

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Student Pathways to In-demand Industries

Melbourne—Friday 28 November 2025

MEMBERS

Alison Marchant—Chair

John Mullahy

Kim O'Keeffe—Deputy Chair

Nicole Werner

Roma Britnell

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Anthony Cianflone

WITNESSES

Dr Michele Lonsdale, Acting Chief Executive Officer, and

Pearl Goodwin-Burns, Senior Manager, Education, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare;

Lauren Frost, Advocacy Manager, Policy and Communications, Youth Affairs Council Victoria;

Rob Auger, Operations Manager, Employment Programs, Jesuit Social Services; and

Melanie Raymond, Chair, and

Trent Miller, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Projects.

The CHAIR: Welcome to the panel's hearing for the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee's Inquiry into Student Pathways to In-demand Industries. All mobile telephone should now be turned to silent.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard and broadcast live on the Parliament's website.

While all evidence taken by the Committee is protected by parliamentary privilege, comments repeated outside of this hearing, including on social media, may not be protected by this privilege.

Witnesses will be provided with a proof version of the transcript to check.

We will run this like a bit session just a little bit like a Q and A format—pretty informal chat. A few Committee Members will ask some questions, and if you would like to answer, you can just indicate—hand up—or jump into the conversation. There may not be an opportunity for everyone to answer every question, so we will just, depending on time, allow a few speakers. If there is any important information, though, or points you do not have an opportunity to make during this session, you are welcome to provide additional information in writing. I will get you all to just start with your name and your title or position and organisation that you represent. I am Alison, the chair and Member for Bellarine.

John MULLAHY: John Mullahy, Member for Glen Waverley.

Anthony CIANFLONE: Anthony Cianfalone, Member for Pascoe Vale.

The CHAIR: Thank you so much for coming today. What I might do is start this end. We will do an introduction, and then we will jump into questions.

Trent MILLER: Hi. Trent Miller, CEO at Youth Projects.

Melanie RAYMOND: Melanie Raymond, Chair at Youth Projects.

Rob AUGER: Rob Auger, Operations Manager of Employment Programs, Jesuit Social Services.

Lauren FROST: Lauren Frost, Advocacy Manager at Youth Affairs Council Victoria, or YACVic.

Michele LONSDALE: Michele Lonsdale, interim CEO, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare.

Pearl GOODWIN-BURNS: Pearl Goodwin-Burns, Senior Manager of Education and the Raising Expectations program at the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare.

The CHAIR: Great, thank you. Thanks so much for your time today. John, I am going to give it to you first.

John MULLAHY: Thank you all for being here today. I noticed some consistencies across all of your submissions, so what I wanted to start with was: how should career education be tailored to support young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and how adequately is current school career education meeting the needs of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds? It is open to anyone.

The CHAIR: If anyone would like to answer.

Trent MILLER: Sure. I can kick off. I think for career education in schools more broadly it is really important to segment different students, and what we particularly see at Youth Projects for young people that are leaving school early is that they feel very much left out of career conversations and they are left without a pathway. Their work experience opportunities are limited and generally bound to the people who they know within their networks, and often when they are coming from cycles of poverty they do not actually understand the particular opportunities that exist out there within careers. So, yes, I guess that is sort of the main problem point that we see for young people. In terms of how you can improve that within the school environment, I think it is having connection to community services organisations to come in and run that type of work and give an understanding for what career pathways exist that are out there by having such things as an industry discovery day, so partnering with organisations that know that they are going to have a massive skills gap and need to think innovatively about how they recruit. We run a significant amount of bite-size programs. Young

people do not necessarily want to commit to long-term education, particularly when they are on the platform of leaving school, so how can we give young people exposure to many different environments where they get to test and trial new things, meet new people and understand what a day in the life might look like before then actually committing to longer term work?

The CHAIR: Thank you. Can I just add to that question, though, something we have not really discussed yet—trauma-informed support. Can you just talk a little bit about maybe that? That was mentioned in some of your submissions. I am not sure whether that should be a question on notice.

Pearl GOODWIN-BURNS: Absolutely. At the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, we run the Raising Expectations program, which is supporting care-experienced students, so students that have been in out-of-home care, to access and succeed at TAFE and university. We work with TAFE and university partners to embed trauma-informed wraparound support services to ensure that they can access and participate in higher education at the same rate as their peers. That does involve things like tailored workshops for TAFE and university staff. I would recommend taking a similar approach to career development and ensuring that career practitioners have awareness and knowledge about the impact of trauma and what that looks like on the engagement of a young person in education and what their aspirations are in terms of career and education, because we hear from young people quite often that they do have low expectations placed onto them because of their situation and because of being in care, and that has lifelong impacts on their ability to engage in things like careers and TAFE and university options. So it is really, really important to be considering the impact that trauma has on children and young people in the context of their career and their further education.

The CHAIR: And does that impact their work experience or those tasters that—

Pearl GOODWIN-BURNS: I think it does, because what we hear—I have actually got a quote here from a young person in regard to her career education. She says, ‘In high school we did have a careers advisor, but he literally said to me, “You will never get into medicine. Pick something else.” Instead of saying, “Here are the pathways into medicine,” it was, “You’ll never do it.” I should have been a cook or a cleaner, in his opinion.’ That is a pervasive deficit-focused narrative that exists quite consistently for young people that have had a care experience, and it really shapes the way that they view themselves in regard to their future and their careers and their aspirations and access to things like TAFE and university.

The CHAIR: Before they have even started.

Pearl GOODWIN-BURNS: Yes, exactly. They are hearing that right from school age, which the Commission for Children and Young People in Victoria really explored in their *Let Us Learn* report.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Trent MILLER: Just to add to that as well, on community services organisations. We have a role that is a dedicated youth coach, which is the absolute wheelhouse of our organisation, and our youth coaches are able to look at a young person holistically, which helps with trauma-informed care. They are able to look at their mental health, their housing situation, their family, their hobbies, everything that is all encompassing. Having that person to support that journey throughout ensures that they can make necessary adjustments as their life is changing and shifting around them, because that is that one trusted person that they have who believes in them. The school system is not set up to have that amount of resources given to that particular one young person, and instead they are framed in the too-hard basket.

The CHAIR: How many how many youth coaches, though, do you have?

Trent MILLER: We have around 50 across the west and north-west that do a range of different things that are in a multitude of different programs. They specialise in a range of different minority groups, whether it is culturally and linguistically diverse groups, queer groups, neurodiverse, specific disabilities or housing, and then they are paired up appropriately.

The CHAIR: How amazing for those young people to have that. That is incredible. I am sure you would like to probably—well, more students need that.

Melanie RAYMOND: I am just going to say, on top of that, we actually embed the idea of being trauma-informed in how we design our hubs so that they do not look like or match anything where they are likely to have had a really negative experience. To recognise that from the get-go is very hard. We had the opportunity to create from the ground up and adapt workplaces with all manner of approaches that can be brought to bear. It is not just a thing that staff have on their CV and bring out, it is in everything we do, such is the level of trauma that we are aware of. So it can be in the physical space of how you design your service.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Lauren FROST: I also just wanted to add on, sorry. I was really thrilled this morning to hear some of the excellent testimony that some of the young people from VicSRC were giving, and particularly that one of those young people identified that youth work was an area that she was keen to get into. You will see in our submission that funding supports for youth work is a core part of what we are calling for, because youth workers really have that ability to work in this strength-based way that really centres the young person's experience and builds up all of the things that my colleagues have been talking about. I would really encourage the Committee to think of youth work as an in-demand industry in and of itself, so supporting more young people to get into youth work as a profession but also then providing support for youth workers and the youth sector to keep doing all of the excellent work my colleagues have just mentioned.

The CHAIR: I would like to add that it just felt like that youth work and the profession was able to give agency and advocacy, and they afford the student the voice to advocate for themselves. It gives them that confidence to do that.

Lauren FROST: Exactly. That is why it is so meaningful and impactful. There is such excellent work that teachers and career counsellors give, but youth work has a really unique role to play as part of that. That is why we are really supportive of increasing the investment in youth work across Victoria but across Australia, really, too.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Michele, did you want to say something?

Michele LONSDALE: It is a bit of a different response. I agree with everything that has been said. It is just when we talk about young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, that is not a homogenous group. Someone mentioned before about diversity. There are a range of different experiences that young people have—some intersecting, some not. The reason that Raising Expectations has been so successful is because we have taken one group of young people that have got experience of being in the care system and the program has been tailored to those needs. You could take that model and transfer principles and elements of it to address needs, perhaps of other young people. But I just am a bit wary when we talk about that blanket term.

The CHAIR: Thank you for pointing that out. Anthony, I will head to you for another question.

Anthony CIANFLONE: Thanks, Chair. My question is around collaboration between industry and education providers and how the government can better support those collaborations. This question is to everyone, but particularly to Youth Projects, to Melanie and Trent, because you guys are longstanding service providers across my community here in Merri-bek. I am very familiar with your work, and you have had quite a lot of success there—74 per cent pre-employment training completion compared to 47 per cent across Victoria—and you have got great partnerships across health care, the Here4Hospitality program and supply chain and logistics training. Can you talk to how those partnerships and collaborations have worked? Then we can hear from some of the others about how that can apply, potentially, through the government's work and support too.

Trent MILLER: Yes, for sure. It was actually really driven by our young people, these concepts. Young people through regular feedback and surveys were telling us that they just simply did not understand what careers existed and pathways to get into them, but they did not want to commit to things long term. So we thought, 'Well, what are the skills that are in demand? What's going to be potentially attractive to young people? And do we have a group of employers that are interested in the youth workforce?' Our programs really started with co-design with employers first. We wanted to understand what skills employers needed for young people to be attractive to them as potential candidates, and then also for young people, what were the features that they needed to improve their employability skills. Then we mapped it up together and went to our local TAFEs or RTOs and picked some micro-credentials that would give young people a step up so that they would

be attractive to the general labour market pool for that particular industry. And then through that, we intertwined those local employers throughout the program, so young people get to start meeting the employers during the program and start building trust and rapport. Then the employers realise that, 'Oh, these young people actually aren't that scary. I really like this person; I might hire him now.' So all of these relationships happen really organically, and young people get to build out their professional networks.

They also come together as their own tribe. We might have 10 to 12 people in these programs, and they are there for one another. They share each other's challenges, they share each other's triumphs, and that relationship continues further on and on. And because we have done all of that co-design work with employers earlier, they do not just want to stay in touch with us until the end of the program, they want to work with us on an ongoing basis because they want to report back and maybe they need some funding to improve this young person's experience at work, whether it is paying for a particular licence or some form of work equipment, and we have the funds to be able to do that. That results in a young person finding a meaningful pathway where they are continuing to progress up the career ladder so that they do not end up coming back into our service, because they have work.

The CHAIR: Interesting. Does anyone else want to speak?

Rob AUGER: Yes, we have run a series of traineeship programs where we have co-designed some of the pre-employment resiliency training et cetera with the employers as well. It is a key factor. We worked predominantly in this sphere in the aged care sector, which was a very in-demand industry. One of the things that we found was that there was a shortage of people who understood what the industry was going to be like, who had gone and gotten their accreditation and then they applied for the job, and they did not necessarily have the foundation or the employability skills nor an awareness of what the industry actually was. You had a high drop-off rate of people who would apply for the job, get in, realise that it was not what they thought it was and then very, very low retention, so there would be low levels of people that either would have the retention rate in terms of long-term employability and/or people that would complete their traineeship.

So we worked with a series of aged care providers, and we developed a staged process. There was the pre-employment resiliency, where you would build employability skills and they would meet the employer, but they would understand not only the benefits of the industry but you tell them about all of it. Keeping in mind that when you are dealing with disadvantaged youth, there is often intergenerational unemployment as well, so they do not have that potential figure at home who is going to talk to them about how to operate within the workplace, not just the skills that they kind of learn along the way through the traineeship. So we would embed those skills in a week-long program and then we would actually do job shadowing shifts, not work experience, because it is quite sensitive, but the job shadowing then gave the participant the opportunity to view the industry, decide if it was for them. So it was almost a reverse application, where it was not just about the employer interviewing and getting to witness the young person operating in this industry, it was about the person being able to say, 'Actually, I'm not certain if that is for me or, if it is, how do I get involved and how do I go further?' What we found with that was, for people who actually got through the pre-employment resiliency course and then went through the staged job shadowing, I think at one time we had about a 75 per cent completion rate. So 18 months later 75 per cent of people who entered the program were still in the industry and actually completed a traineeship. Getting to witness what actually happens in the industry and having employers give that opportunity was key to that retention rate. I think sometimes vocational pathways are about selling an industry, and that can sometimes sell the industry short because somebody needs to be aware of what it is as they enter—you get a much higher retention rate if they have that experience.

Lauren FROST: I just want to highlight a great example of a program that is working from a regional and rural perspective. YACVic is the peak body for young people in the youth sector in Victoria. It works right across the state, and we have got a really fantastic YACVic rural team, including offices based in Swan Hill and Warrnambool. One of my regional colleagues sent me through an example of a great program in Warrnambool that is working really well, which is called the One Day Studios, based in Warrnambool. They have done this great work really raising the profile of media and creative careers with thousands of young people across that region in the Great South Coast. They are a social enterprise, so they aim to break down the educational barriers that are faced by particularly young regional Australians aiming to work in those creative industries. They provide employment pathways for young digital creatives in regional Victoria. They do that via work experience, via classroom visits to the studio and short courses. But the studio itself is really a safe space for young people, and that is a really important part of what they do. It is also a place where they can get access to

those digital tools, to knowledge, but really importantly, to those peer networks. Something that has been really great that has come out of the program is this podcast, which is now being run by the young people, called Get a Real Job which is all about their experience and has been co-designed with them about what it is like to be in one of those creative sectors and have people really believe in them and foster that creativity. I think that is a really great example of when you involve young people in the co-design of these programs, more young people are involved in the long run. So there is really great work happening out in our regions that I wanted to shout-out as well.

The CHAIR: Great. I would like to ask—you all touched on this job readiness and being ready for the workplace or after leaving school—can you just talk about some of the things that maybe you do or the success in getting young people job ready? Because it is a big scary world out there sometimes and to transition into the workplace can be a bit of a beast.

Pearl GOODWIN-BURNS: As part of the Raising Expectations program, we have a fabulous peer-mentoring element to our program. The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare actually connects young people with an out-of-home care experience with a peer mentor that also has an out-of-home care experience. It is the first program of its kind based on education in Australia, and it is really powerful having a role model and someone with a real-life example and relatability and having a mentor that can speak about the challenges that they have faced and that they have gone through. Our mentors all have TAFE and university qualifications or they are partway through completing, and those mentors are able to model and demonstrate what kinds of skills are needed and what the pathways look like for them to get there. We have young people aged 15 and above engaged in that program, so some of those young people are still at school and some are disengaged from school. They look for a connection in someone that has got experience but has that really unique perspective of someone that has been in care. I think that is a really powerful model in terms of career support as well, because there is nothing like having someone that has a similar experience to you to demonstrate the power that you have within you.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Trent MILLER: I think for us we try to avoid the term ‘job ready’, but we will ask the question: ‘Are you looking for work?’ If it is a no, that is totally fine; all of our services are voluntary, but we want to eventually get you to looking for work. Lived experience is a massive thing for us. Eighty-four per cent of our staff have lived experience in the service domains that we operate in, and that is a very deliberate strategy, because if they have got lived experience, they can connect with young people and motivate them to eventually be looking for work. If you identify as looking for work, then we think you are job ready.

Melanie RAYMOND: Also there is scaffolding that the team does, really breaking it down, not assuming job readiness, and the bite-size chunks around recognising negative experiences. This is working at their pace with a lot of wraparound support, which we certainly have, but with the timing, the pace, the sort of collaboration with the clients and not sending them into something unsuitable. We spend the time. But really the amount of immersive little things that we are able to create and that employers are really into—it is not a huge impost on them either—has been very, very successful in our hubs.

The CHAIR: Yes, wow.

Lauren FROST: I just think something to add also as part of this discussion, and I completely agree, is the youth sector survey that YACVic runs regularly identifies the exact same thing: many youth workers themselves have lived experience relevant to the issues they are working on. But something I want to highlight is one of the barriers that young people face getting into these amazing roles, which is about student placement poverty, which is around the lack of paid placements for young people in youth work or community work more broadly. That is a real barrier for young people to then get the education and the training that they need to be able to deliver these programs. One of the core recommendations from our submission that I would love to raise today is about addressing that student placement poverty by working with the Commonwealth government to introduce support payments for youth work students, and community work students more broadly, undertaking what are currently unpaid placements.

The CHAIR: We have heard that loud and clear with a whole lot of submissions and witnesses, so thank you. We certainly have heard that.

Trent MILLER: It is a massive concern. The young people that we are seeing, you know, they are often living by themselves on the brink of becoming homeless. They need income from work, which forces them into unskilled jobs, which increases mental health distress. You know, they might be working two to three jobs, which then does not give them any longevity with employment. That creates more financial stress, then it leads to a mental health decline, and they become unemployed and they have not got any qualifications. So it is a really vicious cycle that young people are experiencing right now because the cost of living for them is incredibly tough, and they have got to choose between trying to put food on the table or going to study something and potentially sleeping rough. We need more traineeships where young people can earn and learn, particularly in the industries that are going to have major skills gaps, already now but definitely into the future.

The CHAIR: Thank you, John.

John MULLAHY: Yes, so it sort of leads on from the readiness part to the transition support. Melanie, you mentioned the wraparound support, but what I would like to know is actually what that is specifically. What support do young people from disadvantaged backgrounds need to transition from secondary school to work or further study? And what transition supports do your organisations currently provide young people?

Melanie RAYMOND: One of the things I do want to stress is the model we work in, which is we have got these hubs but bringing what we used to use in health into employment services, and that is outreach, which can occur anywhere. Our team will go out where young people are in very informal settings to recognise an early intervention around mental health, around poverty, homelessness, family violence, because walking into a hub—they are not going to put their hand up or even know that we exist. They are not quite ready in help-seeking, around contacting some of the other organisations in mental health that might be out there. So it is much earlier early intervention with youth, and that includes outreach with neurodiverse and queer populations and also highly, you know, culturally aware and appropriate programs. The cooking program with Rotary matched young people with Rotary women from the Rotary club, cooking a particular cuisine. They told us they found that more useful to English language development than going to an English language class, so it was a really good intercultural experience. So we have got those years of history of doing courageous and safe outreach anywhere, any time, if that is what it needs, and finding those gaps. But Trent, you should talk a bit more about some of those other programs and initiatives that we have in wraparound support.

Trent MILLER: Yes, for sure. I think there is a funding gap in the federal employment services so that your transition-to-work provider, which is your youth employment services provider, does not get access to those young people until they have been disengaged from the system for a period of either six or nine months. At that point a lot can change in a young person's life. That interim gap is not being met from a funding perspective, so a lot of those young people do fall off everyone's radar. So something around that transitional piece where schools can work more collaboratively with community services organisations to pathway them much more clearly—I think it has worked really well in Queensland, but in Victoria getting an exit school letter from a school seems to be very challenging for our youth employment team to be able to register people in. If you do complete year 12, then you need to wait for a six- to nine-month period before you can actually register for specific services.

The CHAIR: So you just lose them, really?

Trent MILLER: Yes. We try to support them through our early intervention programs that we run through quite a number of councils, but they are not funded to meet that demand that is there. If you have a look at youth unemployment, particularly out in the north-west and west, you are looking at low teens, which is significantly higher than the Australian youth unemployment rate. The longer someone is out of work, the harder it is to transition them back into education or employment. We are seeing youth unemployment—the amount of young people who have been unemployed for more than a year—has doubled over the past decade, so that gap is getting wider and wider and it is getting more challenging for young people to find secure employment or even get a chance.

The CHAIR: But something is happening, because we have got a work shortage. It just does not marry up, does it?

Trent MILLER: There is a mismatch, absolutely, yes.

Melanie RAYMOND: We are finding those sorts of innovations from putting our lenses on and looking for the gaps at the micro level and finding them and having the freedom and the time to do that. That is how we have designed some of the original program. The YHOP in Hume was the first one around being actively out where no-one thinks young people are but in fact they are; they are not where you think they are. And we are honing our skills, and now we would like to grow more of that. The problem is it is not recognised as education or mental health or health: what silo do we belong to? Because we do not want the silos. Sometimes we have found various funding bodies do not recognise what it is—and yes, that is probably true because you have not seen this before. But the ability to wrap around the support and to capture that in the method and where it needs to be is what we would like to do more of and what we think works and bolsters the impact of other programs that are being funded to help them.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Rob?

Rob AUGER: We have traditionally in most of our employment services embedded a welfare support officer within the programs, be that the state-funded former Jobs Victoria mentor programs, currently our federally funded IEA or Inclusive Employment Australia programs and even Skills First Reconnect. What we find is that by having somebody who can actually address a young person's psychosocial issues, not necessarily to actually service them but to make sure that they are remaining connected with other services—AOD counselling, mental health counselling, housing and complex needs—it keeps them tied to these employment programs so that they do not slip through the cracks and there is a continuity of service or pathway within a particular program to end with either further education or employment. They are not traditionally funded within these models, but we have always carved out a role to ensure that there is somebody who can look after that aspect of it. What that typically does is it allows us then to embed people who are career or vocational experts in their specific role so that when a young person is looking to pursue a vocational or education pathway they can stay highly connected with the employment consultant or the mentor or whoever that is, depending on the program, but when it becomes a little bit too much for them they can still stay connected with the program but through other avenues that are a little bit more supportive and focused on another area.

Because we work with disadvantaged youth and often work in the justice space as well, we also have a justice and community engagement officer. That person will also help them liaise with their corrections officers' orders, parole officers and proactive police units and make sure that they can meet all of the obligations that they need to whilst they are studying and/or pursuing a job. That is incredibly valuable as well, because often when young people are on corrections orders, they might have curfews, they might have LGA restrictions et cetera. For them to be able to engage with a mainstream vocational service or employment service becomes very, very difficult and daunting. They will be being told on one side, 'You need to go get that job,' and yet they have got limitations to what they can do. So having somebody that can coordinate all of that is incredibly important as well but, as I said, not always recognised and funded. These are things that we need to carve out.

The CHAIR: That you have to do, yes, to give the best chances for success. Anthony, I think we have time for one more question.

Anthony CIANFLONE: Just picking up off that conversation, what are your respective views around potentially looking at embedding some of those services from your respective organisations and other similar social service type organisations—not just through the respective programs delivered directly to those being engaged but actually embedding them early and through schools?

Trent MILLER: Yes, I think that is the absolute best pathway—to work more collaboratively with schools, particularly in that back-end half of the year, when you can start to educate them around what particular options are so that they are not just finishing school and then they are not sure where to go. They have got almost like a menu of 'Okay, these are your different alternatives, and these are the different community organisations that can support you.' But for that work to build a relationship with young people in schools to be like 'Okay, now we're leaving education and going out into the real world' is critically important, and I think schools would be very receptive to that. We do a bunch of different workshops on a range of different things. It is just all managed locally through our hubs, and the feedback we always get is incredible. It is unfunded work, but we see the benefit of it, and it helps educate young people about the opportunities that exist once they leave school.

Lauren FROST: I completely agree with your suggestion, and I wanted to highlight a fantastic program which is called the School Focused Youth Service, which has been running for more than 20 years in Victoria.

That does exactly that: it embeds youth workers in schools to help support them. And particularly—as you were talking about before, Trent—it really focuses on young people who are at risk of disengaging with education and doing that early intervention before they are already disengaged. Like I said, it is a fantastic program that has been running for more than 20 years, but the Victorian government has recently made the decision to defund that program, despite the amazing results it has had. We have been deeply disappointed by this and have been advocating for the funding for that program to continue. What we have been told is that services who were previously providing this support to schools via the School Focused Youth Service can instead apply for the mental health menu, but then what I am hearing very strongly from all of our Members and from schools is that many schools are using the money from the mental health menu to pay for casual relief teachers because of the underfunding of Victorian public schools. So it is a really holistic problem we are seeing here. There are great programs that have proven results, but they are not being funded anymore. The funding has been cut. They were doing the best they could with the funding they had, which was limited, and now we have seen that be cut further. So I just wanted to highlight that. If that was something that the Committee could recommend, deciding to continue funding that program and even expanding it would have a huge positive impact.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Pearl GOODWIN-BURNS: I agree with Lauren about the school-focused youth service. I think it was a really valuable program, and I do think embedding things in schools is necessary and key to this conversation. What I do also think is that having someone once you get to a training institution—so a TAFE or a university, once you are there—is also critical, so supporting that transition to the TAFE and uni but ensuring there are staff on the ground at TAFE and universities that can actually appropriately support your transition, support with those early days and those early months of your transition. So the disability transition officer that has been placed into TAFEs in Victoria is a welcome opportunity, and I think that model could be scaled up and expanded to support other students with disadvantage. In our case we would love to see something like that to support our students with an out-of-home care background, and our partner TAFE and universities do have dedicated and tailored support teams at each institution to support that transition. So I would welcome that but also expand on it.

Trent MILLER: I think our programs that we run at our youth hubs—some of them are certificate III qualifications. You have got young people that are completing those qualifications who would just be terrified to set foot into a TAFE, and they are willing to come and attend and engage with ours because they know that they have got their youth coach by their side, and they will continue attending, which is why we see really good completion rates. I think TAFEs are willing to come out to youth hubs, but there are just not enough of them that exist around particularly low socio-economic areas where young people actually feel like they belong, particularly when they have come from traumatic or disadvantaged backgrounds.

The CHAIR: I am so sorry we have run out of time to keep going, because we could chat all afternoon, I think. But thank you so much for all the work and your submissions and then answering our questions today. If there is something else that you think that we need to consider, please feel free to come back to us as well. Thank you for your time today.

Witnesses withdrew.