

CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the education of gifted and talented students

Maribyrnong — 29 August 2011

Members

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Witnesses

Mr N. Scott, College Principal,
Mr R. Carroll, Director, Sports Academy,
Mr M. Cusack, Assistant Sports Director, (Academic/Strategy) –leading teacher,
Mr D. Clark, Sporting Pathways Manager, leading teacher,
Mr M. Smyth, High Performance Manager, Sports Academy,
Mr P. Fleming, Professional Development and Athlete Wellbeing Coordinator,
7-9 leading teacher,
Mrs M. Spencer-Gardner, Sports Academy Admissions Officer, US College
Pathway Consultant,
Ms E. Carroll, Athlete Wellbeing 10–12, Physical Education teacher,
Ms A. Field, Geography and SOSE teacher, High Achievers Program Manager,
and
Mr A. Hester, Physical Education and Health teacher, Senior Programs Manager,
Year 12 Coordinator – leading teacher, Maribyrnong College.

The CHAIR — Thank you firstly for having us here at the school today. I wanted to particularly thank Nick and Rob for showing us around and certainly I can say on behalf of the committee that we are very impressed with the school facilities and the programs that you run and we're certainly very interested to hear as part of the hearing today some more about what the school does. Just by way of background, we are part of the Education and Training Committee. The committee, as you are probably aware now, is looking at the area of gifted and talented students and how we support gifted and talented students throughout Victoria in programs such as what you're running here and also through the general secondary system and secondary schools and primary schools and early years as well. Today it appears to be very formal but it is a hearing as such. Everything will be recorded on Hansard and you are also protected by the same parliamentary privilege as what we are when we are in Parliament. So feel free to say whatever you like and certainly we won't have any problems with that. You are protected by parliamentary privilege for anything that is said inside the room, although anything that is relayed outside the room does not afford that sort of privilege. Also there will be an opportunity at the end of the session to have a look at the Hansard. If there are any errors that have been made, typographical errors or what have you that has been made, there is an opportunity to correct those. Thank you once again. We will get straight into it.

Nick, we always give the opportunity of the principal to give some opening remarks if they wish to or we can go straight into it.

Mr SCOTT — I would like to welcome you all and thanks very much for showing your interest. Let's get on with the show.

The CHAIR — I will start and if anybody feels like they would like to contribute to the questions, just if you could just jump straight in and give us your name so we can record that as part of Hansard.

In terms of the demographics of the school, are there scholarships and equity places for students who experience educational disadvantage?

Mr SCOTT — I think Rob would be best to answer that. The answer is yes and Rob can amplify.

Mr CARROLL — Yes, there is. Generally the scholarships were awarded on a criteria basis around talent in sport, so students providing evidence that they are on a talent pathway. Then there are also academic checks to be done around work ethic in school and good reporting over a period of two years and also then good character references. So there were some strict criteria. However we became aware, particularly in this location, the demography of this location, that not all students could meet particularly the sports criteria. There were some sports that weren't overly represented in the western suburbs so we were aware we needed to offer more places, particularly to Asian students, to African students, who were a good proportion of our student population. So we actually identify our own students and I think the committee has seen this morning evidence of those, particularly in the badminton and volleyball programs, where the criteria weren't strictly applied to make sure there were opportunities for a wide range of students. Boys, girls, non-English speaking backgrounds, CALD students, Indigenous students — we've had 12 Indigenous students in our program students in our programs as well, which are highly supported. So that is some of the detail about the demography of that.

The CHAIR — What proportion of students at the Sport Academy come from low SES or non-English speaking backgrounds?

Mr CARROLL — I'm not sure of the exact proportions but my estimate would be in the range of 10% to 15% I would imagine.

Mr SCOTT — I would have thought that is the case. It is about half of the general school population in terms of how many qualify for EMA, which is a measure of socioeconomic disadvantage. 30% of our students on the whole qualify for EMA. It wouldn't be that. I would have thought it was about half that figure in the academy.

The CHAIR — Do many students travel from rural and regional Victoria to attend the academy?

Mr CARROLL — They do. We probably have around 30 students who relocated from regional Victoria from diverse areas, from Lakes Entrance for volleyball, Kerang for swimming, a number of athletes from Shepparton and Warrnambool for soccer. So they do come here. One of the issues we have as a sports academy with state-wide provision is that we generally cater for students who can travel here easily, so mostly northern and western suburb students. So if a regional student does choose to come to Maribyrnong for both academic and to experience the Sports Academy, they have to effectively solve the residential problem themselves and often that is done through boarding with a relative or family friend. In some cases — a small number of cases — they have boarded with other Sports Academy families.

The CHAIR — What percentage would come from outside the western region for the sports program?

Mr CARROLL — Again a large number of metropolitan students from outside the west. In terms of percentage it is probably around 10% travel from as far away as Bentleigh, Mooroolbark...

Mrs SPENCER-GARDNER — Oakleigh.

Mr CARROLL — About 10% would travel from outside the western suburbs.

Mrs SPENCER-GARDNER — Lots from the northern region.

The CHAIR — In terms of the Sports Academy catering for both able bodied and athletes with disabilities, again in terms of numbers how many students that have disabilities are studying sports.

Mr CARROLL — Since 2007 when the academy first opened for enrolments the programs have always been open to athletes with a disability. We have had probably only four or five hard inquiries and it resulted in one student of the 430 athletes currently. [REDACTED] is the student. He is a paralympian in table tennis.

The CHAIR — That is an ongoing...

Mr CARROLL — We are fielding more and more inquiries, particularly athletes with disabilities in swimming. In terms of those turning into real enrolments for us it is a very small percentage.

The CHAIR — In terms of the application process, can you describe that process and how you go about the sort of selection criteria to get into the school?

Mrs SPENCER-GARDNER — I'm Maureen and that is my portfolio. I'm not sure if you have this in your folders — I actually brought a document that is a flow chart of that. Can I pass that to you? We tend to get either a telephone call or an email or an inquiry through another student. So there is an initial inquiry that is made — or via the website. They come from everywhere. Just today there is a girl who started who is a cycling champion in Britain whose family found the school when they visited a friend locally here in Ascot Vale a couple of years ago and then they decided to relocate and did some research about sports schools and found us that way. Part of what I do when I speak to families is ask about, "How did you find us?" because it is valuable information. So the inquiry comes and then the school runs tours every Wednesday morning while the school is operating at 9:30. The assistant principals run tours of the school and the Sports Academy every term — except they stopped for this term. It is a frantic term, term 3. So tours start again in term 4. That offer is made available to families who want to take it up. In fact, it is a strong recommendation that they do. Just so that they understand the uniqueness of the school. I'm talking about enrolments into year 7. I think I have given you the year 7 flow chart with year 7 dates on it. Obviously we have a lot of applications, more than we can handle, for year 8 to 12 students to come in as well. So then they do the tour, we run an information evening, and Darren Clark, down the other end, and myself address that meeting and explain the criteria to the families and explain that it's about an academic program as well as a sport program to make it clear to the young people and the families that both things are weighted in the selection process and advise them about the submission date for the application. I think there's an application form in your package which really goes to great lengths to explain that they need to

present evidence about both aspects of the young person's pathway so far. Then we, a group of us — Darren, myself, Marty, sometimes Rob — do a review of the academic evidence before anyone's sporting capabilities are looked at because we take it very seriously here the fact that athletes are coming in with privileges and therefore they need to be responsible people in the academic classroom in terms of demonstrating the appropriate attitudes and behaviour that assist the school in the goal of raising academic standards as well. They don't necessarily need to be A+ students but they certainly need to be well behaved kids who get their work done and have an understanding that both things matter.

The CHAIR — So if they are really underperforming academically and elite athletes, do you provide some form of gap program or bridging program to get them up to a level so they are still able to come to the school?

Mrs SPENCER-GARDNER — We provide that feedback in a very personalised way. I personally interview any family in that position to explain why we are not able, at the moment, to be offering a place in the Sports Academy and exactly what the specifics are of the issues that need to be addressed. In fact, we've had a few examples, haven't we Rob, of probably our highest performing soccer athlete whose school reports talked about him being rude, disrespectful, late, not taking homework seriously, all of those things. We were able to let him know that this wasn't going to be the school for him until he was able to address those and provide evidence in his own school that those matters had been addressed. That's the case for several athletes. Each of the year 7s who applied this year, out of 150+ applications I've received, there were six kids whose applications said similar things, that they were not cooperative — reading between the lines of primary school teacher reports is a bit of an art, so, yes, each of those students has been in with their families and their families have been very grateful for the opportunity for their child to hear that they need to be doing things right. So no, we don't provide a bridging program here but we certainly provide quite specific information about what needs to be fixed and what we need to see.

Mr CLARK — Understand we do have a bridging program for the kids that are here that their academics drops off. Our process for that would be to have our welfare people involved to talk to the students. They then talk to our athlete development teachers who will then assist the students to get up to speed by providing time during their athletic development program classes to come up and work with the assistance of those teachers. So we will take them out a little bit of their training to catch them up to speed and then feed them back into the training process.

Mr CUSACK — Also the three categories are effort, behaviour and conduct. In terms of academic in maths and sciences and stuff we really look at that as a separate issue and think how would we manage them within the school. That is not going to — they would get a trial. If their effort and behaviour and conduct are all good and above then that is fine for us. That is happy for us to proceed with a trial. Then, how do we manage that student within the school is after that.

The CHAIR — It is more about attitude.

Mr CUSACK — Attitude rather than the actual specific marks and stuff.

The CHAIR — Just on the selection process in terms of students with absolute proven ability versus students with potential, if you have a student coming through and they are not top of their tree but you can see that they've got potential sporting ability, do you look at that as part of that selection process?

Mrs SPENCER-GARDNER — That is a Marty and Darren answer.

Mr CLARK — Both Marty and myself go to every single trial held for a kid in any of the sports and the coaches are looking at their level in the sport. Where we've started to look at some general testing that will help us identify students that mightn't get in on the sport that they've chosen but we can look at their results and say, "Okay, let's come and have a trial in this area." So that's started to happen this year. A girl that just missed out on swimming at a recent trial we've sent around to two other coaches and the netball coach has said, "I want to work with this kid because based on what I see I reckon I can come up with a good netballer out of that girl." The girl hadn't played netball before. We want to get that as a really solid

base by adding some testing into our trials. We've played a little bit with that this year and will firm it up for next year.

Mrs SPENCER-GARDNER — Certainly within the school there's been talent ID...

Mr CUSACK — Talent transfer.

Mr SMYTH — One girl is the swimmer, she is probably five foot one ever since she stepped in the place and is competing against swimmers that are seven foot two and halfway down the pool. Now she has the requirements to be a fairly good triathlete. The kids are finishing their pathway maybe in their sport and transferring across into other sports to continue their sporting career.

Mr CARROLL — Just to add the final bit to that one, the six athletes you viewed in the training program today, and all but three of the badminton athletes, they all did not meet selection criteria in terms of meeting the state pathway skill level.

Mrs SPENCER-GARDNER — Most of them didn't apply even.

Mr CARROLL — The coaches saw some potential in them and they were encouraged to apply and they were supported through the process. Now they are not only in the Sports Academy but several are in state programs.

Mr CUSACK — The final criteria is at coach's discretion. We employ coaches that are elite level and we trust their judgment that if they see an 11-year-old or a 12-year-old that they think has potential then we trust that judgment even if they are not in the pathways. So the final criteria is it is at coach's discretion.

The CHAIR — One more before I hand over to you. In terms of students emotionally, particularly if you are dealing with some of the students from, say, low socioeconomic backgrounds, how are they supported? So they come into the school and are great in terms of what they do and even food and things at home, some of the basic necessities, are there issues that have been identified that the school need to support as well as program and education programs?

Mrs SPENCER-GARDNER — I personally interview every family. Once they have been through that academic review and have been to the coaches I interview every student and family not as part of the selection process but just as a getting — allowing them to make a personal contact with someone in the academy. I keep notes and those notes go on to our own athlete wellbeing people here as well as to the coordinators and the program leaders in the main school. So there have been several examples of those sorts of issues needing to be shared, say, with the — some of the Aboriginal students and some of the children in foster family situations or children with volatile separated families. The sorts of issues that come up — my background is in student wellbeing in my previous life before I was employed here and so I am very aware of how important it is to support all of those issues in every student's life.

The CHAIR — Yes.

Mr SMYTH — Within the academy we have a sports psychologist here one day a week and she takes classes in the theory part of that, like development. We also have a nutritionist that is here. We do one on ones with them. If there is requirements that come from those sorts of requirements with food and psychological mental health issues and things like that. They will also be in the ADP class and work with Karen who does the years 9 to 10.

Ms CARROLL — I am the athlete wellbeing coordinator for years 7 to 12 and Peter does 7 to 9. So we make an effort to get around to the Athlete Development Classes and make sure that we make ourselves known and that the kids know us and chat to them in classes. Both Peter and I coach within the program as well. So I coach in the badminton and Peter coaches in the basketball. So we are here a lot at school — before and after school — and in the gym. So the kids get to know us and we can get around and talk to all of them. We also communicate with the Athlete Development Teachers. So if they pick something up in

class they might pass it on to us and we coordinate and talk. We have a weekly meeting with the school welfare coordinator, Leah White. So we can share information if we need to and if it needs to go to the sport psychologist or school psychologist we can pass that on.

Ms MILLER — For the record, can you explain how the sports academy works and how things happen on a day-to-day basis? We kind of had a loose discussion downstairs about it.

Mr CARROLL — There is two main components and one is the Technical Program and one is the Athlete Development Program, which is a mixture of strength and conditioning and leadership training.

Mr CUSACK — Technical Program operates from 6:45 in the morning to 8:15 and also 3:30 to 5 at various places both onsite and offsite. Each sport runs about two to three sessions a week with coaches who are various levels of coaches. But most — they are all elite level coaches either as teachers within the program or coaches that come out from external and work between 6 to 18 hours in the program depending on the sport. There are 12 technical programs, so students work in those between two to three times a week. They are very specific skill-based — our aim is to maintain students in their pathways and develop their skills. It is very much skills based. Depending on the sport, for instance volleyball and badminton are not big sports — club sports — in the western suburbs, we run teams as well. AFL, we try not to run a team because AFL is strong on this side of town. So we are really ensuring those players are in their Western Jets or TAC pathways. It depends on the sport whether we actually operate a team in that. Very much technical based and that's a number of sports running offsite and a number of sports running onsite as well.

Mr SMYTH — We start with the physical preparation stuff. We start at 7. It is really academy track work from 7 to 5 o'clock. From 7 until 8:45 we have mainly year 11 and 12 athletes involved in national programs come and train. We also have — at that same time — from 7:30 to 8:30 we have an injury clinic which is run by our physiotherapist. So we know with 430 kids if they have an injury, when they have a PE class they don't do inappropriate activity to make that injury worse. We have one person, Nathan Skewes is our rehab coordinator, he will get that information out to the phys-ed teachers and any staff that will deal with that student. Then it goes probably — then we start from 9 till 3:15 where we have our year levels. The year 7s have three periods a week, 8s have four, 9s have eight, 10s have ten. We work — they'll have the sports psychologist — Caitlyn — and nutritionist involved in that and a phys prep staff, ADP staff, involved in that. So we have almost a ratio of 1 to 25 for the ADP teacher. It is nearly the same for the physical prep staff that work with that. We break that up into — we have a year 7 and 8 coordinator within physical prep, someone at year 9 and 10. I look after year 11 and 12 and national athletes but we also have them going the other way where they look after individual sports. There is real cross pollination with the staff. It has been very successful looking after the sports and the year levels like that. Also we will have after school until 5 o'clock, again the year 11s and 12s when the athletes might be in rehab and do extra work, the only option is from after school from 3:30 to 5 to train in there as well. We have our specialists, like we spoke before about our sports psychologists and nutritionists in here a day each week to have consultations and be involved in the Athlete Development Program.

Mr CARROLL — The athletes are not always in the gym. There is quite a large personal development component and we run a lot of leadership training and they do interesting things like time management, goal setting, media training, a little bit of financial training, depending on the year level, and they also work in primary schools to mentor and coach and help organise. That's up to about a third of the athlete's week. Of course we are a school first and a sports school second, so two-thirds of the week is working with the teachers on their academic program which is where the balance needs to come in. I'm not sure whether the teachers want to make comments around how they find the athletes in the program. Whether the swimmers are falling asleep on them.

Ms FIELD — I've got quite a few athletes in my year 7 class this year which we've had to work extensively on time management which includes organising when they're going to be coaching, when they're going to be doing their PE, when is an appropriate time for them to be doing their homework and how they can manage their time both academically and in the sports program. There's probably about 50% of them, maybe just under, that are in the sports program so they also need to have a bit of a separate

timetable and extra coaching on how to use their planner and communication with their parents so that they're aware of what work they might miss on a day they might be out doing their actual competition. A lot of communication between parents as well via email and the phone so that I can send them the work they will be missing and a lot of those students in that year 7 class are very good at keeping up-to-date with the work. The couple that do struggle to keep up with the work I have higher communication with the parents than I would the other kids that are pretty good at organising their time. So it is nice to see in that particular group how there are sports students who are learning how to organise their time at such a young age because it will be easier for them in the future.

Ms MILLER — Just on that High Achiever Program, how did that come about?

Ms FIELD — It is the first year that the High Achievers Program is running in the form it is now. It used to be just a Maths Acceleration Program for the year 7s to do a more complex maths. Year 8s to do a higher level maths and so forth. This year — the enrichment of the subjects is predominantly across the core subjects with other subjects also weaving across curricula activities from one subject to the next. Having a said that, not every student in there is gifted in maths or gifted in English. They tend to have a spread of where they are gifted and this means that we can cater for kids that are not just gifted in maths but also English. So some of them are very gifted in maths as well as art or music as well as English and so forth. So we are able to work with a group of students that are high performers in certain areas and then also get them started on their goals of where they need to improve for further years as well with the subjects that they might struggle with a little bit more.

Ms MILLER — Do many students from the Sport Academy also participate in the High Achievers Program?

Ms FIELD — This year we have about 50%. Next year we have got 8 out of the 25 that are in the program as well. The communication between the parents there is a little different to the communication that we have with the parents that are just in the High Achievers Program. The kids who are just in the High Achievers Program also do LOTE and study Italian whereas the sports students don't. We have a lot more communication with the sports area when it comes to — I'm constantly liaising with Maureen as to the selection process for next year. Reading school reports together, any concerns with being able to cross reference and just chat about individual students and how we think they will cope with both being in the High Achievers Program and also the Sports Program. In the High Achievers Program in English, they do a lot of timetable management, goal setting, use of the planner, communication that goes from school to home and that helps those sports students to be more organised.

Ms MILLER — So you set the pathway and you actually implement their individual programs?

Ms FIELD — I actually, at the moment, do it in my English class. There are a couple of students in there that do struggle with time management but that's not just the sports students, that is the mainstream students as well and those students are working more extensively on redoing their timetables, reorganising their time, doing anything we can to help them try to find the optimum time where they can do that certain homework where they are not too tired or what time of the week does suit them better. It is a very individual, sort of, aspect that we look at with their goal setting and timetable management.

Mr SCOTT — If I can comment on the numbers of students. We have seen a significant growth in interest in the Academic High Achievers Program and we almost are in a position to run two classes in year 7 next year. Couldn't quite get the numbers in the end. That is on last year, we really only had 28 suitable students for 25 spots. This year we got to more like 40 and in that set of 40 it was about, again, 50% academy and 50% non-academy. I would say on the whole the Academy students are quite well represented in the High Achiever Programs across the levels. The one thing we can say in terms of academic high achievement where we have principals awards every six months, while they are only 40% of the school population there are easily half the students that win awards were for academic achievement.

Mr ELASMAR — Do you run any professional development for staff about gifted and talented students?

Mr SCOTT — There is two forms of gifted and talentedness. We are talking about the academic side of it, which is certainly Angela's purview and she does work there. Others would be better to talk about the development that goes on in the sports giftedness.

Mr CARROLL — Perhaps a bit of a team approach here, but Pete runs some specific PD for the academic staff and Mark for the athletic part.

Mr FLEMING — Rob and I have run a few sessions now with the staff — general teaching staff — on working with the sports kids. We find if you have a whole sports class they are a very vibrant bunch of kids so we ran sessions for staff on how to effectively teach sports kids in an academic sense. So it is a lot of hands on activities, keeping kids engaged, that type of stuff. So we have to run another one next term because we've had about 25 last session and staff want more of it, which is great for us. That just helps balance out staff working with very active kids. If you haven't got them engaged very quickly, they can be a noisy bunch. That is just the nature of sports kids. We find staff have been very receptive to our approach to that and have asked for more PD there. That is one thing we do generally.

Mr CARROLL — We did a learning cell analysis as well on Sports Academy students through Mark's work. Were you going to talk about that, Mark?

Mr SMYTH — No, I wasn't actually.

Mr CARROLL — Learning styles on our Sports Academy students. They're multi-modal learners but do show a preference to strong kinesthetic and visual learning modes. So they would prefer to work in — I guess we encourage all of our staff to use the plasmas and the displays because they like to learn through seeing and doing rather than sitting and listening. They are not strong aural learners. We do have more boys than girls. So we have had to implement some boys education strategies within the sports component around very active, experimental-type learning programs and scaffolding work. The academic staff have taken that on board generally. I was fortunate enough to spend some time in the UK in February looking at their gifted and talented program and brought back a lot of resources which we have been tapping into not only of Sports Academy interest but literacy and numeracy interest as well. We are starting to use those resources within the school.

Mr SMYTH — In relation to high performances, we have had our staff invited to go up to the AIS to spend two or three days with their staff to have a look and see what they are doing. We have also been involved with a proposal handed in today with the Victorian Uni, the Australian Sports Commission and the Institute of Sport are looking at the market place and looking at drop out and reasons for drop out with athletes in schools like this. So that is exciting to have a look at that. There have been opportunities for the staff to go — have a look at PDs they need to go to, being able to back them to be able to do those things. I finished one at the AIS on conditioning.

The CHAIR — You spoke about the partnership arrangement with the Institute of Sport, Victoria University and I also understand the relationship with the Western Bulldogs as well. Those partnerships you run in the school, how important are they and maybe just quickly how they work?

Mr CARROLL — I'm putting into your document what I call value-added partnerships or outreach endeavours but in 2009 I was asked by the Department to prepare this document about the way the partnerships worked and what value the school received from partnerships with the lines of those three main partners and in return what those partnerships gained from being in line with us. It was quite an extensive document. We put a money figure on it of \$120,000 to the college in in-kind donations from Western Bulldogs, Victorian Institute of Sport and Victoria Uni. That has grown further where we are opening up the facilities to communities. So we currently have about 10 community organisations that come in and use the facilities after hours and there is lots of benefits for them in doing that and there is flow on benefits back to the school. It is really immeasurable. If you want to put an economic value on it, in 2009 it was worth about \$120,000 of services to the school that we didn't have to pay for and the partnerships are — to be sustainable they think there is that amount of value back to them and they have been sustainable. To touch on the VIS partnership, that is where the real PD for the Sports Academy side

comes in because they don't directly intercept with our athletes. Their main business is around their own athletes. So the VIS has been the professional development arm for our coaches, our sports scientists and our teachers. To give one example, our careers teachers spend a three-month work placement at the VIS working with talented athletes of school age who are still at their schools and produced documentation now available to all Victorian schools who have talented students within their cohorts about how you manage the balance between academic and sport and life.

Mr ELASMAR — Many Victorian parents have told the committee they receive very little support and guidance in nurturing and supporting their gifted or talented child; do you provide any?

Mr SCOTT — I think Rob can speak positively in terms of the forums and other things we have.

Mr CARROLL — We tend to support the parents because whatever message we give to the students at school an important part of the partnership is with the parents. They have to be the taxi and the driver and the cooks. If we are to give nutrition messages to the students it is irrelevant if it is not enacted at home where most of the meals are served. We would run support services for the athlete parents in weekly meetings — termly meetings. A particular focus we have had in the past is around nutrition; how would you select and buy and prepare nutritionally good meals for athletes so they get the same message that the athletes get. We also talk to them about how to report injuries to us so we can better manage it with athletes.

Mr CUSACK — That has been one of our most successful things, our parent nights, especially with the year 7 students. With all students and parents coming in we have a packed hall out here. Just on servicing on how to access the website and explaining the whole — it is a completely new process to all students and all parents when they come in here. It is really completely different to what they've seen in a school. So understanding how to report injuries, what ADP means, what technical training means. So we create a forum where all these things are explained very — I think it was week two — in week two or three in term one. Parents can come in and ask all their questions and they know how to access our website — injuries — any of those — achievements — how to deliver all those things. That is one of the most successful nights we've had.

Mr SMYTH — The website has been great for parents to get information. The newsletter is more informative. It has really changed the focus because of the numbers to explain to the parents what is actually happening. That is probably the worst thing, the parent not knowing.

Mrs SPENCER-GARDNER — We see way more of parents. Most of us know the parents all by name. We see a lot more of parents in the sports academy than usually is the case in a high school.

Ms MILLER — What sort of support do you offer a student if it's no longer an option for them, in terms of counselling and stuff?

The CHAIR — Like outside of sports?

Mr CARROLL — In terms of life issues or academics?

The CHAIR — No, career options outside of sports? So pathways...

Mr CARROLL — Can you talk about our counselling process recently, Aaron?

Mr HESTER — A lot of it is set up with the pathways and subjects which they choose. So starting from year 9 we do quite a bit of work with the kids on choosing a career and different institutions or TAFEs that offer courses in that area. Then we look at the subject selection and it involves double periods throughout about a two or three-month period in which the work we give them, they often take home and work with their parents about different areas that they like to focus on outside of just sport. Then the last stage of that is sitting down with one-on-one counselling with our course counselling teachers and coming about a viable pathway that leads right through to the end of VCE.

Mr CARROLL — I think too the Sports Academy has broadened its focus. When they come in they have big dreams and want to play for Australia and earn a living out of sport and be professional athletes and all of those things. We are very careful about not selling the false dream. We tell them we will support their dreams but let's have plan B and C running at the same time. Where we broadened, perhaps, our focus away from just a high performance pathway in sport is to say, "There are career options here." The best career expo happens every day in front of them. They can see all of these people who are in front of them making a living out of sport but not actually playing sport. They are coaches, sport scientists, physical preparation staff, PE teachers, nutritionists, physiotherapists. Everyday they live that message that you can broaden the career but still maintain sport as your interest. We are building into our year 10, 11 and 12 programs the fact that they actually start the sports-themed industry course, I suppose, so when they leave year 10 they can now leave with a Sports Coaching Certificate, a Sports Training Certificate and a First Aid Workplace Certificate and that leads into a Certificate 3 in Community Recreation as they exit year 11 and 12 VET programs. Practically we are also taking on athletes from non-playing backgrounds so we have a sort of a pseudo development sport in AFL umpire's academy. We have a student here in the sports academy whose focus is not playing as an athlete but actually servicing other athletes in terms of personal training and setting up their own business. We have broadened the focus as we have grown.

The CHAIR — Just to conclude and to also get on the record, in terms of sporting success, can you just give us an indication of some of the results that you've had in the short time you have been able to run the academy?

Mr CARROLL — Others can talk too. It is easy to focus on the pennants and trophies downstairs. That is not how we count our performance. We decided that we do have a lot of resources here. It is unfair for us to compete against the local schools in competition so our key performance indicators have been around the numbers of students getting into sports-themed tertiary courses including US college pathways. It is around the numbers of students we get into Victorian teams and the number of those who then go on out of Victorian representation to represent Australia. So the minister was here last Wednesday and in the first six months of this year, for instance, there is over 70 students from the Sports Academy who played for Victoria this year and 14 of those have gone on to make national representation. I think we have currently 6 or 8 athletes in US college pathways.

Mrs SPENCER-GARDNER — One graduate and six currently in US colleges where they can continue to get a full tertiary education and keep playing high level sport in a way that's not as easy to manage in Australia and have a whole life experience.

Mr CARROLL — The focus has been around training environment more than competitive environment excepting perhaps volleyball and badminton. Our thing is to value add to their state and national pathways and make them more able to be accepted for Victoria or Australia.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much to all of you for appearing before the committee and we certainly congratulate you all on the great work you are doing. In summary, and for the purpose of Hansard, can I note the information that we've been given today. The booklet, in specifics, details the partnership arrangement which was mentioned by Rob earlier on and also the information which gives the rationale of the school and the timetabling information and also the application process and admission process to get into the school and information on some of the staffing as well. If we could just have that noted. We will use that as part of our evidence as well. Thank you again.

Witnesses withdrew.