

# TRANSCRIPT

## ECONOMIC, EDUCATION, JOBS AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

### **Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools**

Melbourne — 26 March 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 Rose Vallance, University student,

Mr Joe Collins, University student,

Ms Alice Whitford, Year 12 student,

Mr Nathan Grigg, University student,

Mr Sam Rice, Year 12 student,

Mr Xavier Healy, University student, and

Ms Emily Turnbull, University graduate, Country Education Partnership.

**The CHAIR** — Good afternoon and 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. The evidence is being recorded by Hansard. The hearings are also being filmed and broadcast live via the Parliament’s website. We will provide a proof version of the transcript so you can correct any typographical errors.

In my understanding each of you will state your name, which part of Victoria you come from, your level in school or university and a very brief summary of your experience with career advice. You are welcome to state your name and then continue.

**Ms WHITFORD** — I am Alice Whitford. I am from Myrtleford. I go to Marian College, Myrtleford, and I am doing my Year 12 this year. We do not actually have careers education in Years 11 or 12, and it is not really woven into the subjects either. We had a Year 10 class, and that was a bludge. We did not learn anything about careers education. We had a teacher who is also the business teacher. He is not a careers teacher. He is a nice guy, but he just googles everything, so it is not really helpful. And he is old, so it is not up-to-date stuff. It is not stuff that can help us now so much.

We did not have work experience at our school. I lined it up. I was ready to go. I was going to fly over to New Zealand and do work experience with someone over there. I asked my school, and they were like, ‘You’ll have to do it in your holidays. We’re not going to help you do that’. So I did not get to do work experience either.

**Mr COLLINS** — I am Joe Collins, and I am from a small town in the Mallee called Woomelang. I went to school at Tyrrell College in Sea Lake. Our career advisement, pretty much just to sum up, was ‘Come back another time. I’ll fit you in later’. There was just never enough time, especially for us Year 12 students, who were trying to organise university applications and things like that. The careers adviser at our school was always too busy helping Year 10s fill out a MIPs form or something, which is a form that really does not help the students in any way. They just nag about doing those sorts of things. That is pretty much a summary of careers at my school.

**Ms VALLANCE** — My name is Rose Vallance. I am from Ouyen in the Mallee. I am a second-year uni student at Deakin, and I live here now. My experience of education in Ouyen was pretty dismal. From the first meeting in Year 10 I was pretty much told not to study what I wanted to study because there was no hope for me in that field. So after that I changed schools and the help was much better because it was a teacher who was willing to help and willing to put in the effort. It was very different at two different schools.

**Mrs FYFFE** — What are you studying?

**Ms VALLANCE** — At the time I was trying to study drama, and so I have moved to uni and started that on my own with no help from the careers teacher.

**Mr GRIGG** — I am Nathan Grigg. I come from St Arnaud, which is near Bendigo and Ballarat. I am currently studying at La Trobe as a first year student in Bundoora. My experience with careers is that it has been very vague through Years 7 to 10, and then at Year 10 it has been a big rush of, ‘What are you going to do for Year 11 and Year 12 and on to uni?’. It has really just come down to small videos that we have watched through class. When we did get to Year 12, though, getting ready for uni, like Joe said earlier, the careers teachers really did not have time for us. In my scenario we had our careers teacher as the Year 12 coordinator as well, so all we could do was come in at lunch, see them for 5 minutes and have to leave. I only knew what I wanted to do because I had time to talk to the teacher outside of school at hockey. No-one else really got the time that I did.

**Mr RICE** — I am Samuel Rice. I am also from St Arnaud. I am currently doing my Year 12. As previously mentioned, the careers education there was very vague up until Year 10. There was a massive rush from Year 10 to sort out exactly what you wanted to do with your life but nothing in the way of guidance. It was always just, ‘Come back later. We’ll talk about it another time. I’ve got a class in 5 minutes. I’ll see you after that’—that sort of thing.

**Ms TURNBULL** — I am Emily Turnbull. I recently graduated as a dietician from La Trobe University. I am from Beulah, a small town in the Mallee, and I went to school at Hopetoun P-12 College. Career advice at my school was probably like a lot of the other schools. We did do work experience and we had a careers class in

Year 10, which was helpful to a degree, but our career adviser, as much as she was lovely and trying hard, I think keeping up to date with career advice in this day and age is quite complicated as the job market we know is quite complicated, and I think she was probably just a little bit out of touch with that.

In Year 12 we had a younger teacher take over, and again it was kind of really not a priority; it was just slipped on top of all her other teaching load, so she often did not have the time to get across the broad range of career advice that she needed to give out to all her students.

**Mr HEALY** — My name is Xavier Healy, and I am from Ouyen, like Rose. I went to Ouyen P-12 College through to Year 12. I am in my fourth year at the University of Melbourne now, about to graduate from my arts degree in politics and sociology.

In high school my careers advice experience was similar to Rose's at Ouyen. Our careers advice person was not a teacher; she was employed part-time. She was quite apathetic. She would forward emails she was sent from universities but never made an effort to see us or talk to us. My biggest memory about her as a careers teacher was doing a quiz that gave us a list of our personality traits matched to careers that were never relevant. I do not think any of us ever followed any of those careers. It was a very random sort of careers advice experience that did not get tailored to our needs, in my experience.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you. We will ask questions now. You can all participate, but again when you answer, state your name for the record. I believe some of you have got to leave early, and we understand that. My first question is: what are some examples of successful programs offered by universities, employers or organisations that have helped you with your career choices?

**Mr HEALY** — I think we would all agree that the Rural Youth Ambassador program that the Country Education Partnership runs has definitely helped us with our personal development and with our career directions. We have all been a part of that. That is a program that has empowered us to make some decisions that affect our fellow rural students and to give advice to MPs on that experience. As well it has given us a lot of personal experiences that have just exposed us to different opportunities, different outlooks on life, different people and different careers as well as taking us out of our little country bubble and taking us into the city or further around. That is one that has definitely been powerful for all of us.

**Mrs FYFFE** — How easy was it for you all, living in what are considered more remote rural areas, to visit TAFEs and universities to see what courses they had to offer? Did they come to you?

**Ms WHITFORD** — In Myrtleford we have not had anyone come to us. Although we are an hour away from Albury, which has two or three universities, they have never visited us. They do not make the effort. For a school camp we came to Melbourne in Year 11, and we did visit two unis, but it was not helpful at all. It was just like, 'This is where you go to sleep'. It was not anything about the courses or anything; it was just the physical features of the university.

**Mrs FYFFE** — To fill a day.

**Ms WHITFORD** — Yes.

**Mr COLLINS** — Where I am from in Sea Lake it is 4 hours to Melbourne, and it is further the other way if you want to go to Adelaide to see what is there. It is extremely hard to get to open days and things like that, especially when they are all in a bunch of weekends in that August time of year. If you are committed to sports in your local towns, it is just impossible to get away and see the universities. Most universities you might be interested in are all on the same days anyway. So you might be interested in looking at Deakin in Geelong, but on the same day Melbourne University's open day is here in Melbourne. It is a real stretch, and I do not know anyone from my area that has ever been to an open day and come back and said, 'Yes, that's locked in what I want to do', if that makes sense.

**Mr MELHEM** — Is there a virtual hub or portal where you can centralise all these things and be able to access them electronically? Would that help?

**Mr COLLINS** — I do not think so, because I think the majority of the students from where we come from really like seeing it firsthand and getting the hands-on experience. It is great to look at something digitally, but personally as a rural student, where I am studying now at La Trobe, the only reason I am there is that I saw it

through an open day. I managed to get down and I was like, ‘Yes. This is exactly what I imagine from reading the stuff online. I confirm that this is where I am going to study and further my career’.

The universities come up to Swan Hill and do like a pitch about why you should study there, but again it does not come down to the stuff that I guess we might be more interested in, like what it is going to be like living away from home and the things you will have to do to go about day-to-day life that you once probably did not have to consider — all those things that are a real slap in the face, you could say, now that you are here, like cooking your own tea and just those simple things.

**Mrs FYFFE** — Find out where the laundry is.

**Mr COLLINS** — Yes, all those things. You do not know really what to expect. That is life-changing and can be the changing factor of whether you are going to study away or not.

**Mrs FYFFE** — What about you, Rose? How did you choose?

**Ms VALLANCE** — I actually went to Deakin not having seen it. I applied, got in and moved on to res, and that was the first time I had seen the university, because from where I lived in Mildura at the time to Deakin is 7 hours. So I just did it because I did not have any choice.

**Mr CRISP** — Get me out of here!

**Ms VALLANCE** — Yes, it was time to go. But I had already moved schools by that time so it was fine. I was just doing whatever came at me by that point, because I was all up in the air about deciding and deciding now because I had not had the guidance. I think in a small town sometimes the emphasis is to stay, so sometimes that is why there are opportunities for TAFEs and those sorts of things. We went to the TAFE career expo in Mildura, but it was plastering, beauty—I cannot remember—tiling, whatever else was there. But we did not do a university tour or anything, so it was all well and good for the vocational stuff and for the hands-on trades, but we found for all the people who wanted to be uni students where we were the emphasis was not there; it was on staying. So managing that and then having to move out on your own is very, like Joe said, a slap in the face.

**Mr CRISP** — That is something we would like to explore with the rest of you a little more. What sort of impact does having to move have on making your career choice?

**Mr GRIGG** — On the career choice or are we back to the open days?

**Mr MELHEM** — I think you can go for your life.

**Mr GRIGG** — I will start.

**Mr MELHEM** — You can say whatever you like, because this is probably one of the very rare occasions when you will not be held responsible for anything you say.

**Mr GRIGG** — Especially in a government building.

**Mr MELHEM** — It will not be used against you either.

**Mrs FYFFE** — We are a much older generation and we need to know what you are thinking and what you want.

**Mr GRIGG** — I will tell you everything—how about that? At my school we did go to an open day, unlike many other schools I know of. It was the Year 10s and Year 11s that both went down to Federation University for a night and stayed on res, I think. All the Year 10s went, but only half of the Year 11s could go due to SACs and other work. You could go, but you were kind of pushing it, and in Year 11 it is a little bit late for open days at the end of the year—to be going to these types of open days and starting to get used to the res. It was only Federation University, so you were not really getting the broad statement that you would get if you came to a place like Melbourne.

The school would provide transport to open days if you could convince enough of your friends to pay the \$30 for the bus. You would have to get the numbers before you could go to an open day with the school, which

rarely happened. I think I went to one open day with the school because no-one wanted to go. No-one had an idea of what uni was. I would rather stay at home and go to footy training later than go to a place that I have never been to. Travelling is really difficult, like we have heard from the others who are not even students anymore. It is 3 hours there and 3 hours back. That is a 6-hour day just in driving, and then you have got to come back the next week, the next week and the next week just to get an understanding of all the universities because you cannot just go and check one—or none. It does make it difficult for getting an understanding about what you are going to do with the rest of your career, we will say.

Coming on to res and getting outside of Melbourne: if you had asked me if I would stay on res two years ago, I would have said no just because I had no idea how the trains, trams and all this worked. I would have gone to Bendigo and just gone to uni there. The first time I hopped on a tram was with Phil when I was in Rural Youth Ambassadors. For a rural student coming to a metropolitan place, it is very scary. You cannot get in contact with your family easily. You get a phone call maybe once a night if you are lucky. No-one knew what it was going to be like before they came down here. The only way you would know what uni is like is if you talk to a previous student who is at uni now.

I went to La Trobe because one of my friends said, ‘It’s really good; it’s country—ask Nathan—‘there are trees; it is not just concrete. You’ll like it there’. I said, ‘If I feel more at home there, I’ll go there’, and that is the reason why I chose La Trobe—not because a teacher said, ‘The course is very tailored to the course you want to do’. It is not that on open day I said, ‘This is it’. This is the amazing thing: it is that a friend said, ‘You’ll like it there’, and that is the best I have.

**Ms TURNBULL** — I think I had a similar reason for choosing La Trobe actually: it was not concrete, there were trees around and the first-year peers that you lived with on res were going through the exact same experience as you. I think that does help a lot. I do not think that I would have stayed at university if I was not on res. But the other factor in that is that when I finished Year 12 we had had two years of drought and unless I got a scholarship I was not going to university, because I could not put that on my parents, as farmers, to pay for my accommodation and that. There are a lot of other factors as well that helped me make the decision, and I think scholarships are definitely one of them as well.

**Mr HEALY** — I would just add that I was in the same kind of position. I would not have been able to go to university without scholarships or financial assistance. I was at Ormond College, which is a very expensive place to live at the University of Melbourne—I would say the best place to live, but very expensive. Without the extensive financial assistance program, I would never have been able to go there. I suppose I was somewhat lucky to even know that financial assistance existed, because a lot of rural people do not know that those places are accessible with that sort of support. A lot of rural people just do not apply, do not put themselves out there for that kind of thing.

For me, going back to your first question, another one of those programs that has coloured my career trajectory and that kind of thing was the University of Melbourne’s Kwong Lee Dow Young Scholars Program, which is a Year 10 program that takes young students from around the state into a developmental kind of program. That exposed me to the University of Melbourne. We stayed at a college for one of those sessions, and that exposed me to that and made me aware of it and taught me about all of that. From there I was like, ‘The University of Melbourne is great. I love it. I want to go there’, and I knew there was support available, which a lot of people do not get exposed to and do not realise.

**Mr MELHEM** — Hearing from all of you, we have heard similar experiences about the career advice you have received during your time. I think it is very, very similar, which is pretty disappointing. It is not what we want to look at, but at least you are telling us this. Now, my question to you all or to one of you is: how would you do it differently and what would be your expectation? What would you like us recommending in our report to the government? What sort of reform do they need to put in place to make it easier for the students who are currently in Years 9, 10, 11 and 12—so the people who are coming behind you? You did not get it, so can you take us through what you would like to see, what changes to that, whether it is the number of advisers or the skill base, whether it is funding. Can you share that with us? And even after you leave here, if you feel like it, if you want to think about it and you want to send us something, drop us an email about your thoughts on the situation and what you think we should do—please do that as well. So over to you. Who wants to go first?

**Ms WHITFORD** — I think a class—not a careers class, but like a life skills class. Because I am a Year 12 student; I am still studying in my town, in Myrtleford.

**Mr MELHEM** — Have you decided on what you are going to do yet?

**Ms WHITFORD** — I have no idea. I have come down and I have stayed with my friends at a La Trobe campus—absolutely terrifying. I had no idea that is what life staying on campus is like. You have to share showers, and you can hear everyone and everyone is awake at 1 o'clock at night. Like an actual class, where they are like, 'This is what it'll be like' or 'This is how you do taxes'—I do not know anything about taxes—or the scholarships, so not necessarily careers but life skills. I feel like a class that taught us how to do that stuff that we need—how to catch trams even—would be really helpful.

**Mr COLLINS** — I think all of the above, like what you were suggesting. Probably younger career advisers that have more understanding about the current system and are passionate about everything—I find the current ones in a lot of rural towns are just some casual or part-time employee from around the town that has had some things to do and sent a few kids off to uni, so they have just held the job for years on end. They just keep coming in and doing one day a week, if that, at the schools. I think our career adviser for one term this year was there for half a day, just 4 hours or something, so we did not get much time to see her. The only reason I say younger is I just think that might be a bit more engaging, especially for those Year 10, Year 11 and Year 12 students, who might just relate to them a bit more, especially if they have had recent firsthand experience.

Another thing I think is that the emphasis on knowing what you want to do after you have finished school needs to be lower. 'Lower' is probably not the right word, but we should not have so much of an emphasis that you need to know exactly what you want to do, like what career you want to do, after Year 12, because the chances are now, with the studies that are going on, that we will have 10 different jobs in our lifetime, so how are we supposed to know exactly what career we want to end up in? I think the career advice that we get should focus on the different work skills we might need and then the array of jobs that might follow from that. And focusing on things that kids are passionate about too—I do not think they should worry about the income they are going to make or the status they might have in a certain job. I think it is about being passionate and committing to something that you love.

**Ms VALLANCE** — And I think it does feel like a bit of a last-ditch effort too. By the time you get to Year 10, you are so stressed about the fact that you are in Year 10 that you do not want to think about uni, and then you sit down at the start of the year at a Year 10 meeting and they say, 'What do you want to do? Because whatever you want to do when you finish, you have to do all of these units beforehand'. So it is too late. You know, people asked me when I was seven what I wanted to be, and I said I wanted to sell jewellery for the rest of my life. That is not exactly what I want to do now, but I was constantly asked, 'What do you want to do? What do you want to do? What do you want to do?'. I think I was just very lucky, because that is what my home was like, but I think that is what a school environment should be like. It should be a place where you are constantly being asked where you want to go and what you are interested in and what you want to find out about, so I think career education cannot just be thrown in at the end of your 13 years. It needs to come all the way through.

**Mr GRIGG** — I agree with both Joe and Rose on their statements there, because what Joe said about having around 10 careers by the end of your life—I know people who finished school just last year and have already had five careers. It is jumping around because they do not know what to do. They do not want to go to uni because they have no idea, and they just do not know what they can get out of a small town like St Arnaud, so they are just going between jobs.

It is a little bit sad that we do not have really a dedicated careers adviser that has time for everyone. We have, like I said, the Year 12 coordinator, who is in charge of careers, but then we also have MIPs, which was mentioned earlier. That is where they come in once a term I think, and you have a half-hour meeting with them. When you are in Year 7 they ask you about your family. They say, 'How's your family going? What do you like to play in sports?'. Up to Year 9 they might be asking what your favourite football team is. Then at Year 10 they will be asking, 'Oh, so what do you want to do for uni?'. That is a little bit ridiculous. You are getting a Year 10 student to decide on the rest of their life, and they will still only see them once a term.

**Mr MELHEM** — Do you want to do it earlier? Do you think they should do it earlier?

**Mr GRIGG** — I reckon earlier.

**Mr COLLINS** — The whole way through.

**Mr GRIGG** — I reckon you should have a little bit to just give them an idea of what careers are out there. It does not necessarily have to be university, because that is not for everyone, but traineeships.

**Mr COLLINS** — Just exposure, just an understanding of the system that they are building up to. Like, you know, that eventually you are going to have to make a decision on what subjects you pick, and eventually you are going to have to consider picking electives that are going to decide whether you can or cannot get into a certain university degree. Especially I guess for a lot of rural schools we do not really get the flexibility in Year 8 to pick electives, whereas at some schools they do. They have a choice of electives.

**Mrs FYFFE** — Because your schools are not big enough, with the number of teachers.

**Mr COLLINS** — Yes, they just do not run them. So in Year 8 that is just the compulsory timetable, whereas some schools do get the luxury of that choice. I mean if a school is like that, so in Year 8 you could start to choose, but even at our schools they could focus what they are teaching in subjects to let kids get an idea of whether that is what they are interested in.

**Mr GRIGG** — Relate it to the workforce is what we are trying to say here.

**Ms VALLANCE** — Sorry to interrupt, but I think that works perfectly in a small town, because you have got so much industry around and so many businesses that you know. Like, you know every shop and you know every farmer, so you can incorporate it. It could be incorporated all the way through—like, this is how maths applies to this business and this is how science applies to the farm. It could be a very grounded approach, but it is not; it is sort of forced.

**Mr RICE** — Because when you get a careers adviser who also doubles as your Year 12 teacher or a teacher of a specific subject or area within the school, their opinion is always biased. They are always pushing you a certain way. So what we need in the ideal situation would be a dedicated full-time careers adviser in every single school. So from Year 7 through until Year 12 they are just focusing on us as students and our direction and helping us to achieve whatever we decide.

**Ms TURNBULL** — I think—on what Sam just said there—you could almost have a career adviser in a cluster area. In the Mallee cluster you could have a career adviser who is across everything from getting jobs in your local community to going to university and everything in between, and they are across that and can work with people in the local area about what the challenges and barriers might be and helping them I guess understand their own key skills, because I think sometimes we do not think we have skills in high school. But there are definitely—I guess you have got skills and those skills could lead to certain careers and being able to understand that.

**Mr HEALY** — I totally agree with all of this. I think another aspect to the career kind of realm during our younger years is just experiences. Some of the most powerful influences on what I want to do for my career have not come from a careers adviser or a careers class. They have just come from living life and programs like the Rural Youth Ambassadors or Kwong Lee Dow Young Scholars. I think that sort of thing really needs robust support from the government, especially for rural kids, who do not have access to the museums and galleries and everything else that happens in Melbourne. I think the government needs to give robust support to exposing our rural peers to different experiences that can then colour their life trajectory and their career options. It might not be explicit, but I think those things are really powerful in career advising.

**The CHAIR** — Work experience—was it easy to organise in your region? What can the school or the government do to better assist students?

**Mr COLLINS** — Emily mentioned before the idea of clusters in regions. We discussed before we came in that it would be fantastic if there was, say, a Mallee career hub or something that was dedicated to Year 7s right through, focusing on careers. Imagine if there was someone that coordinated that, so they were in Melbourne for a month and each school sent down all their Year 10s and had organised work experience in the city, and then they all met back at the hotel that night and tea was organised and things like that.

**Ms TURNBULL** — I know some schools do it, where they do all stay together for a week and do their work experience. What I found from my school was really difficult with work experience. Unless you had somewhere to stay in a bigger town, your opportunities for work experience were really limited. I think if the schools did it

almost like a school camp, where you go and stay together for a week—whether it be in Ballarat, Bendigo, Melbourne—then you have got more opportunities for your interests. Because we had a lot of people that just did it in their home town and probably did not get as much out of it as they would if they had gone elsewhere.

**Mrs FYFFE** — It is hard in the home towns, isn't it?

**Ms TURNBULL** — It is really hard, because in Hopetoun there are not a lot of businesses, and I guess it is sometimes not what you might want to be doing as well. So unless you have family elsewhere and ...

**Mr COLLINS** — Unless you have family in a regional town or a city, it makes it really hard, unless one of your parents is going to travel with you for the week and drop everything they are doing at home to come.

**Ms VALLANCE** — And pay for accommodation.

**Mr COLLINS** — Yes, and stay where you are staying. It becomes impossible. When I did my work experience I went to Mildura and worked at the shire, and that was because I had family there. It was just the easiest thing to do, and the school was not really interested in working out anything else.

**Mr MELHEM** — I have got a question about how easy it is to access career expos—well, you may not have accessed them. We were in Mildura last week, and there were some discussions about perhaps taking the expos to the regions.

**Ms TURNBULL** — Horsham has one; we went to the one in Horsham. We go down on a bus as a group. There are heaps of little stalls around, and it is kind of just a day off school, but you do not get a lot out of it, I think.

**Mrs FYFFE** — It is like a hot date. No, sorry, what do you call it?

**Ms VALLANCE** — Speed dating.

**Mrs FYFFE** — Thank you.

**Ms TURNBULL** — If you want tailored advice, if you want to go and talk to, say, the TAFE or the university, you could go up to their stand, but unless you know what you want to ask, you do not really get much out of it, I think.

**Mr COLLINS** — Yes. Students have to be confident enough to actually go up and ask a question that might seem from our perspective silly—like you might ask, 'How do you go about this?'.

**Mrs FYFFE** — Well, the domestic living arrangements and so on.

**Mr COLLINS** — Yes, you might ask something like that. You might think that is not a common question. So the student just ends up standing out the back gossiping with their friendship group, not actually getting anything out of such expos. We were talking about it before we came in. The expos definitely exist and are run around the regions, but again what it comes down to is schools cannot afford for their Year 12 kids to take a day off class. So we attended one, an expo in Swan Hill, and I mentioned it was just like the unis were pitching why you should study there, and that was it. There were other expos on, but the school just never took us to them because they could not afford to take another day off.

**Mr RICE** — Accessibility is absolutely the biggest problem there. We have only been able to get to one careers expo in the last eight years because there is just not enough interest from the students, and the school is not willing to take us over there and take time off.

**Mr MELHEM** — Is that because of the Year 12s? What about if we say Year 10 or 11?

**Mr RICE** — That was all years, wasn't it?

**Ms WHITFORD** — We did it in Year 11, and I went. It had all of the stalls, and they were all like, 'We're so great. Here, have this squeegee penguin'. So I went and got all the merch and all the books, but I did nothing with it. I still get emails from Collarts from three years ago because I signed up for everything. It did not mean anything to me and I did not know what to ask and I did not know what to expect. They were just like, 'You've

got to come here; we have a good science program', and I did not even know what I wanted to do. So you do not know what to ask them.

**Ms TURNBULL** — You do not know what you do not know.

**Ms WHITFORD** — And it is not personal; they all want you. But in coming here, I was able to ask Rose if she could give me a tour of Deakin and what it is actually like, not how it is meant to be and how beautiful it is — like, the real thing.

**Mrs FYFFE** — Can I just go back to Sam? Sam, you said you have had one in eight years, so that was all years could have gone. It was voluntary to choose to go. It was not targeted at Year 9 or Year 10?

**Mr RICE** — No, it was not specific, and I missed it. I had something very boring happening, and I missed it. So I have never been to a careers expo in all of my high schooling, because there was not the interest in or push towards it.

**Mr GRIGG** — If I can just follow on from what Sam was saying, I was actually back in school when that was there. It was for everyone to go to but it was never encouraged. We were encouraged to stay at school. In the end I believe it was mainly VCAL students who went. Most other students were encouraged to stay in class. Even though it is only a 1-hour drive to Horsham for us, which is very short, being in the middle of nowhere, they still would rather bring a small car full of students than a bus.

**Mr CRISP** — I was mostly going to recap for the moment; we have lost a couple of the witnesses who I was going to test this on. From the Mallee students we got the idea very clearly that you would prefer a single professional in careers moving around the schools to deliver that service. I was going to test that with the St Arnaud witnesses to see whether you were in agreement that rather than having a single, dedicated person doing a few hours you are better off having someone who really knows what they are doing as far as being a careers professional moving from school to school. That is something that I have taken from what you guys have told me. I think it is quite valuable, but I wanted to test it outside the Mallee.

**Mr GRIGG** — It is a great idea, I reckon. I believe it would work really well. It does not have to be frequent, it just has to be better than once a term. Let us just say you have got four schools in this program—a cluster—and you have got the one dedicated volunteer. With four schools you could have them every four weeks for a whole week coming and visiting students from Year 7 to Year 12. I think that is a great idea. You could have not even a whole day. You could have lunch just talking to the Year 7s, saying, 'This is what you do'—I am not going to say in finance and taxes—'and these are your options'. Not even 'these are your options' but, 'This is what the world is like right now, and this is how it's moving'. I think that is great.

**Mrs FYFFE** — They would not have to be a teacher either, would they?

**Mr GRIGG** — No.

**Mrs FYFFE** — Someone with life experience who knows.

**Mr GRIGG** — Teachers do not have the time; they are so busy.

**Mr COLLINS** — My friend left Tyrrell and went to boarding school in Ballarat. It is a big thing for kids to leave home and go away, but it is just like a mindset they have that they are going to get a better education there and they cannot get the education they need in rural schools, which I do not quite agree with. We were comparing careers advice. Once a fortnight he had an hour meeting with someone who was not a teacher but a career advice professional just to discuss how his résumé was going and what was happening in the industry. It would be good if our schools had the resources for something like that. I think it must just come down to funding, really. The boarding schools can afford to run that for all their students. That is just a comparison of what resources we had in comparison to a school that is like that with what they have.

**Mrs FYFFE** — They probably had more flexible time.

**Ms TURNBULL** — I think career advice, though, is probably one of the biggest issues that faces young people today. I think career advice should really be pushed on people because it is a big, scary world outside of high school. I definitely think people get lost after high school. That is where that advice really comes in handy.

**Mr GRIGG** — I still remember a year and a half ago when me and Joe were in a meeting with Minister Merlino, and all the other rural ambassadors were with us there, and he asked us to do a task where every student would rate out of 10 their careers adviser, with 10 being the best and zero being 'It doesn't exist'. There were 20 students in the room, and only two students rated their careers advice over three out of 10.

**Mr COLLINS** — That was from across the state. The youth ambassadors are not just from the Mallee.

**Mrs FYFFE** — It was not just remote.

**Mr GRIGG** — No, it was everywhere. The schools differ in size.

**Mr COLLINS** — Some of them I would not consider rural and remote compared to ...

**Mr GRIGG** — Like Maryborough. That is not rural.

**Mr COLLINS** — But they are all considered by the department rural and remote.

**Mr GRIGG** — Somehow.

**The CHAIR** — That was very good. We do not have any further questions. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank you for your time and contribution, unless you want to say a quick word about what you need the government to do.

**Ms VALLANCE** — There is something that would be interesting. We tried to fix all the problems ourselves. We set up Rural Inspire. I do not know if you have heard anything about Rural Inspire, but we set it up to try to link rural students with rural young people who are in the communities now and people who came from rural communities and are doing interesting jobs. We tried to fix it ourselves and set up this initiative, but we have just run out of money and people and whatever. We are all so passionate about building Rural Inspire up that I think that might be something.

**Mrs FYFFE** — This is a network of rural students currently at university who are available to almost mentor country students and show them what university is about?

**Ms VALLANCE** — Yes.

**Mr COLLINS** — We were discussing the possibility of going to schools and facilitating workshops and discussing life outside of school and where you go.

**Ms VALLANCE** — Because there are so many youth ambassadors. There have been—how many?—70 of us go through. So we already have a network of 70 people who are available to do uni tours or to show them where they have gone in their career. It can literally be any person who has come from a small town. Success does not mean being a CEO. That is our support.

**Mr CRISP** — Rose, on that, if you could offline provide a little bit of information about Rural Inspire to our committee, we would like to look at that a little more closely—I would, certainly.

**Ms VALLANCE** — Absolutely.

**Mrs FYFFE** — Thank you for mentioning that. I was not aware of it.

**Committee adjourned.**