

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the Use of School Buses in Rural and Regional Victoria

Melbourne—Wednesday, 25 August 2021

MEMBERS

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Ms Harriet Shing

Ms Kaushaliya Vaghela

Ms Sheena Watt

WITNESSES (via videoconference)

Mr Sebastian Antoine, Policy and Research Officer, Youth Affairs Council Victoria; and

Ms Claire Lock.

The CHAIR: The Economy and Infrastructure Committee public hearing for the Inquiry into the Use of School Buses in Rural and Regional Victoria continues. Please ensure that mobile phones have been switched to silent and that any background noise is minimised.

I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land, and I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. I wish to welcome any members of the public that are watching via the live broadcast.

My name is Enver Erdogan, and I am Chair of the committee. I would like to acknowledge my fellow committee members: Mr Mark Gepp, Mr Tim Quilty, Mr Lee Tarlamis and Mr Rod Barton.

For witnesses giving evidence: all evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during the hearings is protected by law; however, any information or comment repeated outside the hearing may not be protected. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing. Transcripts will ultimately be made public and published on the committee's website. We welcome your opening comments but ask that they be kept to a maximum of 15 minutes to allow plenty of time for discussion. Could you please begin by stating your names for the benefit of Hansard and then start your presentation. Over to you, Claire and Seb.

Mr ANTOINE: My name is Sebastian Antoine. I use the pronouns 'he' and 'him', and I work at Youth Affairs Council Victoria.

Ms LOCK: Hi, my name is Claire Lock. I use the pronouns 'she' and 'they', and I am a year 12 student.

The CHAIR: Excellent. I want to thank Youth Affairs Council Victoria as well for their submission. Do you want to just start and give us an outline of your presentation?

Mr ANTOINE: Fantastic. Thanks very much, Chair, and thank you, committee members, for having us here this afternoon. It is a great pleasure to speak with you. I would like to echo your acknowledgement, Chair, that I am Zooming in from the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, and my respects to their elders past and present, and also I make a special acknowledgement of the young ones who are the next generation of elders and leaders. I would like to also extend that acknowledgement to Aboriginal lands throughout this state, the lands on which we work and the lands that this inquiry pertains to as well.

My name is Sebastian Antoine. I use the pronouns 'he' and 'him'. I am a Policy and Research Officer at Youth Affairs Council Victoria. I am attending this hearing alongside Claire Lock, who is the young person from rural and regional Victoria who contributed to YACVic's submission to this inquiry called *On the Buses*. I will ask Claire to introduce themselves in a moment, but first I will give you a few of my opening remarks.

I will step back a little bit first. Youth Affairs Council Victoria is the peak body for young people aged 12 to 25 and the youth sector—that works with them and supports them in Victoria. We are a member-based organisation and have young people and youth workers as well as youth work organisations as our members across the state. As the peak body we are an impartial voice elevating the voices of and advocating for young people and the youth sector. Within YACVic there is a core agency called YACVic Rural, which works with and advocates for young people and the youth sector in rural and regional Victoria, taking a place-based and best practice approach to supporting and resourcing them, for better outcomes for young people.

I am sure you have all keenly read our submission called *On the Buses*, so I will not go into detail, but I will just give you a few key points as a reminder. The submission itself centres the voices, experiences and recommendations for change from young people, because we consider them key stakeholders in initiatives

around public transport and especially when we are talking about school buses. It also reflects the experiences of youth workers who struggle every day with transport disadvantage when they are engaging with young people in rural and regional Victoria. The submission finds that public transport availability and access across the state is highly variable, but everybody we spoke to recognised that there was room for improvement and that school buses had a part to play in that. I must caveat that with saying that school buses are not the only solution but I will focus on them today because that is the scope of this inquiry. Young people said and youth workers said that improving public transport would give rural and regional young people the same opportunities that their metro peers take for granted—level the playing fields, connecting them with the opportunities there.

There are three kind of key messages that come through the submission. The first is that there are ways to make it easier for members of the community who are not engaged in secondary education to catch the school bus alongside school students. There is lots to unpack there, and I am happy to answer questions about that this afternoon. The second key message is that it would be more impactful to use the existing school bus assets to deliver more services and more routes during the day. We went back through our records at YACVic, and YACVic and young people have been recommending to the Victorian government to do what we call activating the downtime and using those buses to deliver more services. For over 10 years young people have been saying this. Young people are keenly aware that the school buses are parked for most of the day—up to 20 hours—while members of the community, including young people, still have travel needs. The third key message and something that we are really passionate about at YACVic and in the youth sector is to really keenly involve young people in designing, governing, delivering and evaluating new public transport initiatives, using models of youth participation. Again, I am happy to talk more about that this afternoon. Our members in the youth sector across the state are experts in that—in involving young people in designing and delivering services like this—so they would be really eager to help efforts in the public transport space as well.

I will let you know briefly that YACVic Rural has prioritised the issue of public transport, given how big a response we had from young people and the sector on this. So we will be thinking and working around school buses but also on initiatives more broadly over the next 12 months. Look, there is so much to discuss I feel like I have barely scratched the surface. I will try and leave lots of time for questions from you all. I would now like to introduce you to Claire Lock, who is a young person from Bright and one of the young people who contributed to our submission, to share her perspective on the issues today. Fantastic. Thanks, Claire.

Ms LOCK: Thank you, Seb. I would first like to start with acknowledging the country that I am speaking from today, the lands of the Taungurung people. I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge that under asphalt this land always has and always will be Aboriginal land. As Seb said, I am a year 12 student from Bright in the Alpine shire. I am a member of the Victorian Student Representative Council, which is the peak body for students across the state. I also spoke at the regional sitting earlier this year of the Legislative Council. I have, firsthand, experienced the lack of public transport in regional and rural areas. Recently my doctor told me I had to go to see a medical specialist who is in the local regional centre, but I cannot attend this appointment for another four to five weeks due to not being able to get there. I am lucky that I am in a position where my parents can take me during school holidays. However, this is not the same for most of my peers. There is no wonder that there is a mental health crisis in our rural and regional areas when mental health facilities and the local hospitals are in the regional centres, which are quite far away and can be hard to get to.

The access to training and TAFE is also another major worry of my peers. The local TAFE is 80 kilometres away, in Wangaratta, and there is no timely bus service to and from it. I have not been able to access specific health or educational events due to this lack of infrastructure, and, like I said before, most of my peers, unless they have their licence, cannot get there. I am very excited to be here today, and I am really keen to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Sebastian and Claire. Thank you for sharing your unique perspective, living in regional and rural Victoria, and I guess the difficulties and challenges of meeting the transportation needs of young people and also the mental health challenges too. Thank you for sharing that with us. I found it quite a unique perspective compared to some of the other presenters we have had before this hearing. On that point, I might actually start with the Members for Northern Victoria, so the two regional MPs. I might start with Mr Quilty, then Mr Gepp. So Mr Quilty, you can ask the first questions.

Mr QUILTY: Thank you, Chair. I was interested in hearing more about how young people get involved in designing, delivering and evaluating bus services. What does this co-design look like?

Mr ANTOINE: It is a fantastic question, Mr Quilty. Thanks for asking that. I might make a few comments, and then, Claire, if you have got anything to say—I am sure you have got experience of being one of those young people—if you have got any stories to share there, that will be great. Mr Quilty, youth participation is what we are talking about, and it is the bread and butter of what we do at YACVic: treating young people as key stakeholders and offering them a seat at the decision-making table when these initiatives are being made.

There are a whole lot of models and theories and academics that are doing work in what youth participation looks like, but it is underpinned by a series of principles that value the lived experience that young people bring and specific ways about involving them in decision-making processes. It all sounds a bit jargonistic, but it is good fun when you get down to it, and young people bring obviously a very unique perspective and a really important one to these kinds of conversations. We often talk about giving young people a seat at the table which puts them on equal footing with other decision-makers. So you will notice in the submission we talked about a coalition of voices designing and delivering these new public transport initiatives, of which young people are an important member, but as well having schools and parents and employers that struggle with getting workers to and from their workplaces. So it is about valuing young people there and making sure that their unique voices are included when we are making decisions. The reference there, not just to the designing of the initiatives but to their delivery, evaluation and monitoring, is about the long-term involvement of young people—not just consulting with them and saying, ‘Oh, what would you like? Okay, we’re going to go off and do it’. It is about involving them at every step of the way as a meaningful stakeholder and saying, ‘What’s working well? What can we change going forward?’. Claire, I am sure you as a young person have been involved in a few opportunities of youth participation. Do you have any reflections or things to add there?

Ms LOCK: Not too much to add. I mean, we have seen a lot of youth participation coming out of the bushfires in trauma recovery. Using models such as those can be really useful, but also engaging in youth-led spaces and organisations, such as YACVic or SRC or CYDA, which is Children and Young People—a body for them—so engaging young people in organisations which already have a high youth participation rate and giving them a seat at the table, not just a tokenistic one.

Mr ANTOINE: I might just jump in very quickly, Chair, with a couple of last-minute comments. The 2016 Victorian youth strategy set out a framework for how the government would engage with young people. So there are some specific recommendations and actions in there around meaningful engagement with young people, and I also recognise that a new youth strategy is coming out shortly, which YACVic has contributed to as well, which we hope will really centre youth participation. The other thing to consider is that lots of local governments have youth participation mechanisms, so having a youth reference group or a youth council of young people with a range of experiences who are really interested in shaping their communities for the better. So that will be a great place to start as well. Thanks, Chair, back to you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Quilty, do you have an additional question?

Mr QUILTY: Okay. The inquiry is looking into adding people who are not students onto school buses and taking them to other venues—TAFEs and so on. This potentially is extending bus routes, extending travel times and impacting on students who are currently using the school services. Can you comment on that and how those things are weighed up?

Mr ANTOINE: Sure, yes. Just to clarify, you are talking about a situation where the existing school bus run, so taking students from home to school—you know, talking about changing that by adding stops or extending? You are thinking about the impacts on those existing students?

Mr QUILTY: Yes.

Mr ANTOINE: Fantastic. Yes, for sure. I think it is a great question, and I suspect you have had similar conversations with other witnesses up until this point and you will have going forward as well.

Our position at YACVic is that the school buses are a valuable resource for students. They are one of the only kinds of services in rural and regional Victoria that are designed specifically for young people, and we do not really want to lose the benefits of that—the fact that it works exactly how young people need it to. So what we

would like to see are some minor changes to the existing school bus runs to make it easier for members of the community to get on. So that might include, where feasible, adding a stop at the TAFE or at the train station or at the city centre where workplaces are, which might not add too much time to the school bus run but makes it much more convenient for non-school-age students to catch that bus to and from where they need to go while still keeping the same kind of focus on the service for the school students there. I think that is why we are talking more broadly than that. So it is about using those school buses when the students are not using them to deliver more services at different times of the day as well there. Does that answer your question? Fantastic.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Tim. I might pass over to Mr Mark Gepp, who is also a regional MP in northern Victoria. Mr Gepp.

Mr GEPP: Thank you, Sebastian. Very nice to meet you. And Claire, lovely to see you again. I hope you are both well. I want to tease that issue that Tim just talked about and get a clear understanding of where the two are you coming from in terms of allowing non-students, other members of the public, onto the school bus. And I am picking up that there are a couple of different threads there from you. Are you talking about times which have been traditionally set aside for a school bus run—so, you know, to pick the kids up and bring them in to school—and any spare capacity during that period, where it does not impact negatively on the timetable et cetera, or are you talking about the non-school bus run times? You had mentioned utilisation of the assets at other times—maybe during the school day and after the school bus run has finished. So could I just perhaps put that there? And I will have a follow-up, I am sure.

Mr ANTOINE: Fantastic. Yes, for sure, Mr Gepp. We are talking about both. So we are talking about two options. One is allowing more people onto the existing school buses on their way to and from school—you know, at 9.00 am in the morning and at 3.30 in the afternoon. And then when those school buses are not used to drive school students around, using those buses, the physical buses, to deliver more routes and services.

So I think it is worth noting that community members are already allowed to catch the school bus alongside students. There is a bit of a process to go through—some forms to fill out and those kinds of things. YACVic understands that very few people take up that offer, and there are probably a few reasons why. It might be that the school buses are already full. It might be that nobody knows about that opportunity to catch the school buses alongside the students. The Department of Education actually do not capture any data about community members who apply to catch the school bus and whether or not they are accepted, which would be really valuable data for transport planning.

So there are a few kind of barriers there. The kind of main one that we are thinking about though is that the school buses are set at exact times. You know, they are designed around the school day. So if your TAFE class, for example, starts at 8.00 am in the morning, catching the school bus with the students is not going to get you there in time, or if your workday finishes at 5.00 pm, you would be stranded in town with no way to get home—which is why we are really talking about both. So it is allowing more people easier access to the school buses on the school bus runs and then using the buses themselves to deliver more routes. Does that clarify things for you there? Great.

Mr GEPP: Yes, it does. I am interested, Claire, as somebody who is still at school: we are hearing a lot of feedback from a lot of witnesses during this inquiry about the safety of our young people, especially for the cohort under 12 years of age—you know, that sort of 6 to 12—and they are obviously the primary school years more predominantly; do you have a concern about sharing a facility that right now is currently set aside specifically for kids? Although I take Sebastian's point that if you go through a bit of a process you can utilise it. And how would you respond to those concerns that parents in particular are expressing around the safety of kids, particularly those younger kids who use the facility?

Ms LOCK: Yes, absolutely. Firstly, I will say that is a very real and very valid concern for parents and carers to have. However, there has to be some kind of framework in place for the safety of all students and the safety of all people catching the bus. I know, personally, my school buses all have cameras, and that is with just students taking the bus and that is for the safety. And if there any incidents on the bus, there is CCTV to aid investigation. Obviously if there were buses to be opened up to the wider public, there would have to be some kind of paperwork, some kind of framework in place, to ensure the safety of everyone on board—you know, whether that be having to have a working with children check or police check. Whatever it may be, there will

have to be some child safety policies in place, and that has to be the foundation of these programs—child safety at the forefront—because we do not want to be putting children in danger.

Anecdotally, my peers in the city catch public transport with various members of the public in a lot more populated areas. I think what Seb and I have talked about is that in these smaller areas everyone knows everyone. I know most people in my town because it is a small town. There is always someone who knows someone on these buses, whether it be family, friends or neighbours. I do not think we have to worry too much about unknown strangers getting on these buses with students, but absolutely having some framework in place to, you know, support and protect students is very, very important.

The CHAIR: Thank you for that, Claire. I might pass on to Mr Barton next. I know he has got a question. Mr Barton.

Mr BARTON: Thank you, Chair. G'day, Claire and Seb. How are you going? Really good presentation, and I think I have a question for either one of you. Seb, I would start with you. For young people, if we sort of said, 'Let's see if we can ease this in, if we can trial it in—open it up, say, to TAFE students, uni students and things like that', do you think that would be helpful rather than scaring the horses?

Mr ANTOINE: For sure. I can see where this question is coming from, and I think it is a great idea. Rolling out this initiative gradually would make sense. It is a sensible option. From our perspective as the peak body for young people, we would welcome the chance that young people are the first ones in the trial there, and I think, with the gradual rolling out, I would really like to see that be part of the long-term commitment. What I would not like to see happen is for a trial to happen and then it not go exactly to plan and then the whole thing gets pulled. You know, it needs consistent government investment and a commitment to, 'We're going to do this in the long term, and here are the steps towards that'. I think there is real scope to learn lessons from early stages and the trialling of rolling out of different aspects of this initiative to inform what happens next. I am thinking, for example—it is a small example—the little town that I live in has a minibus that drives around. It started off as an on-demand service that took people from the village up to the train station, and over time it has got bigger and bigger and there are now, I think, four or five minibuses and a consistent route. That has happened over time and from learning lessons from what happened in those early stages. So I would really encourage the committee to have a bold plan for what you are going to do and then commit to that long term as well as being flexible to the things you find out along the way there—for sure.

Mr BARTON: I will just say that the government is—I hate doing this, when I have to pump the tyres up for the government—actually doing a very large bus review around Victoria. It is probably the biggest thing, and I think people like yourself and Claire should be jumping on board and influencing and annoying the government as much as you can, particularly the two members in Northern Victoria there. Get into their ears and make sure that your story is getting told.

Claire, I will just go to some of the issues that Mr Gepp raised in regard to safety. I absolutely acknowledge this is an absolute issue that has to be addressed, but we know that it is operating in New South Wales and Queensland and has been operating like this for a number of years. We know that. We have had Professor Stanley report to us that the risk to young people is no worse than on public transport, because we know that rural and regional kids are using public transport to get to school as well, right? So we know that. My question is: people have put forward some ideas around safety—for instance, could we have coach captains, who may be year 12 students who we think are superstars, and they could be overseeing, or we could have a volunteer parent just on the school runs in and out and things like that. Obviously, cameras—I note that you said you have cameras on your school bus and what a good service that is, but that is not on all school buses, and I think that is an absolute no-brainer. There are things like we put the adults in the front and all of those sorts of things, so there are lots of measures. Do you think it is insurmountable, that we cannot convince people that we can do this safely?

Ms LOCK: I think in everything you are not going to be able to convince everyone that you can do it safely. Have a look at the vaccine rollout at the moment—not everyone is convinced of safety measures. You are not going to be able to—

Mr BARTON: Only those ones on the flat earth, not everybody else.

Ms LOCK: You are not going to be able to convince everyone that they can do it safely, and I think it is 100 per cent a valid concern for parents and carers. I know I would be concerned if my six-year-old was getting on a bus with some people I did not know. However, the idea of having a bus captain—I know most schools around here have bus captains regardless, just for the daily ins and outs of things that happen on buses. Those are year 12 students or senior students who have that role already. You know, designated sections, I feel like that could work, but it is a thing that needs to be teased out, and it is going to be different in every single area. There are going to be different, I guess, needs and measures that are going to have to be taken in every different area.

Mr BARTON: Yes. I think you are right. I think community involvement is the key, and I think the young people need to be part of it.

Ms LOCK: Exactly.

Mr BARTON: So get on to local members. All right. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Great questions and great answers from everyone so far. I might pass to Mr Tarlamis if he has a question. Mr Tarlamis.

Mr TARLAMIS: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Claire and Seb, for your submission and for coming along and presenting to us today. It is good to see you again, Claire. First of all, I just want to agree that basically anywhere and any way that we can involve young people in processes at every stage is a good thing [Zoom dropout] because I think there is a propensity to say—and too often there are assumptions made and a lot of making of decisions—‘We’ve taken into consideration the impacts on young people’, whereas they might say, ‘That’s nice, but were young people involved in the decisions?’. I see this a lot in community organisations, particularly when working with a lot of groups from different ethnic backgrounds and stuff, where the older generation say, ‘But we put on this youth event, and nobody came’. It is like, ‘Yes, because you ran it how you thought it should be run. You didn’t hand it over to them to run it and let them run it how they want to do it’, sort of thing.

I think having that young person’s perspective about how they see things and do see things differently and experience things differently is really valuable, particularly in a situation where we are talking about the school bus program, where predominately the people who use the school bus program are younger people. So there is value in having younger people talk to us about the current system, because there may be improvements that can be made in the current system before you actually start looking at how you change the current system and what those impacts will be on the current system. So I think that is really valuable in terms of having young people involved in that process.

The point you made earlier in terms of when you move to a system, I think we need to be careful about what we look at doing in terms of not setting things up to fail. If we look at saying, ‘We’re going to open it up really big’, and then because it will take some time to build things up and get routes right and things like that, people sort of say, ‘Well, we did all these things, and nobody’s utilised it therefore it’s been a failure, so let’s just stop it and change it’ and stuff like that. So maybe there is a way of looking at doing it in terms of scaling up and starting with different cohorts of people and things like that as well. They are the sorts of things that we need to kind of weigh up. They are probably more comments rather than questions, but I am not sure if you want to comment on any of those.

Mr ANTOINE: I will make a couple of quick ones, Mr Tarlamis. Thanks for your comments. It is great to hear that the government is interested in working with young people on these initiatives. That is fantastic. Our core business at Youth Affairs Council Victoria is supporting organisations and government to meaningfully involve young people in these decisions, so it is fantastic to hear your enthusiasm.

I just might add one thought that has come to mind about the staged kind of rollout that we have not talked about so far. What we would like to see is a place-based approach to moving public transport forward. What we do not want to see are these decisions to be made at Spring Street, because people who work there do not understand what it is like in rural and regional Victoria, and it really makes sense for people in those regions to be making decisions about what works best. It might be that, rather than a staged rollout of cohorts consistent across the state, different regions take a different approach. It may not be staged in terms of time but staged in terms of how they are rolling it out as well. So that could be an approach there.

The CHAIR: Excellent. I have got a request from the secretariat that we get a screenshot. I did not want to just take the photo and spring it on everybody. If everyone could put on a smiley face for the secretariat. Secretariat, if you want to just take the shot now? I am not sure if they are taking the shot. Hopefully they have got one good photo. If they do not, that is fine.

Before moving forward—we have got a little bit more time—I will ask a short question, and then pass over to anyone that has got an additional question. I know Mr Gepp has got an additional question he wishes to ask also. Seb, you mentioned the barriers in place in terms of making it easier for the public to access the service. You made reference to the bus service. Do you want to elaborate on that slightly?

Mr ANTOINE: For sure. I think I have spoken to most of the points, but happy to speak in a bit more detail. So for the existing school bus program that is funded by the Department of Education and Training, obviously the main focus is students going from home to school and then back home again. But there is provision there for community members to get on the school bus. I think they have got different categories even if you are a TAFE student or an apprentice to if you are a general community member. But yes, there are a few forms to fill in, and you have got to make two verbal reference checks to the principal that is coordinating the school buses. So it is not a hugely onerous process, but there are some steps to go through to ensure the child safety aspect there.

But yes, the other thing is that the school buses do not work for everybody. As I mentioned before, the times and routes might not work, and we spoke to over 200 young people and youth workers to put this submission together, and I think maybe four or five of them at most knew about the opportunity to catch the school buses as a community member, not as a school student. So we think that is a real barrier, and it might just be an information campaign. I think in the submission we said something along the lines of: ‘All students who leave school, whether they leave school early or whether they graduate from year 12, get a bit of information that says, “You’re still able to catch the school bus if you’d like and if the routes work and if the timetables work. Here’s the approach to doing it”’. So there are a few issues there that we can address, but obviously more impactful would be delivering those extra routes and extra services.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much for expanding on that. I might pass over to Mr Gepp.

Mr GEPP: I am surprised that Seb made the comment that he does not believe that we are the font of all wisdom down in Spring Street; we like to think we know everything down there. But we have been put in our place, and quite rightly.

Just on that issue of non-students, did I hear you correctly earlier, Seb, say that we do not collect any data on the applications that are made, so we really do not know how big the demand is? I heard your comments just now about an education process, perhaps an information program, that might expand knowledge of it. But right now we do not collect any data. Is that correct?

Mr ANTOINE: Yes, I am surprised as you. The schools collect data, obviously, on the applications that are made and record the names of people who are accepted onto the school bus, for emergency planning and all of those kinds of things, but no, the department does not collect any information on applications, whether or not they are accepted.

Mr GEPP: Wow, okay. Well, that might be handy information for us to know. I just wanted to make a comment on the issue that Mr Tarlamis raised about the inclusion of young people in the design and application of the system, whatever we might recommend at the end of the day, because, I mean, the critical nature of that is that it should be a community-based approach, because the way that it might work for Claire, who cohorts in Bright, I can tell you and Mr Quilty can tell you, is going to be completely different to what is required in the Mallee, where the school bus stop is still 3 or 4 kilometres away from the child’s home. And that notion of a school bus captain or another adult or some other safety measure being in place—you can imagine if you are a young child dropped off in the middle of nowhere in the Mallee in the middle of the afternoon, a hot summer’s afternoon, and Mum or Dad or your carer is not there to collect you, that is what is giving rise to this anxiety. So that design of the local community and particularly the young people is going to be critical, I think.

The CHAIR: Sorry, Seb, would you like to respond?

Mr ANTOINE: It is fantastic to hear, Mr Gepp, and we could talk about youth participation all afternoon. I will not talk your ears off but would really welcome more of those conversations after this if you would like.

The CHAIR: Excellent. On behalf of the committee I just wish to reiterate how important our crucial youth voices are to these types of inquiry and to the policy debate more broadly. And I think we touched on really important and informative and helpful information in relation to our terms of reference but more broadly about autonomous organising spaces for young people, making sure they have a meaningful say in and contribution to policy development and decision-making more broadly in our state. So I really appreciate the feedback from both of you, Sebastian and Claire. And on behalf of the committee, I wish to thank you again for your submission and presentation.

Witnesses withdrew.