

TRANSCRIPT

ECONOMIC, EDUCATION, JOBS AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools

Melbourne — 26 March 2018

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Witnesses

Ms Katy Haire, Deputy Secretary, Early Childhood and School Education and

Mr Nick Beckingsale, Executive Director, Secondary Reform, Transitions and Priority Cohorts Division, Early Childhood and School Education Group, Department of Education and Training.

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. The evidence is being recorded by Hansard, and the hearings are also being filmed and broadcast live on the Parliament’s website. We will provide proof versions of the Hansard transcript so you can correct any typographical errors.

I would now like to invite you to make an opening statement—I believe you have 5 minutes or something like that. Then please allow us some time to ask you questions. Please state your name before you start, for the Hansard record. Thank you.

Ms HAIRE — Thank you for inviting us to be part of the important work of this committee. My name is Katy Haire, Deputy Secretary, Early Childhood and School Education, in the Department of Education and Training. My colleague, Nick Beckingsale, is the Executive Director, Secondary Reform Transitions and Priority Cohorts Division, as part of the Department of Education and Training.

The Department of Education and Training is responsible for providing education, care and development services to families, children, young people and adults. It does this both directly through government schools and indirectly through the regulation and funding of early childhood education and care services, non-government schools and vocational education and training. The primary goal of the department is to maximise learning and development throughout a person’s life. To achieve this goal the department provides policy, resources and services aimed at developing the capacity of learners to lead a full, healthy and productive life and to contribute positively to society and develop meaningful, respectful relationships with others. To deliver on these goals the department partners with many organisations that provide education and care services—non-government organisations, vocational education, training organisations and higher education institutions—as well as of course directly providing services through more than 1530 schools.

Today in this brief presentation I am going to cover four areas: the context for Victoria’s approach to career education, the current programs resources and support, the impact of career education on students’ decisions and pathways, and the changing context of career education in the world of work.

So firstly to the context. As you are probably aware, the government has made a commitment to establish Victoria as the Education State. This is a vision for a fairer and more inclusive education system to enable every child and young person to learn and develop the knowledge, skills and attributes to enable them to thrive, regardless of where they start or the path they pursue, and to be ready for the changes in the world around them. It is probably useful, I think, to set out what we mean by career education, because achieving this vision of young people being ready for their future means ensuring that young people have access to career education that provides them with the knowledge and skills to effectively navigate multiple careers in a changing economy throughout their lives. That brings us to a distinction between the idea of career education and career advice.

Career advice typically focuses on providing students with advice about subject choices, further education, training or career options, but in our view this is only one element of a more comprehensive concept of career education. In our view career education involves the development of knowledge and skills through a planned program of learning experiences to enhance a student’s ability to make career decisions. It involves building students’ knowledge and skills around the following areas: self-development, so that young people understand themselves and the influences on them, build their experiences and achievements and develop their personal capabilities; career exploration—allowing young people to identify, investigate and consider a range of future work and learning options in the context of a good understanding of civics, economics and the world of work; and, thirdly, career management—empowering young people to make plans for their future career and manage their choices, changes and transitions. So these three aspects of career education about understanding yourself, exploring the world of work and making good plans and decisions sit within the common set of knowledge and skills that are set out in the Victorian Curriculum.

It is probably also useful to set out the roles and responsibilities of the department and government schools in relation to career education. Our job in the central part of the department is to set the overall direction, policy direction, and provide schools with resources and support to deliver the Victorian Curriculum and meet the needs of students. In relation to career education, that includes targeted funding for senior secondary students, professional learning and teaching resources for school staff and targeted programs for specific groups of students. We also provide guidance and support to schools so that students can have safe and meaningful

Structured Workplace Learning and work experience that will provide them with greater understanding of industries and the world of work.

However, as you are probably aware, in Victoria government schools themselves have significant autonomy over how they use their resources and how they design and structure their teaching and learning programs. This includes matters such as the qualifications and experience of their staff and how they structure classes and subjects to deliver the curriculum. This is in order to ensure that the way the content is delivered matches the specific needs of the students and the community in which the schools operate and because we know that principals and teachers are the ones who know their community and the needs of the students best.

Schools are also responsible for developing partnerships with other schools, local employers and further education and training providers to ensure that students can access a range of experiences as part of career education. One of the specific supports that is provided that you have probably already discussed as part of your inquiries is the Managed Individual Pathways funding. The department expects that all government secondary schools will provide young people with career education, programs and services, and this includes providing individualised programs for students as well as career education embedded in the delivery of the curriculum. In addition to the core funding provided through the global budget or the Student Resource Package, we support schools to do this through the provision of targeted funding, teaching resources, support for workplace learning and the delivery of student programs. The targeted funding known as Managed Individual Pathways supplements the core funding provided to schools to provide specific career education programs for students in Years 10 to 12.

Mrs FYFFE — If I could just interrupt, is that solely used for career development? It cannot get incorporated into the school global budget and used for other things?

Ms HAIRE — It is paid into the global budget, but it is paid in with the specific requirement that it is for the ...

Mrs FYFFE — It is not isolated in any way; it is just part of the global budget?

Ms HAIRE — It is part of the global budget, but we do ask schools to report on the delivery of that element of their budget, which we can provide a bit more information about if you would like.

I was just going to talk briefly about some of the other resources that we provide in addition to the MIPs. We have a range of teaching resources to help teachers deliver career education as part of the curriculum. The department has developed the Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework. This resource shows how learning outcomes in the curriculum can be met through career education activities for students at different year levels. We also provide resources to support teachers to engage parents in conversations about their children's careers—I know you met with Parents Victoria this morning—and to support students with a disability to plan their careers and transition to work.

In terms of support for Structured Workplace Learning and work experience the department funds Local Learning and Employment Networks, known as LLENs, to facilitate student access to Structured Workplace Learning placements from a range of employers. These provide students who are studying a VET subject at either VCE or VCAL level with the opportunity to integrate their on-the-job experience with their secondary study. The department also supports students to explore careers in priority areas such as science, technology, engineering and maths through specialist learning facilities.

The 10 Tech Schools, three of which are already open and seven more which are opening later this year, operate in collaboration with schools, local industry and other partners to provide students with the opportunity to learn through working on real-life problems, working in partnership and informed by the needs of industry and tertiary experts and using cutting-edge technology. Tech Schools are designed to show students the world of work at a particularly high level of technical complexity, to increase awareness of career options and the skills needed in key future growth industries and to link students to information about further study and career pathways in those areas.

We also engaged the Career Education Association of Victoria throughout last year to deliver Exploring Work Futures through VET program, targeted to students in Years 9 and 10 government schools in rural and regional areas and low socio-economic status metropolitan areas. This program was designed to highlight the relevance

of VET in the changing world of work and raise student awareness of the many opportunities available to them through VET pathways.

We thought that you might like a bit of data on the participation of students in career education activities. Obviously a number of factors influence young people's decision-making around what subjects they will study, the careers they are interested in, further education, training pathways and employment destinations. Because of the complexity of those factors it is difficult to scientifically identify exactly which input has led to the output of the destinations and decisions of young people, but we can tell you a bit about those destinations and project backwards a bit about how we think career education has contributed to that.

As you are probably aware, each year we conduct the On Track survey, which follows up students six months after they have left school to find out their post-school destination and to gather information on what types of career activities they did at school and how effective they found them. So what we know from this, and some of it is in the presentation, is that in 2017, 75 per cent of students who completed Year 12 reported being in further education or training, with another 11 per cent in employment. So that is 86 per cent. A further 10 per cent deferred further education, and 4 per cent are not in employment, education or training.

Mrs FYFFE — How many students were you tracking? Was it 60 per cent of those who had left school six months before?

Ms HAIRE — This is all of the students who left school after completing Year 12 in 2016 and who consented to be contacted.

Mrs FYFFE — But they would not all respond to you.

Ms HAIRE — No. We got just under 50 per cent of the Year 12 completer cohort, which is a pretty good response rate for a survey, so it is pretty reliable data. But it is not 100 per cent of the students.

Mrs FYFFE — And you are not doing the long-term tracking anymore, are you?

Ms HAIRE — There is the longitudinal study, LSA—I would have to come back to you on that.

Mrs FYFFE — Are you looking at going back to that as a more accurate assessment?

Ms HAIRE — The longitudinal study took the On Track data and then tested back in with students after a number of years, from memory. I would have to check back in with the Committee if you would like on that longitudinal study. The denominator that we are working with is all the Year 12 completers who left school in 2016 and answered the survey in 2017, which is a considerable number.

The survey showed that the majority of students who completed Year 12 are participating in career education activities. Two-thirds of students said they participated in career expos and university information sessions at their school, 85 per cent indicated that they had an individual careers counselling service and 78 per cent had participated in some form of work experience or Structured Workplace Learning. Students are also reporting that these experiences had an impact on their ability to identify career options and make decisions about their pathways beyond school. Two-thirds of students reported they were able to identify careers that matched their interests and abilities, and just under two-thirds reported that their workplace learning experience helped them make a career decision. Anecdotally sometimes we hear that it is more a decision of what they do not want to do than what they do want to do, but it is informing the decision, and nearly 79 per cent reported that the careers advice they received at school was useful in helping them choose their current study, training or employment pathway.

The final thing to talk about is the changing context for career education, which I know is a significant consideration for the Committee. So far I have described the current context of support for career education, but as we are all well aware, there is the world of work. The landscape of careers and employment is changing rapidly around us, and it is changing rapidly for the young people in schools today.

Mrs FYFFE — If I may interrupt, Chair, we have only got 15 minutes left and we have got a number of questions.

The CHAIR — You are towards the end; is that correct?

Ms HAIRE — I am right at the end, but I am happy to stop and we can just provide the rest in writing.

The CHAIR — Okay. We will go straight to questions if you are happy to do that.

Ms HAIRE — Sure.

Mrs FYFFE — How do you measure the effectiveness of what is happening now with career advice in schools?

Ms HAIRE — There are probably two aspects to that. One is through the On Track survey that I have just spoken about. I will not go over that again in the interests of time.

Mrs FYFFE — Which surveys 50-plus per cent.

Ms HAIRE — That is a reliable source; more than 50 per cent answering the survey gives us a good idea. The other part is that through the schools census we ask schools to report back to us on their obligations under the Managed Individual Pathways funding, and I can find a little bit more detail on that for you in a moment.

Mr BECKINGSALE — That census has a number of pieces of information, including what proportion of students have career action plans and the extent to which the Managed Individual Pathways funding has been used to assist students in the transition from school to further education, training or work.

Ms HAIRE — And it measures—particularly around any students who have exited school prior to the completion of Year 12 to confirm that they have had a specific counselling session and support around their future careers or training. They are the two primary measures: the On Track survey and the census through which we look at the MIPs.

The CHAIR — Work experience: some submissions have suggested creating an online portal to streamline work experience for schools and employers. Is such a portal feasible? What would be required to set it up, and how could the Victorian Government better assist students to find work experience placements in their preferred field?

Ms HAIRE — We have already an online portal that we use for Structured Workplace Learning, which I talked about earlier. This portal is for students who are undertaking a VET subject, either in VCAL or VCE, who undertake a Structured Workplace Learning placement as part of that VET course. For these students, we have set up over the last two years an online portal for Structured Workplace Learning opportunities, and so far the feedback has been that that has worked very effectively. So we do think that that is a good model to use. We do not currently have a portal for work experience, which is generally Years 9 and 10 students who undertake a week or a short-term placement during those years of school. But our experience of the portal is that it has worked very well.

Mr BECKINGSALE — We fund the Local Learning and Employment Networks to source the job offers that are on the Structured Workplace Learning portal. In the period that that portal has been operating there have been about 8000 work offers from employers on the portal, and about half of those have been taken up by students. So it does seem to be quite effective in this early stage of its use. We have just increased the targets for LLENs to 5800 new placements that we expect to see on the portal this year.

Mr CRISP — I would like to talk about the departmental review in two parts: what are the main findings in the department's review of career education; and the second part is when will the review be released to the committee?

Ms HAIRE — Thanks, Mr Crisp. As I think we may have indicated to the Committee already, because we are still providing advice to government about the review we are not able to provide that information today. It continues to be the subject of government decision-making, so it is outside of my ability to provide that to you today, I am afraid.

Mr CRISP — The terms of reference took many, many weeks to get to us. Is it your belief that the report will be withheld until we have finished ours?

Ms HAIRE — I could not comment on that, because that is the subject of advice to government at the moment.

Mr MELHEM — Going back to the LLENs, I know you talked about the 8000 jobs that were created to report, and you are looking at increasing that. What other involvement have they got with schools in relation to assisting schools about the sort of career advice, the jobs of the future and industry involvement with schools to actually develop this sort of program? Can you take us through what role they play in that?

Mr BECKINGSALE — The LLENs actually play quite a strong role generally across those areas. The LLENs are funded by the department to do both the Structured Workplace Learning portal but also generally to help with student engagement in schooling. That often means that they are working with local employers and industry to help students understand what sort of careers might be available to them, and that encourages them to stay in school. The LLENs are incorporated associations, and their boards are made up of generally local employers, training providers and schools, so they have a great capacity to create partnerships which can help assist students in understanding the local employment market and the sorts of jobs that might be available to them locally. So they are quite a useful mechanism in terms of career pathways and post-compulsory schooling pathways.

Mr MELHEM — My next question is actually twofold. One is: I know you are doing the review currently about the careers advice et cetera. Are you able to shed some light on how you think the system is currently working and what sort of changes you might want to look at? I know you have not finalised the review. The second part is where do private schools, and that is Catholic schools and independent schools, fit in to the whole program? I think a large number of students actually go to schools other than public schools. How does that fit in with your review, and what do you think about how the system is working? How can we improve the career ...

Ms HAIRE — I might take your second question first, Mr Melhem. Catholic schools follow the Victorian Curriculum, so the same elements of the curriculum that are delivered in government schools are also delivered in Catholic schools. Non-government, non-Catholic schools do not follow the Victorian Curriculum. They generally follow the Australian curriculum, possibly slightly differently, but in terms of Catholic schools they would be very similar to government schools.

Mr MELHEM — So this view about whether or not the career advice curriculum should be made mandatory, part of delivering ...

Ms HAIRE — Well, look, it is required. Careers education is required in government schools. It is very clear on our Schools Policy Advisory Guide that that is an expectation of government schools, and it is also woven through the curriculum in a number of places, which we can go into, or in the interests of time we could provide that to you in writing if you would prefer. And, thirdly, we have that element that we have already talked about of the—so those first two bits I have spoken about are careers education, and then we have specific careers advice through the Managed Individual Pathways funding. That is provided to all students in Years 10, 11 and 12. So there is no question that it is part of what schools are required to deliver.

Mr MELHEM — I think the biggest issue we have heard about so far is access—students waiting in a queue to be able to go and see their careers adviser, and that could be a mix of private schools, Catholic schools or even public schools. So I am not being specific, but that is a common theme. So what is the learning from that? Is that something the government or the department might be considering? Is it a resources issue? I know you said 85 per cent were able to have access to careers advice, and the question is whether that 85 per cent had an individual plan or not, but it is a good result. Have you got any view on that, any comments on how we can address that problem?

Ms HAIRE — We have been following the submissions and the people appearing in front of you, and we are very interested in seeing if there are any barriers to students accessing the Managed Individual Pathways funding. So we have certainly been following very closely to see if there are barriers that need to be addressed. We are also mindful of the fact that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may have more difficulty, and that is why the funding is weighted towards disadvantage. We also have some specific tailored resources to address students from a non-English-speaking background, refugee background, with disabilities and so on, so we are very concerned to make sure that there is equity of access.

Mrs FYFFE — I have got a heap of questions, but I will try to narrow them down. We have been hearing that schools concentrate too much on ATAR and VCE results and for students who want to do vocational education and training the emphasis is less and that parents also can often feel this way—that they want their child to go to university, to get a high ATAR score. How do we promote, or how do you think we can promote, the value of vocational education to the community so that it is seen as university and vocational, not university and then vocational?

Ms HAIRE — Yes, and I think that is a really important point that you are making. I touched very briefly on the Tech Schools that we are establishing as part of the area that Nick and I work in, and one of the features of the Tech Schools is that some of them are located on university campuses and some of them are located on TAFE campuses.

Mrs FYFFE — They are not full-time; it is just one day a term.

Ms HAIRE — It depends on the Tech School. Some of them are a week, and then there is a program in the school a week before and a week afterwards.

Mrs FYFFE — A program in the schools got one day a term, so I am told.

Ms HAIRE — Three of them are open, and they have slightly different models. I guess one of the things about the location, with a significant number of them being located on a TAFE site, is to show the pathways and also the extraordinary opportunities to study in STEM subjects and to further applied learning skills in a TAFE environment, but there are a number of other things that we do as well as that. You are right; that is just one aspect of it.

In addition we have \$22.8 million approximately a year that is provided to secondary schools to support approximately 29 000 students who are enrolled in what is known as VETiS—VET in Schools—where students are able to study a VET subject while they are at secondary school, and then the units that they have studied will be recognised if they move on to study in a TAFE or another VET provider. Then with the Structured Workplace Learning that I have already talked about students can study a VET subject in either VCAL or VCE and undertake that Structured Workplace Learning in that area, and again that is designed to articulate into a tertiary VET course. The question about applied learning being given the same status as academic learning is an important one, and I think some of the work from—I think you had the Foundation for Young Australians here earlier today. We have found their work really interesting around the future of work, which is certainly something that we have been looking at really closely, and the importance of the development of skills and capabilities for the workplace, which is as much around work-ready capabilities as it is around academic learning. That is part of what we think the opportunities in schools and the articulation into vocational education provides for students in Victoria.

Mrs FYFFE — So that has been part of the review you have been doing; you have been looking at that aspect?

Ms HAIRE — I cannot really talk about the review, but those issues are ...

Mrs FYFFE — Well, you as a department have been exploring how you can promote that?

Ms HAIRE — Those issues are very much on the agenda, and I imagine that is part of what Foundation for Young Australians talked to you about today, that the kinds of skills that young people need for jobs of the future are much broader than simply academic skills. They need the personal skills, they need the applied learning skills, they need the teamwork, social and emotional maturity et cetera, and we need to be matching those students skills to the right pathway. It is certainly not a single track that they should be on.

Mr CRISP — Time has got the better of us. We have a number of questions that we would have liked to have asked you. Would you be prepared, if we send them to you in writing, to furnish us with some answers?

Ms HAIRE — Of course, yes, to the best of our ability.

The CHAIR — That is well done.

Ms HAIRE — It has gone very fast. I am sorry.

The CHAIR — Yes, unfortunately we have run out of time, but on behalf of the Committee I would like to thank you for your time and contributions. Thank you very much.

Ms HAIRE — Thank you for inviting us.

Witnesses withdrew.