

TRANSCRIPT

ECONOMIC, EDUCATION, JOBS AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools

Melbourne — 7 May 2018

Members

Mr Nazih Elasmr — Chair

Ms Dee Ryall — Deputy Chair

Mr Jeff Bourman

Mr Peter Crisp

Mrs Christine Fyffe

Ms Jane Garrett

Mr Cesar Melhem

Witnesses

Mr Braedan Hogan, Manager, Public Affairs and NDIS Transition, Amaze;

Mr David Moody, State Manager, and

Ms Michelle Wakeford, National Ticket to Work Manager, National Disability Services; and

Ms Andrea Evans-McCall, National Disability Coordination Officer, Victorian National Disability Coordination Officer State Network.

The CHAIR — Welcome to the public hearing for the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee’s Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools.

All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege. Any comments you make outside the hearing are not afforded such privilege. Hansard is recording today’s proceedings. We will provide a proof of the Hansard transcript so you can correct any typographical errors.

I invite you to make a contribution. I know you have all been told 5 minutes each, but if you feel like less time or are comfortable with that because we have your submissions, feel free, but just state your name please before you start.

Mr HOGAN — Thank you, Braeden Hogan, Amaze. I have prepared a short statement so I might just read that and then we can hear from the others. Amaze welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence today in front of the Committee in its Inquiry into career advice activities in schools. Amaze is the peak body for autistic people and their families in Victoria, and we strongly support an examination of the utility of the career advice activities that are currently delivered in Victorian schools and if it is meeting the needs of all students. I say ‘all’ because a significant proportion of them will be autistic.

Just a few key facts on autism before we carry on. Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disability. We do not know exactly how many autistic people there are, but we do know there are over one in 100 autistic children under the age of 14. Just to give you a sense of the volume of autistic people, 29 per cent of NDIS participants currently are autistic, and in the zero to seven cohort of the NDIS one in two participants are autistic. So there is a significant population of autistic children that will be in our Victorian schools.

We strongly believe that strengths-based and evidence-informed career advice activities as part of a comprehensive transition to work program in Victorian schools are essential to support autistic people to enter and stay in the workforce. A failure to do so will lead to these vulnerable people being socially excluded and isolated, many of which are already currently socially isolated.

Autistic people currently experience poorer school and post-school outcomes compared to people with disabilities more generally, and for those with disability. In 2015 the unemployment rate for autistic people was 31 per cent, which is three times higher than the rate for people with disability more broadly and six times higher than for those people without. We recently spoke to our community and found out that only 50 per cent of our respondents had been able to find employment, with 94 per cent totally reporting they had not received enough support to help find a job.

There is evidence of low employment rates amongst people with disability, including autistic people, which are driven by poor career pathways, ad hoc and fragmented supports, a systemic culture of low expectations in our schools and also by employers, limited career information and advice, and inflexible employment services. They are also driven by poor educational outcomes for autistic students resulting from an education system that continually fails to meet their needs.

Greater government support for career activities and transition programs in Victorian secondary schools is urgently needed to bridge the gap between educational environments and the workplace for autistic students. There is evidence that internship programs, peer support networks, virtual reality, innovation and role-playing can help teach valuable skills to help facilitate transition to work for autistic people. Given the high numbers of Victorian students in our Victorian schools and the unemployment rates currently experienced by autistic people, Amaze urges the Committee to recommend funding, urging the Victorian Government and also the NDIA to fund development of and implement a post-school transition policy for autistic students, ideally as a component of the Victorian autism state plan that is currently being developed.

The policy should aim to mandate evidence-informed career activities, support consistency and educate support staff, employers, parents and other stakeholders involved in career transition activities about the specific needs of autistic students. It should also include a best-practice transition planning guideline and toolkit, including with respect to work experience, student-based individual career planning and ongoing support following school.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Mr MOODY — I am the State Manager of National Disability Services in Victoria and, like Braeden, it is my pleasure to be here today and I welcome the opportunity to speak to the Committee about the important issues you are considering. I am accompanied by my colleague Ms Michelle Wakeford who is our National Ticket to Work manager and wishes to take the Committee through that program in particular and some of the things we are seeing in this space.

National Disability Services is the peak industry body for non-government disability service providers. Nationally we have over 1100 members—organisational members—and in Victoria more than 200 members. Part of what NDS does includes supporting communities to implement evidence-based practice in schools, to support transition to work for students with disabilities and to support the disability services sector to maintain a high-quality and sustainable workforce.

Our submission, which we have already provided to the Committee obviously, can be divided into two sections. Firstly, the importance of career support for students with disabilities in schools at a time when there is all sorts of evidence, which we can discuss in more detail, about the impact of students with disability not getting that support in terms of the future likelihood of getting sustainable employment. Secondly, the opportunities presented for the Victorian community and Victorian school leavers in particular around the fact that the disability workforce has already been identified in several reports as representing the potential for huge growth in terms of the numbers that we need to attract into the workforce and the opportunities for students to take advantage of this fact.

I am now going to hand over to my colleague Michelle Wakeford to take the Committee through some key statistics and other material

Ms WAKEFORD — Seventeen per cent of Victorian students have a disability and get education adjustment due to that disability, so it is not a small number of young people. We know that young Victorians are not successfully transitioning from school into post-school life, and that is often a lifelong disadvantage because of that poor transition. Also, the gap between young people with disabilities and those without is widening. These young people in the last 10 years have been decreasing their rate of economic and social participation, so we are basically going backwards, so we think that we need to do something.

The data that we do have from the Victorian education department is that 73 per cent of students from a special school reported they received no assistance in jobseeking or job placement, and a survey of people with intellectual disability found that only 7 per cent said that their school encouraged them to take an employment pathway. Armed with these stats we had a look at some of the international evidence, and as a nation we have not invested to create opportunities for young people with disability such as other countries have. Overseas there is benchmarking and good practice in career development, and that has been statistically validated, so there is a huge amount of evidence about what works internationally. There have also been significant longitudinal studies of over 8000 young people with disabilities through their secondary and post-secondary life to see what works to improve school-to-work transition.

Armed with all that information we set up an initiative with the aim of improving career development and school-to-work transition for young people with disabilities, and that is called Ticket to Work. Our role at NDS is to support communities to implement evidence-based practice. Our approach works in three areas: to build capacity of a range of sectors; to have sector collaboration, so a partnership approach; and to support skills development activities. So our aim is to prepare young people with a disability for the workforce, and we do that in a partnership approach where we have networks that work in communities to improve school-to-work transition. To date, since we started in 2014, through that evidence base we have created over 1000 jobs for young people with significant disabilities and over 2500 career development opportunities, mainly working in other states, all using a partnership approach—so the school disability services, employers, training organisations and post-school providers working strategically together.

We have been conducting our own longitudinal study into the effect of Ticket to Work for students and we have found that participating in Ticket to Work, comparing students with a similar disability, you are four times more likely to be in employment post-school if you have had those experiences while at school. Those experiences are well documented around what works—so career development, work experience, access to employers, those sorts of things—and we know that a survey of young people with intellectual disabilities found that 72 per cent did not get any access to career development, and if they do get access to career development and work experiences, often it is not individualised, so it is very much a cookie-cutter kind of approach.

Mrs FYFFE — Can I just interrupt you for a sec. You are talking about special schools, what about children with disabilities who are integrated into normal schools?

Ms WAKEFORD — We work with both special schools and mainstream schools to support ...

Mrs FYFFE — And those figures would apply to those as well?

Ms WAKEFORD — Yes. So we work with funded students, so those who have been identified as having a significant disability and a range of disabilities, but the majority are from special schools.

We believe there are key things that need to happen in Victoria and we advocate that all Victorian students, no matter what their disability, receive access to an expectation of employment, so an employment-first approach, which a lot of other countries have implemented, that employment is the goal no matter who that young person is or what the nature of their disability there are opportunities for career development that is individualised, supported and meaningful, and that career development and pathway support is evidenced-based, which we find often is not happening at the moment. Thank you.

Mr MOODY — In terms of the second part of our submission, I am mindful of the fact that you want to have plenty of time for questions. I am happy to speak to section 2 in terms of the disability workforce more generally, but I am also cognisant of the fact that you have got our submission and I am presuming you therefore know that it is probably the fastest growing part of the Australian economy and represents a massive opportunity for school leavers in terms of encouraging them, whether or not they have a disability, to be part of our sector and to work in our sector at a time when Victoria alone will need more than 19 000 jobs net, after retirements and the like, in order to meet projected demand for disability services. We need careers advisers, transition advisers, and others in a school environment to understand that and understand the very real priority that needs to be given to supporting students who might be inclined to go down the path to become a disability support work or to work in the sector to do so.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Ms EVANS-McCALL — I am the National Disability Coordination Officer for Eastern Victoria and south-east Melbourne, so I will present something that I would like to read. The federal Department of Education and Training funds the national disability coordination officer—NDCO—program. We work strategically to assist people with disabilities aged 15 to 64 years to access and participate in tertiary education and subsequent employment through a national network of NDCOs. We work strategically with stakeholders, and this includes secondary schools in each region, to reduce barriers to participation and help smooth transition, build links and coordinate services for people with disability.

There are 31 NDCO networks across Australia and there are seven within Victoria, and I am here today representing the seven Victorian programs. The NDCO program adopts the Disability Discrimination Act 1992—the DDA—definition of ‘disability’. This legislation is exceptionally broad and it may be in relation to a person’s intellectual, physical, sensory, mental health, learning, behaviour and/or medical needs or conditions. All education providers in Australia are obliged to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and its subordinate legislation, the Disability Standards for Education 2005, to ensure that students with a disability are able to access and participate in education activities on the same basis as all other students. These obligations are also applied to educational support for post-school transition when most young people face a range of adjustments and challenges as they expect to take on adult roles and responsibilities.

Secondary school is where the post-school transition process occurs, and the senior years leading up to the post-school transition is a critical period in the lives of young people with disability. Receiving quality career advice and support to enable them to pursue meaningful post-school options is vital. This is particularly important for young people with an intellectual disability. The quality of career advice to support transition planning, however, often significantly affects the success of the transition. Not all young people with a disability are receiving the quality and relevant career advice required to enable a successful post-school transition, which results in low participation in employment and tertiary study. Often career practitioners struggle to remain abreast of the full range of career and employment options for students with disability, thus the pathways that students with a disability undertake depend heavily on the level of knowledge and support that careers practitioners receive in order to meet these students’ needs.

It is also concerning that although many careers practitioners experience a lack of resourcing and knowledge, a significant barrier to meeting student needs is the culture of low expectations. The NDCO program has a unique position of being able to respond to gaps and barriers that career practitioners and students with disability face when transitioning to further education and employment. The NDCOs in Victoria have worked to build capacity, linkages and models for the development of transition practice. We facilitate student and parent-focused career expos with community linkages, projects and programs. As NDCOs we work closely with career practitioners across mainstream, alternative and special schools. This work consists of providing transition information, delivering professional development, raising aspirations, and supporting and establishing new career networks. We receive continual feedback about the lack of knowledge and support for career advisers in relation to how to assist students with disability, as we just have not had the training.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much. Our questions will be directed to all of you. What kinds of support should the Department of Education and Training provide schools to improve career advice for students with disability?

Ms EVANS-McCALL — I believe that they need to mandate that every person giving career advice, like careers practitioners, should have the qualification—the grad cert in career development. I have done that qualification myself. As a teacher myself I know that those conversations around careers should be embedded across the curriculum. It does not necessarily just have to be a little singular careers course; it should be embedded through constant conversations through education around careers.

Ms WAKEFORD — We believe there should be a partnership approach with the post-school world, the disability employment sectors and a range of key people that support career development for a young person with disability. We find that often the schools do not have the experience or knowledge on how to support and often have this outdated idea of what a young person with a disability can or cannot do. Therefore we believe that there should be a partnership approach so that we can educate career practitioners to improve school to work transition.

Mr MOODY — In a constructive sense the Department could further actually add to the ongoing education of families and carers of young people with disability to impress upon them that there are real opportunities for students with disabilities to work gainfully in open or supported employment. From our members—disability service providers—the stories are legion about families and carers who for all sorts of reasons make the mistaken assumption that because their child has a disability they are unable to participate in the workforce. As our submission makes clear, essentially if you are not in employment by the age of 21, your prospect of having any employment during your life is severely limited, so working with families and carers as well as students with disability ...

Mr HOGAN — There is a lot of reform happening in this space already in schools, so I think it is good timing, but I think really a real overarching positive culture toward inclusion in schools is really needed, specifically with career advice. I think there needs to be more accountability as to its provision and to the methodology as well. I think also building the capability of staff is needed to deliver effective career advice to, specifically, my cohort of autistic students and understanding what autism is, but it also goes hand in hand with that partnership approach about having workplaces that are happy to receive them for work experience and any other opportunities. And just consistency—it is so inconsistent out there for autistic students, and inconsistent in a very awful way. If it is informed parents fighting for it, yes, but in special schools that does not happen or it is not thought of. It does not happen early enough as well; it does not start early enough, so there are some practical things.

Mr MELHEM — Just a follow-on from that, I think that you have touched, Mr Moody, on section 2, which is about the disability workforce. With the NDIS rolling out, should we start looking at positive discrimination to sort of give students with disability better access to employment in the sector? I mean, it is horses for courses, but is that something we ought to sort of seriously consider? Your Ticket to Work approach I think is an excellent idea, so should that tool be used to encourage both the industry, the disability industry—because it is going to be growing and we are going to have shortages on employing people and finding people—instead of looking at 457 visas to basically come and do the work? So should we positively discriminate and give first preference to people with a disability?

Mr HOGAN — There is already precedent. There is recently the *Every Opportunity* agenda, which sits under the state disability plan and recently saw a State Government commitment. David, you can probably

correct me on the targets, but that VPS have quite ambitious targets, might I say, by 2020 and then 2025. I think there has been a precedent led by the State Government, which I think is a real indicator and sign of leadership to the private employers out there. So, yes, I think that there could be some more teeth and accountability to go further than that.

Mr MOODY — I could only agree. I would not necessarily characterise the *Every Opportunity* Victorian Government initiative as being a case of positive discrimination per se, but what it does do is basically commit the Victorian Government to particular percentages of people with disability being employed within the Victorian public service. Certainly insofar as that gives all departments something to think about in terms of how they actually meet those targets, we would say that is a very positive outcome.

In a practical sense for the Committee's consideration one of the things that many of our members report some frustration with is that in a special school you do not always meet with a careers adviser. If you are a student with disability, you meet with a transition adviser in many cases, and yet if you do not have disability and you are in a mainstream school overseen by the Department, they do not have transition advisers; they have careers advisers. So sometimes, and insofar as language is important, a simple recommendation may be to actually change the phrase 'transition adviser' to 'careers adviser' in all schools for which the Department has responsibility.

Ms EVANS-McCALL — Can I just add to that, though, that in mainstream schools quite often for young people with a disability their career advice is coming from the teacher aides. Often the careers advisers just go, 'Oh, you're dealing with that group, you're the transition unit, so you deal with that group', so sometimes they are missed out as well.

Mr CRISP — Involving parents—you touched on that recently—what are the frustrations parents have with the students and in working with the system for their children's future, and what are the best ways to engage parents in their children's career development?

Ms WAKEFORD — In the longitudinal studies that we have done into post-school outcomes for young people with a disability, the second most important thing was having high expectations, particularly from families. But what families are telling us is that they are constantly told by the school system not to have high expectations—that you will just be disappointed, so lower your expectations—even though that is the key thing that we know makes a difference in the post-school world. Parents are exhausted. They have been through a lot of advocacy for their child to have an education. We think that, yes, parents should be encouraged and supported, but schools should take a partnership approach with those parents and to build those expectations within the school sector but also with parents.

Mrs FYFFE — I think you raise a valid point about the parents being exhausted, particularly when their young people are reaching the age of 18, when they have got to get all of the paperwork and the bureaucracy of them transitioning from a child to an adult. It is daunting. My colleague has just reminded me about the ABC's great program the *Employable Me* series, which I thought was really good, so I hope those sorts of things help.

Regarding the difficulties in finding work experience, this morning I was actually at Yarra Ranges special school, and I was a little bit late arriving here. I know some of the students quite well, but getting work experience for them is extremely difficult. I do not know if it is because we have such small businesses in our area that it would take a lot of time. How can a government help in that way?

Ms WAKEFORD — The way we have done it is by that partnership, so we have disability employment services. We do a lot of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, and we can have a combination of having disability employment services working with schools, and that really works because they have got contacts with employers, and often employers that are disability confident. So we have created those thousand school-based apprenticeships and after-school work through that connection between state government and federal government and how we use our resources to combine those. Currently without that intervention it is often too hard because there is not the specialty within the school to have those connections with those businesses.

Mrs FYFFE — And sometimes just getting through a day in a special school is hard. In fact, I am not allowed to swear, but it is b-hard—very hard.

Ms EVANS-McCALL — With the NDCO program we have been working on a program called Passport 2 Employment; it is a prelude to Ticket to Work. It is a lot of work readiness skills and lots of career language so that when they are then getting ready to head on to transitioning into school-based apprenticeships they have got a little bit more knowledge—so lots of industry visits and just getting to know the world of work.

Mr HOGAN — I think the point you raise is a really good one, and it is probably outside the scope of this Inquiry, but I think there is a fundamental lack of understanding in the community of what autism is. We are actually releasing some community attitudes research next week, so I will give you a sneak preview of what some of the findings show. We find that there is a high level of awareness of autism: 98 per cent of Australians know what autism is; 85 per cent of Australians also have a personal connection to autism; but only 29 per cent of Australians say they understand how autism might affect somebody's behaviour. We also did an experience piece of research, and 4 per cent of autistic people and their families agreed that the wider world knew how to support them.

So going back to your point about *Employable Me*, I think it was very good for infusing this topic into the public discourse, but my main criticism—and the criticism I think of the disability sector quite broadly, especially disability advocates—is that the fundamental impetus was for the person with disability to change for the wider world. I mean, not going into it, but there was no training of the employers about how that disability may have affected them.

One example was the girl who worked in a library. She has savant skills but was told that she could not stim to calm herself, her anxiety, and was told to stop that. I mean, it was not hurting anybody. That is just a fundamental, simple example about how the wider world actually needs to change to accept people with disability, understand their behaviours and also support them better.

There is some work that is being done. There are public education campaigns being developed in this space. There is a lot of stuff about shifting that, but I think that—we will probably see it in the VPS—it is how David said. It is a real strong indication for employers in the public service to actually understand how they can support these people.

It is really simple things. When we asked autistic people ‘What are the things you want the wider world to know?’, it is like knowing about their anxiety when things change. So in a work setting, if a meeting has been cancelled, tell them and give them prior notice of that so that that does not induce their anxiety. There are some really simple things, like sending an agenda for a meeting beforehand or making some sensory changes where somebody works. Fluorescent lights might trigger somebody's sensory overload, so having it in a dark room or a different lighting arrangement. But that is the bit that we do not hear. We are always talking about how the autistic person or the person with disability has to change to fit into the working environment that we want.

Ms WAKEFORD — I would agree with that. We provide an employer with quite detailed information, and it is quite positive information, about that young person before they start their work experience or school-based apprenticeship or traineeship. Currently we have a system of ‘place and pray’; a school will put them into work experience and just pray it works out. That never does. So making sure that the employer has some really good information about that individual student creates a lot better outcomes, we find.

Mrs FYFFE — Do you continue to follow up? How long can you follow up?

Ms WAKEFORD — What we do is try and use all our available community resources to make a difference to that young individual. At the moment we are doing a longitudinal study around young people who participated in Ticket to Work type activities while they were at school to see in two to three years what is the difference in their life so we can start to have that understanding. But, yes, there are some supports. It is just about how you combine those supports to make a difference to that individual young person. Often we have a focus on a program approach—that we must have a new program—rather than looking at how we use the expertise that we have.

Mr HOGAN — Just following up on that, I think there are limited programs that I have seen that have been very successful. I think the first person is always the hardest, to create that attitudinal change with an employer. You get the first one in, and then it is easier after that, and all those kinds of attitudinal barriers come down, preconceptions, about what an autistic person might be like in the workplace. They actually find out that they

have greater outputs, less sick leave—all this is very evidence based—but I think it is about how we support workplaces in doing that.

I also think there is a fundamental, structural kind of barrier to this. We see the poor outcomes of the disability employment services that are funded by the federal government. They are not very effective, because they only have short-term incentives to keep people placed within roles, so they are not there for the long term.

Mr MELHEM — I think we touched on that earlier—about promoting careers in the disability sector. Are you able to tell me how much careers advisers in Sydney are using the online resources that promote the career opportunities in the disability sector? Anyone really.

Ms WAKEFORD — The disability sector? So NDS broadly have been doing a project called ProjectABLE, where we are going out to schools with people with disabilities so that we can explain what the opportunities are in the disability sector. That has been very successful and that has been funded through the Victorian State Government. We find that for people with disabilities, you know, it has to be very individualised. We often do get, ‘They’ve got autism, so they must go into software training’ or ‘They’ve got an intellectual disability, so they have to work cleaning dishes’ and things like that ...

Mrs FYFFE — Or work in a nursery.

Ms WAKEFORD — Or work in a nursery, yes. So we use the Discovery process, which was used in the US, which is around looking at that individual and what their uniqueness is and then how do you market that and find an employer that needs that skill? We find it does not work to talk about ‘different jobs’. For a lot of our students it is about that individual thing that they can do brilliantly, and how you can find a place for those. We surveyed our employers and for our employers it is about finding the gap in their market so it works for them. It is a very demand-led approach. We have found employers can be quite open if given the right support.

Mr HOGAN — Especially because they have needs for those skills in those areas. There is some interesting work that has been done in New South Wales with Social Ventures Australia about demand-led placement and that kind of ‘job carving’ that we are seeing. Not every autistic person has a special interest in IT but most will have a special interest somewhere, and it is about job carving or job creating. One example is a woman who very much enjoys shredding. No-one likes to stand around a shredder for hours, but that is what she really enjoys doing and so a job has been created for her. She is contracted out to go and do shredding for hours on end and she loves it; that is what her special interest is. So it can be as simple as that.

Mr EVANS-McCALL — A really good example of the Discovery model was ‘Cam Can’. A young man in Western Australia, what he could do, his strength, was that he loved waiting. He would patiently wait for things. We all know that with Telstra or Foxtel you have to be there between 9 and 5 for a technician to come to your house, so Cam’s strength was that he would turn up to your house and he would sit there all day waiting for the technician to come. So Cam Can has started their own little industry, and there are lots of other Cams now, but it is a business and Cam earns a wage like everyone else and he gets to do what he wants to do.

Ms WAKEFORD — In WA we have implemented the Discovery process, that career development process, with the Department of Education there and with the NDIA. To date we have had 500 young people that have been through that Discovery process, and we are just evaluating that at the moment. I think we have to be smarter. Okay, we have got the NDIS, so how do we use those supports in with school supports, in with employment supports? The evidence is there, the tools are there and we just have to work out how to do it.

Mrs FYFFE — People’s strengths.

Mr HOGAN — And the flexibility within the systems to do this as well.

Mr CRISP — On flexibility, school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, and the participation of students in those courses — what is required to increase that?

Ms WAKEFORD — We do a lot of school-based traineeships, mainly because they tick all the good practice boxes. It is about getting access to employment before you leave school—so work experience—and getting a vocational education. It is accredited to their senior school, so we find that our young people are 50 times more likely to complete secondary school than other young people with similar disabilities. The trick is making sure that it is supported. It works quite nicely with employers because it is about how we capture that

uniqueness of the skill, and it is not a big commitment. So what we find is that we work with employers to do work experience, convert that into a school-based apprenticeship and then convert that into employment, post-school. So the young person sees themselves as a worker and sees that that is their future. Often young people with disabilities, because of their experience, at the end of secondary school do not see themselves as employable.

Mrs FYFFE — It is sad, isn't it?

Mr MELHEM — Going back again to the same subject about professional development, what kind of professional development would be useful for careers advisers to be able to improve their knowledge as part of their job to actually provide the advice to able kids and kids or students with disabilities? So it is a bit of both. Should there be a special component where we can expose these careers advisers to the disability sector? What are your thoughts on that?

Mr MOODY — I was thinking about this actually, Mr Melhem. I think one of the first things that careers advisers could be schooled or trained in is in government—with all of the vast resources it has to bring to bear in terms of analysis and its understanding of where the future of industry is going, essentially where there is that data and evidence to demonstrate where the jobs are. Careers advisers should in fact be supported to understand that conversation and that material.

The example that comes to mind is the Victorian Government's announcement as part of the budget for 2018–19 of 30 priority industries, which have priority courses across a range of industries, including mental health and allied health. Those priority industries, as we understand it, have been identified based upon demand projections for those jobs in the future. Sharing that sort of information at a particular level with careers advisers would be part of the start of the conversation so that they could be, if you like, supported to—if not steer, then certainly direct, the enthusiasm of the next generation of workers into areas of work experience and jobs which actually have a real prospect of being sustainable over the longer term. So just that sort of stuff—sharing the data that the government already has.

Ms EVANS-McCALL — I think it needs to be around the culture of low expectations. I guess it is that if you do not know what a young person can do, if you do not know that young person, you are making these huge assumptions about what you think they can do, and quite often we are seeing that. So I think it needs to be more case studies, so that they can start to see what a young person with a disability can do, like what their strengths are and what they can do. Because I have seen a real culture of low expectations from careers advisers.

Mr MELHEM — Work experience? Would that play a role in actually placing them in a meaningful ...

Ms EVANS-McCALL — No, because sometimes the careers advisers decide that they cannot do work experience, so they never even get to go on work experience.

Mr MELHEM — Why not?

Ms EVANS-McCALL — They think, 'How can I send that child out to that business? It is too hard. It is too scary, and it is going to be too hard'.

Mr MELHEM — It worked in my office a number of times recently.

Ms EVANS-McCALL — Yes, but careers teachers sometimes just go, 'It's just too hard for us. We have got so much to do, we are so under-resourced and there is little Johnny and it is going to be harder, so Johnny will just not go on work experience'.

Mrs FYFFE — The physical transport, the whole thing.

Mr MELHEM — Is that resources, because ...

Ms EVANS-McCALL — Well, it is time. It is money, resources and time.

Mr MELHEM — That is the point I am getting to—what can we do? They are making that decision based on good reasons—I am not criticising—so how can we make that possible? We talked about money and resources, so in practical terms that is where it is?

Ms EVANS-McCALL — Yes.

Mr HOGAN — My view, and it comes back to your previous question about how we can build the capability, is I think we have been training teachers in lots of things for a long time. In talking to where great practice is working—and also this is what the evidence shows—the enablers to that good practice generally show strong leadership, in saying, ‘We are going to do this’. That is the main one, and then also some accountability—I think we need to be more accountable about what should be expected. I think the other one is that we have been training teachers for a long time, but there has not been much focus on the regional officers, who do have a lot of sway in our regions around education and within Victoria. So I think we need to start really bringing some accountability to bear to say, ‘This is what needs to be done’, and stop training and start doing. I think that is really kind of the tone that I am seeing.

Ms EVANS-McCALL — And I guess that goes back to the DDA and ensuring that students with disability can access and participate in education activities on the same basis as all other students. Why aren’t they getting to go on work experience like all the other students? Why aren’t they getting the same career advice as all other students?

Ms WAKEFORD — I spoke about the international benchmarking, about what is good practice. So the Queensland government implemented that into their schools so that the schools could actually assess themselves and determine if they are doing good practice, and which areas they needed to improve in. Then there was support, so they had people that could come in and work with them to identify, ‘Okay, in this area you are doing well in but this is not’. You know, ‘How can we strengthen that area?’. So there are those benchmarks out there about what is good practice. Griffith University has taken that information and Australianised it so that we can assess schools and we can determine what they are doing well in careers development for young people with a disability and then we can actually implement, but at the moment there is some extra money to look at careers development for students with disabilities but they focus on the micro, so a new work experience form or a new career development form rather than ...

Mrs FYFFE — It’s easier.

Mr WAKEFORD — Yes, rather than the macro around what are our beliefs? Do we believe that young people with disabilities can have a future in our employment? So until we start to look at the macro and not the micro, we are not going to get anywhere.

Mr HOGAN — I just had a thought, because there is a piece of work that is occurring at the moment in this space around how inclusion is measured within schools. Part of the program is a students with disability review, and the reform agenda that is occurring over there is developing an inclusion index. I have not seen the detail of that, but this careers activities advice should be picked up within that inclusion index to really measure that and leverage the international standard and the work that Griffith University has been doing. So that is something that is quite tangible.

The CHAIR — Thank you. I believe there are no further questions. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank you for your time and contributions. Thank you very much.

Mr HOGAN — Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.