T R A N S C R I P T

ECONOMIC, EDUCATION, JOBS AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools

Melbourne — 26 March 2018

Members

Mr Nazih Elasmar — Chair
Ms Dee Ryall — Deputy Chair
Mr Jeff Bourman
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Witnesses

Mr William Stubley, Chief Executive Officer, Year13 (*via videoconference*);
Ms Jan Owen, Chief Executive Officer, Foundation for Young Australians;
Dr Jessie Mitchell, Policy Manager, Youth Affairs Council Victoria;
Ms Leah van Poppel, Manager, Youth Disability Advocacy Service; and
Ms Sherry-Rose Bih Watts, Associate, YLab.

The CHAIR — Good morning and welcome. 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 Hansard transcript so you can correct any typographical errors. I would like to invite you now to make an opening statement. Before you do so, can you please state your name and allow us some time to ask questions. Welcome.

Ms van POPPEL — Hello. Thank you for having us appear today. My name is Leah van Poppel. I am the Manager of the Youth Disability Advocacy Service. We are a statewide service for young people aged 12 to 25 who have a disability, a chronic illness or a mental health condition. We are a core agency of the Youth Affairs Council Victoria, who are also here today. When we hear from young people with disabilities about careers advisers and about work and education in general, we have to take it in a broader context. We know that young people with disabilities are less likely to finish Year 10 and Year 12, they are less likely to get access to tertiary education and to complete it and they are less likely, ultimately, to end up with a job than their able-bodied peers.

When we talk to young people with disabilities, particularly about the issues that they face around getting access to information about careers and about the support that they have, they face three key challenges really. The first one, the one that always comes up when we talk to young people, is attitudes. Young people tell us that the attitude of the careers advisers that they speak to and their teachers in general are often to have really low expectations of their abilities. They do not always know how a disability might impact a young person. Sometimes they think that their disability has been under-represented or is perceived as less serious than it is. Sometimes they think that a young person might be exaggerating.

When it comes to careers advisers specifically, young people say that they do not have a lot of practical information and skills to give. If you are a young person with a disability, that might mean that your careers adviser does not tell you about Ticket to Work or disability employment services, and they do not assist you with finding suitable workplaces for work experience—for example, where the facilities are wheelchair accessible. So young people are sometimes left doing that work themselves. Clearly there is a need for careers advisers to have some training and some support, and some good networks with expertise in disability.

But young people also talk to us a bit about some of the other barriers that they face, and some of those are around broader issues—of getting a start in the workforce when they are 15 and 16, like their peers. For some young people that is because they have energy issues related to their disability; it is hard to do a job with the same kinds of hours in the same ways as other young people. There is not a lot of support if you want to get a very light touch, casual hours kind of job. Disability employment services are really limited in their ability to support young people who are under the age of 18 and who want to work just a few hours a week—under 8. Programs like Ticket to Work and the National Disability Insurance Scheme do offer some support, but they are not very well developed or not very widespread at the moment.

Of course all that I have said today focuses on young people who are in mainstream settings. It is really important to know that when we talk about young people in special schools, they have access to transition officers who support them out of a special school into another environment. But those environments might also be closed environments. Young people can go from special schools into day centres or into sheltered workshops, where they are paid much less than they would be in the mainstream market, without anyone checking in as to whether that is what they would like to do and putting them in positions. In closed environments you are much more likely to be open to abuse and neglect of all different types.

That is a broad overview of the issues that we see for young people with disabilities in accessing career advice and then ultimately getting into careers of their choice. I am happy to answer any further questions.

Mrs FYFFE — I will just ask a very quick one. What are the numbers of young people with disabilities in our education system now? Do you know?

Ms van POPPEL — Across the board about 15 per cent of young people have a disability. About 1.5 to 2 per cent, I think, are in special schools across the entire school population.

Mrs FYFFE — Thank you.

The CHAIR — We can hold the questions until later. If we can hear from the others please, and please state your name.

Dr MITCHELL — Thanks. My name is Jessie Mitchell. I am the Policy Manager at the Youth Affairs Council Victoria. Youth Affairs Council Victoria is the peak body and leading policy advocate on young people's issues in Victoria. Our vision is that young Victorians have their rights upheld and are valued as active participants in their communities. We are an independent not-for-profit organisation that represents young people aged between 12 and 25 and the sector that supports them. We have 393 members approximately, and about half of them are young people. The others represent the wide array of services that support young Victorians, and we are very pleased to have the opportunity to present here today with our colleagues from Youth Disability Advocacy Service.

Secondary students are facing a working world that is increasingly complex, changing and precarious. New technologies and globalisation have made it easier than ever for young people to start their own business, to retrain and to market their skills widely, but these opportunities also carry risks, and as we have heard, they are not equally available to everyone. Meanwhile entry-level jobs and various manual jobs are vanishing and full-time work is giving way increasingly to part-time and casual work.

So it is more important than ever that students receive career guidance that is current, well-informed, engaging and relevant, and while many schools do a really great job, we feel there is room for improvement. In particular students at risk of disadvantage tend to receive the least careers education, as far as we can tell, and report the lowest rates of satisfaction with the careers advice they have received, and this includes early school leavers and students who go straight from school into the workforce, into a traineeship or into certificate-level study.

We do need to see more effective initiatives, probably starting earlier, to make career advice accessible and appealing to students at risk of disengagement and to students who are seeking non-traditional pathways, and such approaches should link to initiatives to prevent early school leaving. I think it is important there to leverage some of the strengths that may exist in flexible learning settings and also in youth support services and youth work settings, as well as in mainstream schools.

More broadly, we welcome the approaches of schools that have provided students with a wide range of career education activities, and these can include things like work placements, industry tours, mock job interviews, trade tasters, programs to support youth-friendly employers and speed-dating sessions for students and employers from a range of industries. We also welcome approaches which have connected students with networks of employers, mentors and role models.

We feel there should be a particular emphasis on connecting students from disadvantaged backgrounds and culturally diverse backgrounds with a range of professionals, including from outside their immediate local community. This is in recognition that we know families and parents are some of the biggest influences on shaping students' aspirations and their entry into the workforce but also that some families are not in a position to offer as much support as they would like to due to their own limited resources or limited experience. As part of this, we would also like to see more steps made to engage marginalised families more in careers education.

We would also like to see more work done to connect female students with women working in trades, STEM and emerging industries to combat some of the narrow and sexist stereotypes that continue to limit students' career aspirations.

We think there could also be more done to connect students to high-quality vocational education and training. As the Smith Family has observed, the VET sector trains people in about nine out of 10 occupations that are predicted to have the biggest jobs growth over the next five years. But at the moment arguably not enough secondary students are accessing meaningful vocational pathways. For example, the health care and social assistance sector is Victoria's fastest growing sector by employment, but relatively few students seem to be considering it as a career option. Students may also need help to navigate the complexities and the potential pitfalls of the vocational sector.

We would also call for better dedicated support for students with disability to plan for their careers. As my colleagues observed, due to things like lack of knowledge, lack of time or lack of resources, many schools do not undertake appropriate individualised planning with their students, and we would like to see all careers education activities include students with disabilities on an equal basis. We would like to see careers educators

given high-quality professional development around transition options for students with a disability, and we would like to see more work done on establishing school industry networks to connect students with disability with inclusive employers.

To achieve all of this it will be important to have dedicated careers advisers in every secondary school with the skills, experience, professional support and capacity to work well with all students and to build strong relationships with employers, higher education and training providers, community services, unions and industry associations. At present school careers advisers tend to come from quite a wide range of backgrounds and are under a range of other pressures from within the school. Some may not have the time, the networks or the professional supports that they need. But ultimately we would also stress that schools cannot be expected to manage careers advice activities alone. It is really important they are support to work with other stakeholders, and the local learning and employment networks, the LLENs, will be really important here.

Finally, we would just add that we would like to see education about workplace rights as part of careers education too. While some students really struggle to find work early on in life, we do know that around 40 per cent of secondary students in Australia do already have a part-time job—so they are not just the workforce of the future, they are also the present workforce—and I think they would benefit from early education to avoid or deal with things like exploitation, harassment or harm in the workplace to which young workers can be unfortunately disproportionately vulnerable.

The CHAIR — Thank you. Jan?

Ms OWEN — Good morning, everybody. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Jan Owen, I am the CEO of the Foundation for Young Australians, and I have brought Sherry-Rose Bih Watts, who is actually part of YLab, which is a social enterprise that we set up inside FYA run for and by young people. Sherry is going to say something as part of my contribution as well.

The backdrop that we bring to this work and thinking is really three years now of intensive research about young people and the future of work across all of Australia. I think that backdrop is incredibly important to this conversation, because career education and learning is one part of a much deeper and broader story about what is happening for young people in Australia and in fact around the world in the future of work. The things that we do know is that because of automation, globalisation and the new flexible economy Australia has one of the highest part-time work forces in the whole of the OECD at 60 per cent, and there are 650 000 underemployed young people in Australia. That is 31.5 per cent of young people in this country who are unemployed or underemployed, so they are not getting the work that they want, as much as they want or they are actually unemployed. That backdrop actually tells us that we are in this very, very changing environment at the moment, and it is absolutely affecting our young Australians.

So where does career advice fit into that? Well, when we think about the fact that we expect a 15-year-old today to have 17 jobs in five different industries across their lifetime—remarkably different to their parents or their grandparents—it means that career advice needs to be put into a very different framework. We would say, and actually our research would point to the fact, that careers learning and careers navigation and careers management are actually the skills of the future, not career advice. In fact anybody who thinks that they could give a 15-year-old who is going to have 17 jobs in five different industries careers advice is probably dreaming, as we like to say in Australia.

So I think that actually that idea about what it is you need to provide young people with in careers management, navigation and education over their entire life is now actually the conversation we need to have, and the international research says go hard, go early. You begin in primary school, not actually much later, and you certainly move away from this place where we are now, which is where on average a high school student has one hour of so-called careers advice across their entire high school and where even work experience, which was embedded in the Australian curriculum, is completely up to whether a school feels like doing it.

We are a long way from where we need to be in terms of international research that says embed careers learning and embed careers engagement early, starting from primary school; have a seamless process from primary to high school to further education, and ensure that you are exposing people to all the further opportunities in education and learning; and also think really holistically about what we are teaching young people in that capability set.

Already the OECD and the World Economic Forum say that 10 of the 16 capabilities of the future are actually about capabilities, not content, and yet we have an education system that is still focused on content, not capabilities. In careers education it is the capability of managing a very different workforce and future work environment and the capability of managing your own financial ability to manage having multiple jobs, project managing having multiple jobs and multiple employers and also this idea of, 'How do you navigate the non-linear?'. In fact the kind of ladder, invisible or visible, that used to exist is now being replaced—we describe it as kind of a jungle gym. Most young people are kind of interested in the jungle gym, by the way—the ladder is not that inspiring, but the idea that you are going to go in and through and up and out of work is actually much more interesting. But we are not thinking about how you actually equip young people adequately for that into the future. So it starts at school.

The other two—and I think Jessie focused on this as well—is that parents are still seen as key informants in terms of young people's decisions that they make, and so their information is based on their previous life experience, which may not be, again, what the future is going to be. Also industry—we have had many, many conversations with industry. The 650 000 underemployed young people are, basically speaking, a mismatch of what people are leaving school and further education with and what industry are asking for and requiring of their future employees. But also from industry's side, again, the research says a university degree, except if it is highly technical, has a shelf life of about two years. That means industry needs to think very, very differently about who and what the relationship with their employee is going forward. It is a partnership, and in the context of a life of learning, it is going to be a very deep and long partnership, so we expect that employees, employers and universities or any kind of TAFE or further education institution will have to be in a partnership around ongoing learning, because the skills and capabilities are going to change over the course of a life.

I would like to invite Sherry just to say a couple of things about some of these ideas.

Ms BIH WATTS — Absolutely. Thank you for having me. As a young person who is …

The CHAIR — State your name, please, first.

Ms BIH WATTS — My name is Sherry-Rose Bih Watts and I am an associate at YLab through the Foundation for Young Australians.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Ms BIH WATTS — As a young person who has recently left the high school system and is currently in the higher education system, I think that from my experience, and it is referred to quite heavily in the research that FYA has done, there is a real fallacy around this linear pathway that many students are being brought up with—this idea that you are going to go into a job straight after university or straight into high school and that is going to carry you through your life.

In reference to careers counselling, which is what we are focusing on today, I think it is quite important that we begin to re-educate our careers counsellors to be able to adequately educate our young people about the skills that they are going to need, first of all; the skills that are going to be valuable to them; and also the diversity of work and opportunities and career paths that are available to them and that they are likely to take. We know that, as Jan mentioned, there are likely to be 17 jobs that young people are going to have in their lifetimes, and some of the research has identified that. We have put these in clusters, so rather than having a careers resume portfolio, we will be looking at a skills portfolio for young people. It is important for our young people to begin getting this information from their careers advisers about what they are going to need to thrive and be able to navigate that kind of jungle gym and that kind of changing workforce.

The CHAIR — William, your turn, please. Sorry about that.

Mr STUBLEY — That is alright. I am Will Stubley. I am the Co-founder of Year13.

Year13 is an online platform that helps predominantly school leavers transition from high school into the next phase of their lives. We focus on employment, education and travel opportunities as well as, the mental wellbeing of young people. We see over a 150 000 young people come through our platform each month. Around mid last year we released a research report called *After the ATAR*. The premise of this was pretty much,

as with a lot of the communication that we put out to young people, giving young people the opportunity to have their voices heard.

The best way that we describe what Year13 does: we are the older brother or the older sister that can help give a general reassurance and connect them to people that are either in employment, education or travel opportunities—everyone from TAFEs to private colleges to universities around Australia. As well, we are part of the Real Skills for Real Careers initiative from the federal Department of Education and Training promoting VET in and across Australia. Our goal is just helping young people navigate through life.

I guess the thing I want to talk about the most is the feedback that we are getting from young people about their transitional journeys from high school and some of the issues they are having. I think this round table is really beneficial because some of the stuff that young people are coming and telling us is deeply concerning and it really does highlight a significant need for change.

My view is quite strong in that I do not think high schools are necessarily to blame but high schools have a very pivotal role to play in helping young people transition from high school. The way that things are currently established, we have got the ATAR system, which is obviously heavily geared around academia and towards the university pathway, which is unfortunately giving young people a bit of a skew on what reality is when they do leave high school, or leave the nest and move out—all the life skills that are needed to actually effectively become an independent, contributing member of society. For example, when we asked—and there were over 7000 respondents in our national survey—55 per cent of young people believe that their school cared more about their ATAR than them, the individual student. This is an ongoing type of response that we are seeing from young people. There is significant disengagement from the school system due to the fact that a lot of young people feel they are not getting what they need—whether it is career advice or support—as individuals. Rather, they feel like they have to fit into a system that is driving them towards the agenda of the school or the agenda of the parents, and they are just not feeling that they are actually getting supported on an individual level.

That is having ripple effects into more societal-level issues. One of the pieces of data we got back is that we have 51 per cent of young people who are currently seeing or wanting to see a mental health professional. So we are seeing a lot of these sort of things that are happening at this school level that are penetrating into other more serious issues of mental health. I believe that is going further into youth unemployment, which was talked about before as well. I think there is a big story. A lot of work needs to go into helping young people understand that real life is not 100 per cent based on academia and it is the skills that you develop. A number of different courses or different life experiences are actually valuable after hitting the real world. They are some of the things that will get you into employment.

I think some young people who are not academically focused or academically gifted can really feel like they are left and put to the side because the school is not supporting them. They might be creative or have soft skills that are actually really valuable in the workforce. They need to be more recognised and more up front from a younger age. This is the main point where Year13 is coming from. I think young people need correct information that is actually going to help us get into further education or employment.

The CHAIR — Thanks for that. We will ask questions, so whoever wants to participate in the answers please state your name again for the Hansard record to make it easier for them. My first question is: how can career advice in schools be adapted to incorporate the development and assessment of transferable skills?

Ms OWEN —It should really be, as we would say, kind of embedded. So rather than as an adjunct, one of the things we are looking at—and I think Will has done some work on this—is: how would you articulate those skills and capabilities? There is a very clear list—there are 16 transferable, portable skills—that we are looking at across the world. They are global and they are 21st century. So how are those embedded in curriculum? How is curriculum capability based and not just content based? How would you help people develop their demonstration of those?

What we hear from employers is that if young people can demonstrate collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, cultural diversity and the ability to deal across different, diverse communities, and critical thinking creativity and innovation, they will not only get more access to jobs, they will also get paid more on their entry-level jobs. So it is about being able to demonstrate those skills, which then goes back to not just what I did at school but how do you tell a story of the whole person—what I did outside of school, what I have done

on my path through school. Lots of young people work part-time, lots of young people are involved in voluntary and community work in this country and lots of young people are involved and movements. How do we have a broader story about a young person? That is what employers are looking for, and it will serve them better.

Dr MITCHELL —I would just add on to that that it is important for careers advisers to have really up-to-date and expert access to data and partnerships with industries, certainly at a local level and also ideally at a much wider level, so that the work they are doing with students is informed by a knowledge of what employers are currently looking for, including for the industries that are likely to emerge particularly in that area over the next few years. That is a comment we hear from youth services in some rural areas, where they will say, 'We think that over the next however many years, perhaps a decade, we are going to see new industries perhaps in the environmental space taking shape here. They may not exist at the moment but we want to make sure students know there will be new opportunities coming forward'. So it is about making sure that the careers advisers have that expert knowledge and those relationships in place.

Ms BIH WATTS —I would like to add to that point that it is quite critical that careers advice becomes a critical component of the education life cycle for young people. Presently, in my experience we only began this careers counselling or careers advice component around Year 10 or 11 and it would have been a one-hour session probably twice in a semester or a term. So for us to be able to begin to educate young people about what their future careers could look like, I think that needs to start much earlier in their schooling life and in their education life cycle.

Mr STUBLEY — What I would add is that I think just the nature of career advice and having it away from the individual is that there are natural biases that are always going to happen. I think it is about trying to actively mitigate that bias is much as possible. Some of the schools that we engage with are noticeably university focused. Alternatively, some people are very much more trade focused, and I think that is where young people can sometimes get a little bit left out—by getting grouped based on their demographic location and what school they went to or just the biases of their influences at that school. I think putting in place metrics or ways of making sure that that bias is limited is something that is going to be really beneficial to young people, because I just think there is so much information about different career pathways which is just not known or is sometimes actually put to the side of other focuses.

Ms van POPPEL — I think it is critical when we think about developing transferable skills among young people, but particularly for young people with disabilities, that, firstly, they are given a say. So for the young person, careers advisers and schools should be able to put the young person at the centre of planning in how you do this and create some flexibility in how you do this.

A couple of the other speakers here today have talked about making sure that careers advisers have good skills and good networks, and that is particularly important when you talk about minority groups like young people with disabilities. So a careers adviser may not know everything about the National Disability Insurance Scheme themselves because that is quite an intricate area or know about the way you might develop skills differently for young people with disabilities, but having access to supports that give them those skills is really, really critical. When you talk about young people with disabilities developing the same skills as others, sometimes it can take longer. So the skill of learning how to get around independently can take a while to build up, and sometimes you might be doing it in creative and different ways.

Last week I was on a panel at a disability conference where a researcher from the US had done some work looking at how young people with autism can develop social skills through using online gaming. They are really motivated to be engaged in things like Minecraft and other online games. They are absolutely developing skills that are going to assist them in their careers, but we may not think about it that way.

Mrs FYFFE — The disengagement of students from disadvantaged backgrounds: we know we have children from refugee backgrounds whose language skills perhaps are not as good, and we know we have children with disabilities. I am thinking of those whose families may not place any value on education—how we gain them and get them involved. Can you tell us if there are any successful programs that are working, that are helping those whose families do not value education but also the other groups, in engaging young people in education and career advice?

Dr MITCHELL —I think there are a number of initiatives that can work well there. Not all of them are careers education initiatives per se. An example of an initiative that has had some strong results with quite marginalised young people is actually the L2P driving mentor program, which, for those who may not know about it, offers young people who do not have access to a car or a supervising driver 120 hours of driving practice with a volunteer mentor from their local community. While it is obviously focused on getting young people mobile, which is quite important for their future status as employees, sometimes the ability to build that long-term relationship with a supportive, usually somewhat older, adult from your local community can be valuable for young people who have been quite marginalised.

I would also add that the Navigator school re-engagement program, which again is not explicitly focused on employment as such, has had some quite strong initial indications of building relationships with families as well as with students because they may have to visit and work with a student in a context quite outside of the school if the student is refusing or unable to go there. So I think it is worth looking at some of those slightly more tangential youth-sector spaces where workers are able to work in a way that is quite different to how a teacher or a school would work and that seems less threatening and more engaging to a disadvantaged young person and their parents. I do think mentoring programs have got some strengths there that we need to utilise a bit better.

Ms OWEN — I have just a couple of quick examples. I do think Victoria is ahead of the game here, so Victoria has VCAL and Victoria has LLENs. There is a whole range of programs and initiatives that Victoria has that other states and territories in Australia do not have, and it points to this idea that there are some good programs and there are some great schools. I think our challenge and the opportunity here is to come to this idea that we just need to rethink what it is we are doing it for. Why are we doing career learning and education? What does it mean to do it across an entire lifetime from kind of cradle to grave almost, and where does this piece in the middle fit in a much, much larger story?

We have just started a program last week with South West TAFE down in Warrnambool that is going to see us look at our clusters—so new clusters, actually some of the ones that Jess talked about in terms of health and wellbeing. We are going to put some of our research into work to see how you could ensure that lots of people have skills and capabilities in a cluster or area of work where geographically but also from a demographic area perspective this is going to really work for that community. So we are going to test some of those things, but I think it does not give us the answer to this kind of mindset shift—and it is a mindset shift. We have got some great examples in the current kind of clunky system, but how do we rethink the whole thing? How can Victoria—which has already been ahead of the game in VCAL, in LLENs and so on—be ahead of the game in thinking about this whole career idea and what it means to have management navigation skills, not just advice?

Mr CRISP — Dr Jessie, you started to touch on this and I would like to explore more about some examples of successful partnerships between school and industry that have helped students with their career choices.

Dr MITCHELL — I think there are a number of them out there. One that we talked about a little bit in our submission was a program by the North East LLEN, where they had introduced an initiative to get more students into agriculture and horticulture via some school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, industry experience and tertiary study. So I guess it was looking across a number of different settings, embedding the skills and the knowledge in school-based learning, creating workplace experiences and indeed part-time and short-term job opportunities for students locally and also helping those students see some pathways through to study beyond school that would allow them, if they wished to, to remain and develop themselves in that industry. In some ways I think rural communities have the potential to do this particularly well. Often due to a real shortage of local resources their approach to partnerships is really strong and really collaborative, so it is building on those local strengths that you already find, I think.

Mr MELHEM — I think Ms Owen touched on this, and Ms Bih Watts as well. Do we need to look at having individual career advice for individual students at school? Also I would not mind if you want to touch on how valuable the career expos are in metro locations. We have a lot of universities that do that, but I would be interested in seeing how we can do it in regional areas to assist students because there is a difficulty now in basically being able to afford the time and the funds to come to Melbourne. So I am interested in your views on that.

Ms BIH WATTS — Again I am speaking from my experience, but I also have in the back of mind the research that has been done. When we go into and begin to look at this whole careers development and advice

area, we are very much looking at it as a singular aspect of a student's educational life. I do think that this needs to be highly integrated, just as students and teachers do lesson plans and they look at where a student has started from and as they are progressing throughout school. I think that is more the approach that needs to be taken for careers advice.

I think it is quite resource intensive and perhaps not very practical at the moment for us to go from a system with careers advice as it is now to a tailored, individual system, which would be absolutely ideal. In the interim it might be practical to say, 'Why don't we train our career advisers to be focusing, say, on particular cohorts of students or to perhaps even have expertise in a particular area?'. So rather than having the same careers advisers for TAFE and VCAL students, we could look at someone who is an expert in that particular area and who focuses on students who are travelling that path, and for students looking at other pathways it is about how we can advise them, upskill them, integrate them and interlink them with other networks beyond just their school and learning environment and beyond just passing their SACs to actually prepare them for the work that it is and the careers that they can envisage for themselves in the future.

Mr MELHEM — So do we look at a ratio? For example, like a career adviser, for argument's sake, for 500 students or 200 or 50? Is that something we ought to seriously consider? Because as I think someone made the comment earlier, at the moment we would probably spend about an hour talking to students about their career advice, which to me is really a waste of time; it is not that useful. Do we go as far as to say, 'Okay, let's be fair dinkum about it and start looking at a proper plan'? Where companies face redundancy, for example, and employees start looking for new jobs, what they do is they give them career advice through a placement service, they call it—a generic one plus an individual one. Should we adopt a system like that where we do that for our students?

Ms OWEN — I think there are a couple of things we should be doing. Number one, yes, we could have individual support, and some particular groups absolutely need individual support for a range of reasons, so we should absolutely consider that. Secondly, we know, though, that there are things around career advice which, again, is this hands-on engagement. Internships have got a bad name at the moment. We think they should be paid. Apprenticeships—we have got the lowest apprenticeship uptake in the country ever, but we do have new models, like hire apprenticeships coming in through PricewaterhouseCoopers and Skills Training Australia, which see young people entering non-traditional trade apprenticeships, and that is fantastic. So we are looking for these options and pathways: apprenticeships, internships—that is what people are asking for. They are asking for a more integrated curriculum.

We ran a program a few years ago at FYA called Beyond the Classroom with Beacon Foundation and Social Ventures Australia and a number of other organisations, including Service to Youth Council, where we tried to track what is going on in kind of a framework—like what is the best way you would do this?

Career expos, by the way, were quite low on the scale except, as Jessie said, we backed a young woman in regional Victoria who wanted to do it in a different way. She was 16 and from the local high school—a big high school, 1200 students—and what she did was she created a day where she invited every single employer to open their doors for students to come and visit them and talk to them about what they did. That entire day the high street was open. Students went in small groups—this was across Years 9, 10 and 11—to go and visit employers. They were all open, they had coffee and buns and God knows what else, and they had conversations. A whole range of young people, like 30 per cent of young people, got part-time jobs out of that day, and that was because they went and visited and had this face-to-face meeting. That was a tiny program, by the way, that cost $200. A career expo costs thousands of dollars. If we repurpose that kind of spend into that kind of model that this young woman, who is also called Jessie, set up across Victoria, it would be super interesting. That is one idea.

Leah brought up another thing which I think is critically important: we have focused all this on what young people are going to need, but we are not always talking about what they already have, and I think that gaming example is a brilliant example of how young people of all kinds of different abilities have different skills and capabilities, and I think that is why one of the things we are saying, and I know Will talks about this as well, is how you help young people understand what they are already bringing so that they can articulate and demonstrate that better to employers who are looking for this broader skill set now. Young people are still carrying a report card with an ATAR on it rather than saying, 'These are all the skills and capabilities I have that also might be unique to my lived experience as well', and they are powerful for employers.

The CHAIR — William, would you like to add anything?

Mr STUBLEY — The only thing I would add in terms of the personalised career advice is that young people are and like to think of themselves as being very independent, and really a lot of young people are trying really hard in whatever field they are in; it is just currently their focus is towards their study. That is good, but it is problematic when it is 100 per cent towards the study and towards getting an academic mark, in this case the ATAR. So when we did the survey, 45 per cent of survey respondents said they still had no idea what they wanted to do when they finished school, and these were the kids that had already finished school. To be clear, I do not think everyone needs to know exactly what they want to do, but that is a very high number of those who had absolutely no idea what they wanted to do when they finished school, when they had already finished. When we dug a little bit deeper, one of the most consistent themes that we got from these young people was, 'My biggest regret is not giving myself enough time to think about what I want to do. I was so focused on getting my mark and just getting to that finish line that I did not actually take the time to step through what I want to do'. I think that is a big issue.

In terms of being extremely personalised, career advice obviously comes at a significant cost associated—it is more about helping the mass of our young people explore it for themselves and then have career advisers come in when they are stuck or when they need some extra advice. I think helping and giving a platform for young people to go and find true, accurate information that is in an engaging and easy-to-access format is a very crucial element to actually just getting that conversation started, and then career advisers come over and advise them, not necessarily telling them exactly what they should do but just helping when they get a bit stuck.

The CHAIR — Thank you, William. Leah, would you like to add anything?

Ms van POPPEL — Yes. Just in terms of the discussion we have been having around career expos and other programs for young people, I just want to make the point that often these programs are not particularly accessible to young people with disabilities. If you talk about having a career expo, it might even be as simple as not having access to a toilet or the physical access to get into the building. Often when those sorts of things are planned, they are not necessarily planned in conjunction with national disability coordination officers or advocacy agencies, and they are not necessarily inclusive of young people who might be in special school settings, where the expectations are that they often—not always, but often—go from the special school into a closed day centre, which is not the same as working, or into a sheltered workshop, which is where you earn maybe $1 an hour for putting toothpaste in boxes or something similar.

The CHAIR — Sorry, we are running out of time, so on behalf of the Committee I would like to thank you very much for your contributions and your time.

Witnesses withdrew.