

CORRECTED VERSION

RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into retaining young people in rural towns and communities

Benalla— 11 April 2006

Members

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Chair: Mr B. P. Hardman

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Witnesses

Ms K. L. Ford, liaison officer, student services (sworn);

Mr P. F. Ryan, chief executive officer (sworn);

Ms K. Smith, student of the year 2004 (affirmed); and

Mr H. Stuart, former student (sworn), Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE.

The CHAIR — The committee welcomes Peter, Kerri, Kellie and Henry from the Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE. Thank you very much for appearing today. Under the powers conferred on this committee by the Constitution Act and the Parliamentary Committees Act, this committee is empowered to take all evidence at these hearings on oath or affirmation. I wish to advise all present at these hearings that all evidence taken by this committee, including submissions, is, under the provisions of the Constitution Act and the Parliamentary Committees Act, granted immunity from judicial review. I also wish to advise witnesses that any comments made outside the committee hearings are not protected by parliamentary privilege. We are an all-party parliamentary committee, including an Independent, hearing evidence today on the inquiry into retaining young people in rural towns and communities.

Could you provide your full name and address and the name of the organisation you are representing, if you are representing an organisation.

Mr RYAN — Peter Francis Ryan, [ADDRESS REMOVED] Cosgrove South. I am the chief executive officer of Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE.

Ms FORD — Kerri Louise Ford and my address is [ADDRESS REMOVED] Shepparton. I am also representing Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE.

Ms SMITH — Kellie Smith, [ADDRESS REMOVED] Mooroopna, and I am a former student of TAFE.

Mr STUART — Henry Stuart, and I am still studying at Goulburn Ovens TAFE.

The CHAIR — If you could provide us with your opening statements, we will then have some questions for you.

Mr RYAN — Thanks, Ben. We would like to keep it relatively informal. I will say a few things, but there will be issues that come up that we might want to have a chat with you about, rather than being totally formal the whole time; if that is okay?

The CHAIR — Yes.

Mr RYAN — Let me just make a number of points. My colleagues will, in a much more relevant way because they are much younger than me, put a different or better spin on some of the things. Mr Chairman, I just looked at the three terms of reference, and I will just go through the points quickly and try to be quite concise. I should also mention that I have three children of my own, all of whom grew up in this area and went away to university — one in Bendigo, one in Ballarat and one in Geelong. They could not wait to get out of home. Having that on the record is probably useful.

Having said that, why do young people leave rural and regional towns and the countryside? My view is that, basically, it is either to study or to get a job. The reality is there are not enough jobs in every country town for all of the kids. We just have to expect that kids will leave their home at some stage, if we choose to live in a regional area. Not everybody, but clearly some, will leave — there is no question about that. They are either going for a job or to study or — as I guess my kids would say — to gain some independence and experience. There is a big world out there, and they would like to take the first step by going to another big city or another town.

It is about excitement, it is about something different, it is about the entertainment and all of the big things that the world has to offer. They believe, because they have been in the one environment with their family up to that stage, 'Let's go somewhere else and have a look'. I do not think it is any more serious than that; it is just human nature. In our case, my wife and I encouraged them to do that, and we did it as well. There is nothing special about that.

However, there are some people who, for whatever reason — and often they are a good reasons — wish to remain. It could be really strong family attachments, it could be friends, it could be a romantic attachment that has developed, and often that is very strong. A real issue is often finance, They just cannot afford to leave home and find somewhere in the city to live. Sometimes, believe it or not, there are education opportunities here that are actually better than going somewhere else, and we should not ever ignore that circumstance.

Then you say, 'All of the country towns really would like their young people to return'. Again, in my case, my own kids would like to return if the jobs were here and they paid as much and had the same career prospects. It is not necessarily that the places where they live are better; it is that this is where the career prospects, the job and the

long-term security for their families happen to be. Some people return, and they return again for those sorts of things — maybe their parents are getting older and need to be looked after; it could be that they inherit a business. All of these things happen, so people do come back. There are friends, there are romantic attachments again that might bring people back, but the predominate thing I would say, always, is a job and a career prospect. That is why people return. If you were then to ask, as part of your second term of reference, ‘Why don’t they return?’, my view is that it is because there is not the work here. It is pretty simple.

The third term of reference is: what steps can we take to keep young people here, or at least for them to return? I think there is a really simple answer to that, believe it or not, which is to actually have the jobs here. The development of the economy in the regional towns — having real jobs with real prospects — is a key feature. Recognising that there will never be jobs for everybody, we need to have as much growth in rural and regional Victoria and Australia as we can, so that there are the opportunities for young people to remain connected in that.

I am going to say something a bit different at the moment. One of the ways we can actually get people to come back is to help them leave. What I mean by that is to stay connected with the kids that leave. It could be as simple as somebody who has decided they want to go to Melbourne to try to get a job or go to university going to a local real estate agent and saying, ‘Who do you know is a real estate agent in Melbourne?’. That is so we can actually get four or five kids from the town to be able to share a house, without all the hassles — for example, it might be through footy clubs. It is getting a connection and remaining connected with the kids who decide to go elsewhere so that there is always a connection back to their hometown.

The other issue is study opportunities. You will hear some stories from my organisation in a moment. We all have the responsibility to ensure, as much as we can, that there are educational opportunities through schools, the TAFE sector and even the university sector, and to make sure that there is provision in regional areas for continuing and ongoing study — not just schools but beyond schools as well. Our organisation does a good job for what it does. But even if we look at, say, Benalla, you cannot do the range of courses in Benalla as you can in either Wangaratta or Shepparton.

I think there are some issues about internal transport within a region. Ben and I have talked about this many times. We need to ensure that kids can still be at home and travel, within half an hour or an hour, and do their tertiary studies while being here. So transport is an issue.

The final point I would make is that I think there is an opportunity for a mentoring system whereby there is this contact or connection that I talked about for both the kids who leave and the kids who want to stay — that is, there is somebody in the community who is not family, who is a mentor to the kids as they go through this growing-up period. There is good research around to show that this actually works. There have been plenty of attempts at it that have not worked, but I think that is because, perhaps, as a community we have not given it the full emphasis and resources that we might need to make that happen.

They are my opening remarks. I am sure these young folk will be able to say it much more interestingly than I have. Generally, my view is that kids will stay here if there is work here. We have to stay connected and support those who leave and those who stay.

The CHAIR — We will keep on moving. Kerri, have you got some remarks you would like to make?

Ms FORD — Sure. Firstly I would like to talk about my personal experience as a young person growing up in a rural town, and I would like to relate that to how it involves me in working within an organisation. As I explained to Peter on the way over, I was a young Mum. I was 17 years old and was with one of the local secondary schools. Basically I was asked to leave as I was looked upon as being a bad example to other students. So I did. I went back and did a VCE photography subject as a hobby. The next couple of years I spent being a mum and doing a bit of work, but then I decided that after doing factory work and those sort of things I wanted to go out and utilise myself a bit. So that is when I went to Goulburn Ovens TAFE and I started doing certificate 4 in drugs and alcohol. I did that in the evenings.

This went on to a Diploma of Welfare Studies which I completed in two years full time. I was explaining to Peter that doing work placements within that there are a lot of sacrifices that people make when they have children and that sort of thing to work and for no payment but that is part of the study.

On the day of my graduation I actually applied for the role as disability liaison officer for Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE, for which I was successful. I started that in 2004. At Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE I work under the umbrella of student services. My role is primarily to work with students. It covers counselling, disability services and the Youth Pathways program. Currently we have a program set up which directly links in with young people and that is looking at young people from the ages of 15 to 19. It covers things like case management where we look at time management and other things which might impact on students with their studies. Having the Youth Pathways program gives students a sense of belonging in that community and within the TAFE. I am a bit of a fan of the Youth Pathways program.

I have also been looking at mentoring programs. I know they are doing them in Melbourne and this is primarily with students with disabilities. I think this would be a great opportunity for young people. I myself have moved in from a diploma of welfare into distance education. I remain in the rural community; however, I am doing a Bachelor of Social Work by distance. I am very fortunate to work around people who are mentoring and supporting me. They are my work colleagues. I am actually working with social workers and I find that is a great help and support. With young people, to be able to have mentoring and have people support them in rural communities might assist in them staying connected and feeling supported.

Ms SMITH — I feel more comfortable to read my experience I have written. I was born in Numurkah and grew up on dairy farms in rural Victoria until the age of seven. When my parents divorced mum and my two brothers moved and lived in Shepparton. At the age of 18, having completed year 12 at Shepparton High School, I followed my oldest brother's footsteps to Melbourne to study nursing at RMIT at Bundoora. I took up any course that became available to me even though nursing was not something I had ever dreamed of doing.

I would be a failure if I did not study something at university; I would be seen and look like a failure. University courses were the main focus and an absolute must in the eyes of teachers and career officers. I do not remember being encouraged to study art even though I got good scores for that subject. I remember two short meetings with a career person I did not know and with whom I did not feel comfortable, to be completely honest. I felt a great deal of pressure to work very early in what I wanted to do but I did not know enough or was not well directed or guided to understand what career path would be right for me. I felt alone and very afraid. The experience of finishing year 12 was overwhelming and what to expect was confusing. The graphic art students I teach graphic illustration to at GO TAFE have an average age of 18 years.

When asked what messages they received when exiting year 12, they were: only dropouts go to TAFE to get benefits; and students were not told TAFE is the beneficial stepping stone to further study, employment or self-employment. They did not really hear about TAFE other than being shown the campus which really did not mean anything other than what the buildings looked like.

TAFE has a dorky image and the teachers at their school showed a poor attitude towards the institution. We were not told about what to do about university until halfway through year 12. The students felt they needed someone they could relate to and speak to about career opportunities and other decisions or choices if they were not aware of what they wanted to do — whether it be work, study or travel.

The students told me that had they had very professional people, specialist tradespeople business men and women to share their stories and experience of how and what they did to achieve what they are currently doing, it would have been of great benefit. Their experience of having one motivational speaker in the professional sporting field did not meet the needs of those who were not interested in that career choice.

Many students felt a great lack of emotional support at such an overwhelming and scary time of their lives. They were told not to get sick. Some students who knew they did not want to go to university felt they were of less importance and in their experience the teachers did not show enough interest in them or give them enough support or information about other choices.

I returned to Shepparton once I successfully failed the first year of the Bachelor of Nursing, and I was extremely happy to return to my hometown. Having worked in Coles supermarkets as a register operator during high school, I felt confident to return with a promotion in mind, which was granted. I began a four-year career in management until the age of 22. Working for Coles supermarkets I achieved retailer of the year in Victoria for two consecutive years. I yearned for more experience and adventure and felt ready for a change of scenery so I obtained a transfer to

Port Melbourne. I moved in with my oldest brother who by then had a masters in aerospace engineering. I managed a store during the evenings to advance my career. My goal is to be the fourth manager in Victoria.

My outlook on Shepparton at that age was poor. I saw my home town as a hole and dead end, and to be rather frank I was embarrassed to tell others I grew up there. In Melbourne there were a lot of social scenes, activities, entertainment, people to meet, privacy and room to be an individual. I thought I could not have found this in a country town. I lived in Melbourne for 18 months before I grew tired of the cold. I wanted to experience a sunny state, Queensland, and I lived there for 18 months. I left the supermarket environment and began a new venture and became a nanny.

I attended Shepparton for a three month period. Shepparton was a safe place from me to collect myself, refocus and prepare to return to Melbourne. Living in Shepparton was not an option. I felt there were not enough work opportunities or social things to do. I was happy to be a nanny and applied for work in Melbourne. I was a successful applicant within two weeks. After 18 months working for two different families in Melbourne I came to see I wanted to be more than a nanny working for others and only earning \$14 an hour.

I also wanted to live with my father because I missed out living with him during the divorce of my parents. I did not have a partner or children so it was the perfect time to return to Shepparton to live with him. Having spoken to other teachers in the graphics art department at GO TAFE they too decided to return to Shepparton to be with their families. Having my father's support emotionally and financially, and due to the less financial strain of living in a country town, I was able to write a book within three months aiming to give hope to the youth who may have been struggling as I did when growing up.

As living costs are lower than in the cities it gave me great opportunities to explore different community activities, to develop new skills or enhance previous skills. I took advantage of being involved with the happenings of Shepparton to build my poor self-esteem and develop self-confidence. These activities included the Shepparton theatre arts group, indoor netball, Wednesday night touch football and Rotary youth leadership awards, which encouraged 18 to 30 year old people to develop and enhance leadership skills to help our communities. I started a gospel singing group. I began building a network of people who became a fundamental foundation in directing me on the path I am moving along today.

I design customised art for homes and businesses including freelance graphic design and do sessional teaching at GO TAFE which enhances my life tenfold. I am currently earning more than \$14 per hour with a lot more spring in my step. I have enjoyed participating in and hosting the Christmas carols, being on television and radio commercials, entering art in local art festivals and being involved in two non-profit organisations.

The students say the benefits of staying in the country are: they can stay at home to make study affordable, that moving is more financially non-viable; they can continue working at their part-time jobs by staying at GO TAFE; there is less travel to and from places; less distraction from study; the city is too overwhelming; there are too many people and cars in the city; TAFE offers one-on-one time and attention.

Mr STUART — I come from a small town, Batemans Bay, and I moved to Shepparton eight years ago. I found that in smaller towns there are less jobs for people when they finish school or if they are just looking for work. When we all finished year 12 we all moved out to Canberra, Sydney or Melbourne. It was one of the greatest things that we did — to get out of there. We did not stay at home because there wasn't any work. There was no money. We had to go to bigger places to find better work and more money. That is why I moved to Shepparton — to find work.

I wanted to be with my father. In the first year I was here I enrolled in Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE. Since I have done that, I have done a lot of things with the community because I work in a primary school. I have done a lot of things with kids, like going on camps. I am a role model for the kids who think they cannot get anywhere or do anything. I try to do a lot of things regarding community gardens and stuff that can keep me in Shepparton.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — How big is Batemans Bay?

Mr STUART — There are 16 000 people; it is not all that big. It is building up. It is a good coastal area to go back to and see people. I always go back for holidays and that is about it.

Mr MITCHELL — It is mainly tourism there, isn't it? That is the main industry and a bit of fishing.

Mr STUART — Yes, a lot of people go there at Easter and Christmas, and that is about it. I would like to go back there when I am older, to retire, but there is no use going back there when there are bigger and better jobs in Shepparton or in bigger places — in cities.

The CHAIR — Does anyone have any questions for anyone?

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — The previous group of speakers covered seven local government areas, and they raised similar issues with all levels of education provided in the region — with secondary schools as well as TAFEs. But in their view they pointed out — and mind you, I cannot recall them giving any actual example which others might be able to assist me with, but I cannot remember a specific example — an issue that they raised that they believe that TAFE and secondary schools do not give skills that are required for young people to stay in the region, and that there are not enough subjects that are specific to this region that gives them the skills to gain jobs in the industries that are specific to this.

Mr INGRAM — I know what you mean, yes.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — But it was about TAFE as well. How do you check yourself? How do you go about checking whether you are doing the right subjects and in fact whether VET is doing the right or relevant subjects?

Mr RYAN — I think the answer to that is that that is sort of true and sort of not true. I almost alluded to it. In smaller towns — we can talk about Seymour, Benalla, Mansfield, Alexandra and so on — that the amount of offerings that we can provide in those small towns is very restricted. But if you come to Shepparton — I can leave with you the course guide — we literally have thousands of courses. We know they are relevant, because the vast majority of them are trades — plumbers, engineers, builders, and sheet metal workers — and those people are all employed. They have to pass their ticket and so on.

I am quite sure that the fundamental delivery we provide is up to scratch. We have something like 17 reference groups across the institute to keep us in contact with what industry wants, how we are going and so on. I accept the criticism that we cannot do that everywhere, and we do not.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — So what is the answer for places like Euroa or the other areas?

Mr RYAN — I think the answer is to improve the transport of kids, who have not got a licence. Once they have a car they are generally okay, but they sometimes do not do it, because when they have to start they are 16 to 17 years old, have not got a car and therefore do not start a course in building that is going to be run at Shepparton rather than at Seymour. I think there is an issue about having transport across the lines. Generally you can get from perhaps Seymour to Shepparton but not to Benalla. Euroa to Shepparton is not easy, even though it is not that far. So there are those sorts of issues, but the reality is that we, as an education system, will never be able to serve up everything they want in that location. It is really a matter of them saying they have a clear strategy about what industries they are supporting in those towns. You have a class of maybe 10 or 12 kids who are going to go into a timber mill in Benalla — we should be able to deliver for them. But if there is just one, we have real difficulty.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — A follow-up to that was what Kellie was talking about. Your LLEN is supposed to coordinate all those different levels of education — or is there another organisation? What discussions do have to ensure that TAFE is seen as a legitimate part of the service provision of education just as much as University is or just as much as VET is in secondary schools? If that is still around, how do you change that?

Mr RYAN — It is.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — Is it still around?

Ms FORD — Yes, it is.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — How do you change that?

Mr RYAN — We spend a lot of money on TV, radio and newspaper advertisements and brochures and people like — —

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — What about actually talking to secondary school teachers?

Mr RYAN — Yes, all of that. But I think the advice that one of these folk gave was that the advice they are actually getting from the careers teachers is actually misdirecting them — as strong as that — in many cases. Maybe we need to put together a concept of — —

Mr McQUILTEN — Re-educate career advisers?

Mr RYAN — Yes, but can we expect our career teacher in a school to be able to service 50, 100 or 200 clients within the school? It could be this mentoring idea, that there are a whole pool of people that provide a whole range of advice and the whole village could get involved in advising its kids; it might be a better way because what we currently have is not working.

Mr INGRAM — Do you think there is a breakdown of the village and the community networks? In days gone past, young people who were going to go into a trade would go and door knock the tradespeople in the area. The information I am getting back from tradies in my area is that young people are not going and knocking on the door and saying, 'I want to do an apprenticeship'. They are relying on going through the career advisers. They are going through school to get the highest possible exit level which then does not necessarily promote them into those trades which they may be better suited to because of their academic ability.

Mr RYAN — I think you are absolutely right. One of the initiatives this institute is involved in, which is an initiative coming out of a recent statement by the government, is about the setting up of technical education centres. There is going to be one at Wangaratta. We are heavily involved with the high school there. The concept is to actually engage kids as young as those in year 9, give them a TAFE experience where all of these trades are actually explained to them and they have a bit of a go. Then those who choose to go through years 10, 11 and 12 in a technical education stream within the school still but using TAFE facilities, I think, is a reasonable approach.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — Doesn't the wheel turn?

Mr RYAN — I used to teach in a technical school.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — My father did, too.

Mr RYAN — But this is a little bit different. It is actually combining the best of both worlds, which we are very keen to make work. There is something happening. If we can get the broad range of careers available to kids in their secondary schooling, then I think we will go a long way so that kids will then go and knock on the doors of the tradies, because they are convinced they want to do it. That would really help.

Mr INGRAM — I want to take up your comment about jobs not being offered — we not only looked at this presentation now but in previous presentations here today — there is not necessarily the range of employment opportunities, particularly in the smaller towns, which provide the career paths, the interesting job opportunities, the challenging job opportunities, and also the pay structure.

Your comment is, 'Provide the jobs'. We are going to be making recommendations to the state government. I want to know your advice. How do we, as a parliamentary committee, provide advice to the government? Is there any gold bullet, if you like, so that government could say, 'Here is a way to diversify the job opportunities and the business opportunities in country areas'. Why aren't those businesses here which are providing those job opportunities?

Ms SMITH — Could you ask that question again?

Mr McQUILTEN — He always asks long questions!

Mr INGRAM — Very simply, how does government provide the incentive for the diversity of businesses that provide the higher-paced structure job opportunities, the more challenging university-education-requirement jobs? For instance, you might diversify, because small communities in particular are largely focused on food manufacturing, to live-skills type jobs. That is one of the challenges in most small areas: how do you get the up-skilled jobs?

Ms SMITH — I am not too sure if what I am about to say is relevant, but the feeling I have with secondary students and the feedback I got from them is being informed by the professionals who are already in the

community: sharing their experience, how they got there, what do they do, is there room, can they make more room?

As far as I read on the web site Youth Central there are 50 000 young people aged between 15 and 24 who start their own businesses, and there can be new employment and new spring-ups from new businesses. The students felt they wanted that sort of one-on-one personal contact to find out where is the success in country towns, what is the range of possible professions and careers, what are they and how you get there — that sort of thing. I am not too sure if that really answers your question.

Mr RYAN — I think government has to be reasonably active and actually do things like have incentives and talk with local government about their strategic plans. For instance, a place like Benalla might decide it wants to be in tourism, timber, arts and culture and then to attract businesses here. If everybody gets a strategic plan about it, when there is new investment, and if the government is saying to them, 'Hey, the best place for you to be is Benalla', then instead of everybody congregating to a big city like Melbourne — okay, Shepparton clearly does not have a problem because it has huge employment problems, we cannot get enough people to do the work, but Benalla is different, Seymour is different.

If we could start to be strategic about what they do and let the local community say, 'This is what we want to be good at' — it might be that they want to be good at entrepreneurial businesses and work in e-commerce and the rest of it — and really support things to happen that way, the result will not be that everybody in Benalla will stay here, but somebody from Warracknabeal might come to Benalla rather than going to Melbourne. If we can start to get that to happen, there is a chance.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — Is broadband access an issue in terms of accessing more remote areas that may not have public transport for some of your subjects?

Mr RYAN — Absolutely.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — Is it a part of that?

Mr RYAN — I think it is. I know Telstra are saying it is going to be fixed, but I know at my place — I am 20 kilometres out of Shepparton — that is 28 kilobytes, right? I do not use it because it is so painfully slow and it drops out all the time, and I am educated and have all the wherewithal to use it but we do not because it is just so bad.

Mr INGRAM — Bypass Telstra and get a wireless network.

Mr RYAN — The wireless network cuts out at 15 kilometres. I am 3 kilometres further on, so you are right, but the answer is that if we had universal coverage, we would do a lot more.

The CHAIR — Kellie, you are obviously an entrepreneur within your area. Were there any activities or things that helped you become an entrepreneur? What were the things that did help you, and what were the things that you think — apart from the things you have mentioned — would help you further or that helped you do that even more quickly?

Ms SMITH — First, this is my sixth month in businesses. The NEIS program is assisting me now, so I have been well educated. I am a big fan of that. I also joined up with and participated in the Rural Women's Association, and they have been a fantastic help as well. Then there is another group but I cannot remember. They have an expo. every year.

Mr CRUTCHFIELD — Would it have been the department of agriculture?

Ms SMITH — No, I do not think it was that. So you are now asking — it was the networking basically that — —

The CHAIR — The networking was very helpful?

Ms SMITH — And I guess that comes back down to the community again, because I have grown up here and I know a lot of people and I continue to know people; and Joe knows Blake and Blake knows Mary, and that is

part of the networking. Networking is a very important part of business, so it is the ongoing contact with other business people and with the rural women. I cannot think of anything else off the top of my head.

The CHAIR — That is okay. You have given a couple of answers there, anyway. Thank you.

Mr MITCHELL — Kellie, from what you were saying before, you gave the impression that you left school with no real idea of where you fitted. I know that exact feeling because when I got asked to leave in year 10 I had no idea of what I was going to do, either. Do you share those experiences around with other young ones?

Ms SMITH — Definitely, even with the class that I teach I have already shared my journey with them, and we continue to talk about our experiences and so forth. It is the same with everybody I talk to. Firstly, I always promote Shepparton — what is available, what sort of activities are happening and how they can help or participate. I think it is really important when I am talking to other people to let them know there are other ways. I was not ready to go to university on the day, and I was just petrified of failing and dying. That is pretty much the experience of kids I am teaching now. That is pretty much how they felt, and it is not a good feeling. If messages of failure are being passed on, then they are walking around feeling like that, and it is not true.

I went straight back to school, and it has been one of the best things I ever did because I got a diploma in graphic arts and that tapped back into my activity because initially that is where I was strong anyway. So I think that is a very strong message for other people to know, that university is not the only way. There are so many important stepping stones. I was a very insecure person, so I needed a lot more work, a lot more understanding, a lot more skills to progress.

Mr MITCHELL — Do you find that the kids are getting pigeon-holed early? Is it a case of, ‘This is the path you must follow’?

Ms SMITH — Yes. They find that when they are talking to someone about their career path they cannot relate to the person they are talking to, they do not trust the person they are talking to, and they do not feel that that person will actually nut out for them or assist them to work out what is real or what their passions are or what will really motivate them. That is why it has been great to jump onto Youth Central because they can jump onto different paths and find out for themselves.

But what is missing is where adults can help teenagers to work out what is motivating them and what they really want to do and why. Do they want to do it for them selves, do they want to do it for the teachers, do they want to do it for the fear or do they want to do it for their parents? It is like life coaching. It is back to that mentoring. It is that one-on-one experience and understanding, that sort of basic emotional mental understanding first.

My brother is in aerospace. He was building planes from the age of three and he went for it, he knew; but there were a lot — myself and others — who just did not know.

Mr McQUILTEN — I would like to congratulate all of you. You have done extremely well. I think you are inspirational.

The CHAIR — Peter, Kerri, Kellie and Henry, thank you very much for coming over and presenting to us today and taking the time to prepare for it. It is very much appreciated. You will get a copy of the transcript and you may correct any typing errors but not matters of substance, and then it will become public.

Witnesses withdrew.