR COE: Under that act, what is defined as electrical work? It is actually quite broad.

Ms Burch: If we may, Mr Coe, take reference to the act and add it to the other reply?

MR COE: Yes, please.

Ms Burch: I am absolutely confident we are covered, but without the act to look at—

MS FITZHARRIS: You do have licensed electricians teaching at CIT?

Ms Grayson: Yes, we do.

MR COE: It is just a matter of whether the Construction Occupations (Licensing) Act has different requirements, which may be unintended requirements but requirements all the same.

Ms Burch: We will give you that assurance.

MR COE: Sure.

THE CHAIR: That has been taken on notice. Thank you. We have reached the end of our time.

MR DOSZPOT: No, we have not.

THE CHAIR: Well, it is half past—

MR DOSZPOT: We started 10 minutes late, Madam Chair.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Minister, are you—

MR DOSZPOT: I have one more question.

THE CHAIR: able to stay for one more question?

Ms Burch: I will stay because I am a well-mannered girl. One more question.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister. One more question and then we must—

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, minister. You finished my previous line of questioning. I have a few more questions to put in, so I will look forward to a response to them; thank you. My last question is based on the Australian Education Union, ACT branch, submission that came in. I quote from page 6:

Recently, the ACT Commissioner for Work Safety, in an effort to stem the high incidence of injuries and deaths in the construction industry, has highlighted the need for high quality and consistent licencing assessments for all trades associated with the construction industry. This wisdom should be extended to all VET qualifications as a measure of competence of licenced operators in an environment which in its current state may deliver an inconsistent quality of graduates across its VET programs. An external agency to monitor the quality of the outcomes of students being assessed in each VET qualifications would prevent this.

I would be interested in your comments, minister, in light of the recent submissions that have come in and the ACT Work Safety Commissioner. What do you make of the recommendation from the education—

Ms Burch: It is quite an extensive question, so we will take it on notice and provide an answer to the committee.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: One presumes the review of VET that is happening at the moment, which you referred to earlier, would pick up on that as well, minister.

Ms Burch: Absolutely.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much for your time. You will get the questions you have taken on notice to us—

Ms Burch: We will. Can you confirm them through the committee back to us?

THE CHAIR: Yes; we will confirm those to you, minister. Thank you. And thank you and all your officials for appearing before us this afternoon.

The committee adjourned at 12.31 pm.