

**EDUCATION AND HEALTH  
STANDING COMMITTEE**

**AN INQUIRY INTO IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES  
FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIANS OF ALL AGES**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
WEDNESDAY, 9 MAY 2012**

**SESSION THREE**

**Members**

**Dr J.M. Woollard (Chairman)  
Mr P.B. Watson (Deputy Chairman)  
Dr G.G. Jacobs  
Ms L.L. Baker  
Mr P. Abetz**

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**Hearing commenced at 1.56 pm**

**SHEAN, DR RUTH**

**Director General, Department of Training and Workforce Development, examined:**

**MICALE, MS BRENDA**

**Director, Policy Planning and Research, Department of Training and Workforce Development, examined:**

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** On behalf of the Education and Health Standing Committee, I would like to thank you for your interest and appearance before us today. The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee in gathering evidence for its inquiry into improving educational outcomes for Western Australians of all ages. At this stage I would like to introduce myself and the other members of the committee present today. I am sorry, we have only two members today. I am the Deputy Chair, Peter Watson, and on my left is Ms Lisa Baker. Our research staff are Dr Brian Gordon and Ms Lucy Roberts, and Hansard staff, Judith Baverstock. The Education and Health Standing Committee is a committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia. This hearing is a formal procedure of the Parliament and therefore commands the same respect given to proceedings in the house itself. This is a public hearing, and Hansard will be making a transcript of the proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any documents during your evidence it would assist Hansard if you could provide the full title for the record.

Before we proceed to the questions we have for you today, I need to ask you a series of questions. Have you completed the “Details of Witness” form?

**The Witnesses:** Yes, I have.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Do you understand the notes at the bottom of the form about giving evidence to a parliamentary committee?

**The Witnesses:** I do.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Did you receive and read the “Information for Witnesses” briefing sheet provided with the “Details of Witness” form today?

**The Witnesses:** Yes.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Do you have any questions in relation to being a witness at today’s hearing?

**The Witnesses:** No.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** As you can see, we have a rather smaller committee today because other people had other commitments, unfortunately. WA faces some specific challenges in training given both the demands of the mining industry and its geography. What are the main challenges to the effective delivery of training in WA?

**Dr Shean:** That is a multifaceted question. The challenges for us, first, are being able to attract people into training, particularly in either a boom or a bust environment. So during a boom environment, which is a period of sustained economic expansion, which we are entering, it is very difficult for people to wish to forgo the wages they could get in the mining area and complete apprenticeships. The challenge, on the other hand, is during periods of downturn, as we saw recently with the GFC, it is hard for people to wish to employ apprentices. So there is always a tension between these two periods. The first challenge is the availability, firstly, of people who wish

to indenture, and the second challenge is those who wish to be indentured. Then another challenge for us is being able to afford training, particularly in the current environment where we have a state that is not doing well in terms of its GST receipts, and also, following last night's budget, confirming what we knew that we were going to see a \$75 million cut from the commonwealth government over three years, which will impact very significantly on training. The \$25 million cut per annum results in a loss of around eight and a half thousand training places per year; so, over three years, we are losing capacity of eight and a half thousand places from the system. Another challenge for us is people to train. Once again because the wages are high in the resources area, particularly for those highly sought-after trades which could work in that area, people, if they are well qualified, would probably rather work in the resource sector than train in our facilities. So we have challenges in terms of being able to attract and retain quality trainers. One of the challenges too is for those who are already in the system, keeping them up to date with the requirements of training; and we have seen quite a change from what was required previously to what is going to be required into the future. The other challenges that sit alongside of that are the challenges that face the state anyway in terms of the need for an expanded workforce. Our estimate is that by 2015 we will be short 76 000 workers. I do not think you have asked me for this but I could go on and tell you a whole lot about the strategies that we have to address that shortfall. That is not all this specific to training though.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** You were able to quantify the training places that have been reduced by the federal government's announcement last night. Are you in a position, knowing that the efficiency dividend for the state will also carry changes to your training place, to predict how that will affect your department?

**Dr Shean:** We are still working that out.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** I know it is pre-budget, but I am not asking you anything specific about the budget.

**Dr Shean:** Keep in mind, with the efficiency dividends, the statement has been made that we will not be reducing our service delivery, the impact for the current financial year will be \$9 million, so we are talking about a third of what the commonwealth has cut off. If you were—as we will not be doing—to translate that entirely into training places, you would be looking at around 2 200 or thereabouts. We will not be doing that, however. We will be looking at service efficiencies. The department has already been told that it has to cut its fleet costs and its travel costs. So there are a number of other things which are cut before we even start to look at training. Should it come to looking at cutting training, we will use this as an opportunity to look at those courses which do not contribute to the state's future, and there are some courses, without naming them, that we currently do fund where you would have to question how valuable they are to the future of the state. That is a reform which we have on a rolling basis anyway in trying to get better value for money at all times. In the last couple of years we have produced a model which we call the state priority occupation list. That looks at those skills which are required for the future of the state's development. It is not just for resource and construction industries, it is also human service workers. Anything which falls under this is high priority for us. Other high priorities are any apprenticeships and traineeships, any foundation courses, particularly for Indigenous students, and anything that is likely to attract people who otherwise would not be in the workforce into training and into the workforce is a priority for us. The areas that have a lesser priority are those which have very low completion rates, and those which perhaps might be done maybe as a post-career initiative—perhaps somebody going back post-retirement to learn a second language.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** When you mentioned foundation courses, does that include what used to be called CEAG courses?

**Ms Micale:** Language literacy and numeracy courses are a group within foundation skills.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** You do not see them being fiddled with as a result of this, do you?

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**Dr Shean:** They are our priority—to keep those in place.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** And the disability training courses that offer access to people with a disability?

**Dr Shean:** Courses that offer real training for people with disabilities would continue to be a priority. Indeed, in signing up to the new national agreement, which we have just signed, we are likely to declare people with a disabilities as a priority; and Minister Collier has been appointed champion minister for disability in the national scene.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** That is good news; thank you.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Ruth, you were saying that the federal government is cutting your funding over the next three years. Before you said that, you said you were battling to find people to fill the positions for apprenticeships and training. You obviously budget for a certain amount of training over a period of time. If you cannot get those people, do you transfer those funds to other parts of the training areas or what happens with that money?

**Dr Shean:** Can I correct you? If I said we were battling to get students, I said the wrong thing. There is always a tension between this, but, as far as I understand it, in the time that I have been chief of the department we have not had any trouble getting students enrolled. But, yes, we do have flexibility to move from the state training provider budget into the private market and vice versa. There are a range of demands within the sector, and if we find that we are getting a slackening of demand in one area we can certainly reallocate to another area. It is not as easy to carry across from one financial year to another, however. We actually operate on a calendar year, so we get some flexibility to deal with the year as it unfolds.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** So your financing is on a calendar year?

**Dr Shean:** Our appropriation and budget is on a financial year, but our financing to the colleges and the training sector is on a calendar year, so that gives us a little flexibility.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** You said that you needed strategies now that you have less funding.

**Dr Shean:** I did speak about the need for us to look at efficiencies within our area, and, yes, we are exploring—today we have been to look at cheaper office accommodation. We currently have some fairly expensive office accommodation in Adelaide Terrace–St Georges Terrace.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** You could shift to Albany; there is plenty of good property down there!

**Dr Shean:** I would very happily shift to Albany immediately. I would even be very happy to run a regional office there, but I am not sure that would be in the best interests of our metropolitan colleges and training providers at this stage. I spend a lot of time in the regions. On average, I do one trip or more per month to the regions, but I think getting back to the question you have asked me —

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** It is a good base to start with!

**Dr Shean:** At all times I think most government departments look at different ways to make savings throughout, and some of these are the standard savings, such as reducing fleet costs and reducing office costs. From our perspective though, one of the questions for us is around some of the services we run that do not necessarily constitute training places and the best use of money for us. So at all times, and particularly at this time of the year, we are assessing what we plan to do for the year ahead and whether it gives us value for money and whether the taxpayer is well served.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** What do you see as the priorities for WA in training and workforce development?

**Dr Shean:** The main priority is to ensure, with opportunities that are going to arise for employment in this state, that all Western Australians can be given the opportunity to take advantage of those. On the one hand, we have an obligation to meet the state's workforce needs; on the other hand, we have an obligation to make sure that all Western Australians have an opportunity to share in those

workforce needs. Given that we know we are going to have a labour shortfall, however, we know that we then have an obligation to use other strategies to minimise that shortfall. That includes, once our own population has had the maximum opportunity to avail itself of employment opportunities, looking at skilled migration as a second option. But there are other initiatives too. One is very much increasing participation of people from those traditionally under-represented groups, such as Aboriginal people, women to some degree and people with disabilities, to ensure that they have an opportunity to get into the workforce in jobs which are appropriately designed. Another strategy is with respect to the attraction and retention of staff. One of the problems here is that in the well-paid sectors attraction is not difficult, because people will move for money; they will not stay for money, but they will move for money. However, when you look at where our demands are for the years ahead—I think we are expecting, over the next four years from 2011 to 2015, highest growth in the health, community service and education sector—they for the most part are not highly paid jobs, so the retention of workers becomes very important. For those sectors to do what they can to retain workers is vitally important because otherwise we are not going to be able to staff our human services adequately.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Is it a concern to your department that after the boom there is always a bust? There is a huge number of young people who have given up proper training to get up there and work as labourers or unskilled workers, who normally would go through the trade system.

**Dr Shean:** You have asked me a philosophical question. Let me answer the reality of that, which is that our projections show that this period of sustained economic expansion is sustained. The modelling which we do—we get detailed modelling which we buy from Pit Crew, a workforce modelling agency—which shows that we are going to see constant demands over the next four years. We buy that on a quarterly basis, showing where the shortfalls are going to be, particularly for the resources and construction industry, and they continue to grow. You then get a projected loosening of demand after that, but that is simply because final investment decisions have not been made for those other projects which are in the pipeline. When you factor in those projects currently underway, those projects for which final investment decision has been given but are not underway or those projects planned and highly likely to go ahead, the rate of growth continues to increase for the foreseeable future. I am not able to give you a definitive statement about how far this will go, but I do know when the Premier speaks about this he speaks about the next 20 or so years. One of the problems, of course, in projecting that groups such as, I believe—my apologies to you if I misquote them—the Super Pit arrangement in Kalgoorlie only has to produce its plans for a certain period and what happens after that may well be commercial-in-confidence, but there are indeed plans to continue which have not yet been tabled or made public. The specific answer to your question is that I do not believe there is going to be a bust for some time. However, the point that you make is an interesting one when you look at what has happened in some of the very wealthy Middle Eastern countries, where people have been so wealthy that much of the labour is done by skilled migrants from outside and there is a fairly affluent welfare population within the country. Our concern would be that we did not end up like that as a nation. I do think that we are well placed as a training sector not to let that happen. The resource companies themselves have a strong commitment to Western Australians. The resource companies in particular have a very strong commitment to Aboriginal people, and the level of employment of Aboriginal people in the Pilbara, I think, in particular is around four per cent—no, sorry, higher than that—whereas for the state government it is lower. In fact, the private industry does better. Please do not quote those figures. I do not know whether Hansard can take them out, but they are not accurate, nevertheless. The Aboriginal employment stats are much better than —

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Would you be able to get us that as supplementary information?

**Dr Shean:** I can get you that. I would get it from the Chamber of Minerals and Energy, because I am quoting some data which they spoke about that recently. Will you follow up with that as a question on notice, please?

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** It will be in the transcript.

**Dr Shean:** I will certainly get you that. There is a very strong commitment from groups such as Rio, who I know with their Argyle diamond mine had a very good level of Aboriginal employment. That is now accepted across groups such as BHP, FMG, Woodside, where there is a very strong commitment to employment of Aboriginal people. To take that cohort in particular, I would hope that once one generation—to quote one of Andrew Forrest’s initiatives—was well employed in the sector that would then have a positive effect on subsequent generations.

[2.15 pm]

I would think that with at least 20 years of opportunity ahead of us, we are going to see a good outcome rather than a disengaged bust-type approach. What it means, however, after 20 years, I do not think our projections have begun to go through some of the subtleties such as you mentioned. Nevertheless, if you have a well-trained workforce, assuming there is work anywhere in the world, then increasingly, the global opportunities are expanding.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** It is interesting, the federal government was looking at bringing in Americans to work up north, and I have young people coming in to my office in Albany saying, “We can’t get work up there”. Those are individual companies, I suppose, but because they are so far away, it is a concern. I would like to see us use up all our resources first before we have 457s and overseas people coming in.

**Dr Shean:** Two things on that: first, Albany does have quite a strong fly in, fly out workforce already, and I imagine that will be expanding; it is a very desirable place to live.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Well, Rio has a direct flight down.

**Dr Shean:** Yes. The second thing is that DIAC is now considering introducing labour testing as part of the migration strategies, such that you need to be able to demonstrate that you are unable to recruit locally before you can recruit from overseas. Having said that, we get a lot of letters in our department that we assist the minister to respond to, with people saying, “I’ve been unemployed for five years and I can’t get a job anywhere”. It is very difficult, sometimes, to work out why some people are struggling so much if they are well qualified, when groups such as Rio, BHP, Woodside and Chevron have so much trouble recruiting. This is where training is vitally important.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Do you still have the overseas qualifications unit, or something like that?

**Dr Shean:** Yes, we do; we still have OQU, which operates out of our career centre in Murray Street, and we can assist people with assessment of their qualifications. There are, under the visa categories however, various other requirements, and these can be relaxed through enterprise migration agreements, although I think we are yet to have one issued for Western Australia. They still allow for some relaxation in age barriers; at the moment, you have to be pretty young to get in under one of these agreements, and also language barriers, to some degree.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Is there any problem with portability of trade qualifications across state boundaries, so that if you are a plumber in Sydney you can be a plumber in WA?

**Ms Micale:** No, there is no barrier to the portability of vocational education and training qualifications. There is a mutual recognition requirement in our sector that we use a national product in the national training packages that are delivered by nationally recognised registered training organisations. There is also in our sector a strong push for harmonisation and the removal of barriers to occupations, particularly around licensed outcomes; so, a hairdresser in WA is a hairdresser in Victoria.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** I spoke to a gentleman who lives in Albany who had been an electrician overseas, but his qualifications were not recognised in Australia. I am just wondering, when we are bringing in so many 457s from overseas—I know it is probably a federal issue—is it of concern to you guys that different qualifications, even in a place like the UK, are different from Australia?

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**Dr Shean:** My understanding is that most of them, particularly from the United Kingdom, are relatively transferable. Where people do not transfer, firstly, it is unlikely that they will be recruited through something such as an enterprise migration agreement, or that they would meet our state priority occupation list; they would need to meet our relevant qualifications. One of the services where our funds go, other than for direct training, is our workforce development centre placement services, where we provide career advice to a range of people. For the most part, it assists school leavers, but we also have one for ex-offenders and two for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The group that operates out of Mirrabooka, run by Mercy, looks at the very thing that you mentioned, which is people who turn up with, say, a qualification from India. There was one that we talked about some months ago where two geologists, a husband and wife, arrived from India, but their qualifications did not allow them to work as geologists. In both cases, work was found. In the wife's case, she ended up running the office; she actually moved out of direct geology but ran the office and was well paid for this. Her husband did subsequently get employment as a geologist and overcame whatever barriers there were; I cannot tell you what they were specifically.

**Ms Micale:** Often where licenced occupations do not align, it relates more to national standards for safe working practices, so in the instance that was quoted in terms of qualifications in the United Kingdom, there is a direct alignment with the City and Guilds trade qualifications and our own in many trades, and in fact there is a special recognition of that in the electrical trade. Often tradespeople may come to Australia as migrants and have had a gap, and as a result of that gap their skills may not be current. We do provide extensive services in the area of recognition of prior learning and also gap training, to assist in bridging those identified gaps and to restore currency.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** How do state training plans seek to address your priorities in training?

**Dr Shean:** Yes, all of our planning is consistent throughout, and our priorities, although we sharpen them as we go. For example, the state priority occupation list is a relatively new development. I think, through the history of the department, we have tried to look at the needs of the state and train accordingly.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** The reason I ask is that everything changes in Western Australia so quickly.

**Dr Shean:** It does change, yes.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** It changes quickly compared with any other state, and probably anywhere else in the world, with the mining boom and everything. Do you update this all the time when you are looking at your strategies?

**Dr Shean:** Yes, in one of our training documents, we had done modelling prior to the GFC that showed a slightly different profile to that which we have now. There is no doubt that the GFC has impacted on the levels of training at the moment, plus numerous other things within the state. We do remodel as we go and similarly, since we introduced the SPOL in 2010, we re-shaped that on a couple of occasions, too.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Was that —

**Dr Shean:** Sorry, the state priority occupation list.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** I have learnt something!

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Do you still have the State Training Board, Ruth?

**Dr Shean:** Yes, under the act we have the State Training Board and also the Training Accreditation Council, and they all feed into the different elements of the department's work.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** How is the department going about promoting and implementing e-learning initiatives, particularly for regional and remote students?

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**Dr Shean:** I have some data on this which is specific to school students, which I thought may be of interest to you. From 2007 to 2011, the number of—this is students generally—students in online learning increased from 1 173 in 2007 to 3 749. You have asked about our planning; that is consistent with our planning and yes, we are consistently increasing our online access. That is both by encouraging government providers to do this, but also private providers too.

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Does pick up the disabilities area as well, Ruth? To what degree are you investing in e-learning technologies to enable access by people with a disability?

**Dr Shean:** I cannot give you the breakdown specific to people with disabilities, but there are some of our providers who focus on disadvantaged students. SMYL has quite a comprehensive online approach now; it has its mobile van that goes right around the state, and —

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** If you have a student with a disability who is enrolled in hairdressing or plumbing, and that student has a vision problem or something or other, is it possible for them to be catered for?

**Dr Shean:** I need to make a couple of things clear: we do not provide very much training; we do some training for international students, which we then subcontract out to the colleges, so for the most part it is the colleges plus some private training providers. Yes, the colleges are all obliged to have disability access and inclusion plans, where they must make their services, as far as is possible, available to people with disabilities. My understanding is that occasionally there are things that simply cannot be adapted, and we will look to replace that unit with another unit if we possibly can, so we are as flexible as we can be.

**Ms Micale:** In addition to that there are a number of support mechanisms in the system that the department funds through the delivery and performance agreements; the disabilities services offices in each of the 10 state training providers. There is a substantial competitively allocated tender each year for the access tender, which again is addressing disability. We have a substantial investment in a program called the Equity, Innovation and Diversity program, which is the funding of non-accredited training. Often people with considerable disabilities or disadvantage, before they come to accredited delivery, need a non-accredited pathway, one that is more supportive and brings them from a very low base. We talked about foundation skills and we talked specifically about CGEA and other language literacy and numeracy programs. We have a qualification, which is a co-enrolment, which is the qualification in industry support skills. That qualification warehouses additional time for people with learning disadvantage and disabilities in order to give them more time on task. Often, the challenge for people with disabilities is one of being able to have an environment to hone their skills, and so we actually do provide substantial funding for public and private providers with that qualification. It is a co-enrolment.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Just following on from that, several witnesses have remarked to the committee that, particularly for disadvantaged groups, much of the training that is provided needs to be at a much lower level. For example, people need programs aimed at assisting them to complete the forms for applying for driver's licenses, basic literacy and numeracy training for youth or adults, or programs to build their self-esteem so they can believe they are capable of undertaking further training at the certificate level. Could you comment on how you respond to these needs?

**Dr Shean:** This certainly is an ongoing priority. One of the arguments is that it should not be the sole responsibility of the training sector, but the education sector carries a large part of the responsibility here. There is a lot of criticism that when students go into the workplace, the literacy and numeracy skills they received at school are not sufficient to allow them to go into the workplace. One of the challenges for us in shaping training packages is to ensure that the first units that students do have some relevant language, literacy and numeracy training components for that particular subject area. The issue that you raised, though, is more of a problem in some areas than others, and it might be useful just to talk about Aboriginal students for a while. You may be aware that a report tabled last week in Parliament looked at the provision for Aboriginal students within



our department, plus within four of the state training providers; I think we had Durack, Polytechnic, Challenger and Kimberley, plus our own Aboriginal workforce development centre services. One of the things that was quite clear from that report was that there is an enormous capacity for local response, and we would not seek to interfere with that—indeed, that is one of the advantages of having autonomous training providers. The way the Kimberley Institute does business in the Kimberley is very different to the way that central institute would be training in the city. The report showed that the capacity for the colleges to respond was very good indeed, and the capacity to be flexible according to the needs of the individual was very good indeed. I would commend that report to you; I know I am meant to give you the full title, but I am sure you can identify it from that—I had not anticipated speaking about it.

[2.30 pm]

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Yes, we have it.

**Dr Shean:** So that gives you a very good example of how some of the supports that are available from us in a generic fashion can then be used individually by the colleges to shape what is required. Certainly the issue you talk about is very much the case; we do not fund people to fill in driver's licences for other people who are literate, but we certainly fund the training for literacy.

**Ms Micale:** I mentioned that we use a national product, or a national curriculum, through the national training packages; we also have a suite of accredited courses that are developed for local need. Within those there are programs—Lisa mentioned the CGEA, which is actually a Victorian curriculum—that provide those first steps that are nationally recognised and accredited and do provide those basic building blocks—those foundation skills. Programs such as the CGEA go a long way to assist those with disadvantage to bridge some of those significant literacy and numeracy gaps, even as far as, using those approaches, building a program around an application for a licence.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Sure.

[Dr J.M. Woollard took the chair]

**The CHAIR:** My sincere apologies; I had something that I had to go and deal with—an emergency—I am sorry.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** The committee has been told that literacy and numeracy remain barriers to completion in the VET world. Literacy is supposed to be embedded into the VET curriculum but there are questions about how effective this is. As the VET sector is based on competencies, it may be more effective to make literacy a required demonstrable competency. Would you agree; and, if so, how would this be made to change?

**Dr Shean:** We could talk about this particular question all day. There is a lot of criticism that a VET pathway is a second-rate pathway as compared with an academic pathway, and Minister Collier is very much of that view that we should do whatever we can to make the two pathways amount to the same challenge and lead to the same sorts of outcomes. One of the difficulties is that by the time students get into, say, year 11 at high school and you divide them out into the VET in Schools kids plus the academic kids, you start to get a separation here. Brenda and I have spent quite a bit of time talking about this, and one of challenges then becomes making sure that you assess at an appropriate level, such that nobody gets an easy ride. One of the problems is allowing this engagement of students of any capacity to happen while they are at school. I have recently been appointed to the Schools Curriculum and Standards Authority, and this question of adequate assessment of all forms of units, if you want to call them, is something we are talking about already. Brenda, I understand, will be on one of the committees talking about just that issue, too. So you asked me a complex question and I am not sure that I understood it fully, but if it is a question of giving adequate credibility to the importance of literacy, language and numeracy throughout, then addressing this yet again in the upper years of high school through different approaches to assessment and accreditation, I think, goes a long way towards answering the problem.

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**Mr P.B. WATSON:** But it would be much nicer if it was addressed much earlier. That is not really a concern of yours—well, it is a concern of yours, but it is not a responsibility of yours.

**The CHAIR:** But you are saying it is included as part of VET that, whatever it is, they have to do so much on literacy and numeracy?

**Dr Shean:** No, I am not saying that all. Generally, the training packages have a component in them that skills the student up for those issues of literacy, language and numeracy relevant to that particular area. So if you are going to become a carpenter, you have to be able to measure the bit of wood you are going to cut up, and so those elements would be in there. The problem is that the way these things have been assessed in the past is not necessarily consistent with the way that academic subjects have been assessed, which means then that you are aiming for lower levels. So the scoping of the units in the package in the first place is important, and then the assessment is important, too.

**The CHAIR:** But if you are doing it for the skill or the trade that someone is going into—I can understand that you are asking for it there—that is reasonable; however, I am sure Peter mentioned before that when we were in South Australia we were told that the completion rates in some areas were very poor. As they are so poor, have you considered maybe having something more generic so that those people who do not complete these courses at least have something that will help them when they move into another area?

**Dr Shean:** There are generic foundation courses that people can do.

**Ms Micale:** A difference between WA and South Australia, if I may, is that our completion rate in apprenticeships at the moment is around 66 per cent, which is considerably higher than —

**The CHAIR:** We were told that the national average was 27 per cent, so, yes, that is pretty—oh, that was for VET; that is right.

**Ms Micale:** But our trade training outcomes are probably the highest. Part of that is that in WA we developed a program that supports literacy. Too often, clients who come to VET with language, literacy and numeracy barriers do not respond to the notion of taking them out for intensive or remedial work. Quite often they have had that their whole lives. One of the successes of competency-based training is that within the vocational context, as Ruth explained, the carpenter has a requirement to measure and perform mathematical calculations, and it is the vocational context that often allows that client to succeed. We have a program in Western Australia that was developed in Western Australia—developed at the department—which is the certificate of applied vocational study skills. That program offers the strategy of team teaching, so it does not isolate the student, it in fact supports them. It is done by employing a literacy professional in the vocational class and delivering to everyone in the class, looking at those aspects of the curriculum that do provide barriers through language, literacy and numeracy, and working out appropriate tasks and strategies to support the students. That is one of the strategies that we have developed.

**The CHAIR:** Is that unique to WA then?

**Ms Micale:** It was developed in WA; it is now spreading across the country and it is actually delivered in Victoria and other states now, too

**The CHAIR:** Congratulations, if that means that the results in WA are higher than elsewhere at 66 per cent. What can we do to help you get them up to 88 per cent or 100 per cent?

**Dr Shean:** Our completion rates are increasing all the time; we have had Auditor General scrutiny of this in previous years. Part of a good completion rate is making sure that people are doing the right courses in the first place. We are comfortable that we are continuing to make progress in pretty well all the areas we working in. For example, we are getting some very good results with Aboriginal employment and also Aboriginal enrolments, too, and better Aboriginal completions. We do not meet all our targets, but we meet the vast majority.

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**The CHAIR:** And where are the 34 per cent? The 34 per cent who are not succeeding at the moment, where are they?

**Dr Shean:** That is a good question, because this is an argument we have with Treasury from time to time; just because somebody does not complete a course, it does not mean they do not succeed. I have been waiting for some data on this and I have yet to find some because it is so hard to track. But I was speaking with somebody in Esperance a while back who was telling me that not all the students who leave their VET in Schools program, for example, are deemed to be dropouts because they go to jobs. They are very keen to get jobs, they are likely to be engaged once they get employment, and they are likely stay in it. Frequently, however, they will then, as a mature age student, come back into the system.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Some of that 34 per cent would be young people—I know it happens in my area—who will do maybe one or two years of an apprenticeship and find out that they can make much more money fly in, fly out.

**Dr Shean:** That is right; yes.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** We are not losing them to the system, they are getting jobs, but it does not show up so well on the statistics, does it?

**Dr Shean:** That is right. It is very hard to track that sort of data, because once they leave the education system—however you would define that—they are gone. I am trying to get my colleagues to do some work in Esperance or a regional town where we can track them easily. But I have had a few teachers specifically raise with me some of the problems they have where their completion rates do not look very good, but they feel they cannot hold kids up from taking jobs. I am sure there are some students who are disengaged and fall out when an option goes bad on them, and there are some very good strategies to overcome that. When we were at Safety Bay high school, last year Jenny Firth, the principal, was telling us that she has always a plan B. The student enrolls on plan A, but if plan A goes pear-shaped then they instantly move into plan B, and presumably that becomes plan A and there is another plan B unless something goes wrong there. So there is no sense of failure as such; it is just a sense of moving to a different course.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Does that student know there is a backup there when they start?

**Dr Shean:** Yes, they do. Another one of the good predictors of successful outcomes for young people is engagement with the family. If the family knows there is a backup, too, and something goes wrong, then the student is more likely to be able to transition to the backup.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** As soon as it gets tough will people drop out and go back to the other one?

**Dr Shean:** I cannot answer that question, other than to say that if kids are going to do well, they will do well in Safety Bay with the Peron Alliance group because the support among the staff is superb across a number of schools. As is always the case, there is no single predictor of good outcomes. We did quite an intensive study on this last year, and some of the things that do predict good outcomes are strong leadership from the principal; strong leadership from the VET coordinator; good buy-in from the parents, which invariably links to strong leadership from the principal and the VET coordinator; schools that are prepared to be flexible; and training providers that are prepared to be flexible, so they are not trying to match a grid like that with a set of training obligations that look like that—you get things meshing together. If you get all of those things together you tend to get very good outcomes indeed.

**Ms Micale:** I was just going to say that in addition to that, our sector is an adult learning sector and you need to understand that when adults enter the VET sector for qualifications with the mind to an occupational outcome, many occupational outcomes actually are not driven by full qualifications. So if you want to become a property manager there is a certificate IV in property management, but if you actually want to be employed by a real estate agent as a property manager the licence only requires you to undertake two or three units of competence, so they come in and they scoop up the

necessary skills they require the permit to work. Unfortunately, that, because of the data collection, scores us a non-completion, but in fact what it does is secure the client a job as a property manager. So it is how the data is collected. We count the qualification as a completion, and yet more and more clients of the system, and in today's labour market, come in to acquire that particular skill set they need in order to get the job or the promotion or the permit to work.

[2.45 pm]

**The CHAIR:** Is there funding within the education system—I am not sure whether it is 12 months, and I am sorry I missed your introductory comments in terms of how long the courses are—for year 13, so that those students who at the end of —

**Dr Shean:** You are asking the wrong group. If you are talking about the education system, not the VET system, then you need to ask the education department.

**The CHAIR:** But the VET system is attached. Is it not attached at all, the children who are —

**Dr Shean:** No, we have areas of common interest, and we put some \$24 million into the school system for VET in schools. But what happens within the school system for year 13 and whatever, I cannot answer; you would need to talk with the education department about that.

**The CHAIR:** All right, I thought that still came under your domain.

**Dr Shean:** We have all the responsibility for VET post-school, but I do not believe that we keep kids going into a year 13. That would be not consistent with what VET is all about.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Ruth, your submission also mentions four regional Aboriginal workforce development centres and one metropolitan AWDC. Could you discuss the roles of these centres and what successes and challenges they face?

**Dr Shean:** Certainly. When Minister Collier was appointed as Minister for Training, he was concerned, having grown up in Kalgoorlie, about what he saw as poor employment outcomes for Aboriginal students. He did a very wide consultation in conjunction with the State Training Board around the state, going to all major regional centres to find out from Aboriginal people themselves what they saw as the barrier to accessing training and then accessing employment and where the breakdown occurred. The document itself is called “Training together — working together”, it is available on our website and it was officially launched I think in June 2010. The general finding was that the services were probably there but it was very difficult to navigate your way around, particularly if you were coming from a disadvantaged household anyway. So, the challenge to us was to put in a system that joined the dots, rather than put more dots there. This would be a locally responsive system which could look different in every region. Indeed, that is what has happened. In March 2010, we opened the Aboriginal workforce development centre in the city and then subsequent to that we rolled out the centres in Geraldton, the Kimberley, Bunbury and in Kalgoorlie, I think was the most recent one. They are all quite different. They all have local advisory councils that determine what it is that they are going to do, but because the supports in each region are different—some are very strong in one region and not so strong in another—they work in different ways.

The task is not necessarily job matching, but clearly that is something that they do end up doing. As of the beginning of March, I think we had some 330 job matches for the five centres, but of course there are other groups that do job matching too. In Bunbury, one of the approaches there has been to get a greater understanding among the corporate sector as to what employment of Aboriginal people is all about, whereas in some of the other areas it is much more specific, putting this group in touch with that group. I was talking with Lyn Hazelton, who is our manager in our Kalgoorlie centre, a few months ago and she said that both she and Michelle Forrest, who works with her, are frequently stopped in the street by somebody saying, “Hey, I found so-and-so who would like to go and work. Have you got a job for them to do?” They say they do a lot of their business on the street in the local community, which is why it is a very effective model.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** That is why we live in the country; people talk to people in the streets, not walk away from them.

**Dr Shean:** That is right. That is very much the case that the way the centres work in the country are very different to the way they work in the city.

We have got these five as trials at this stage. Minister Collier is very committed to them. We do not, however, have ongoing funding for these into the out years. I think we have picked up some royalties for regions funding. We are currently doing an evaluation. Treasury have approved the evaluation model that we are using and so hopefully in due course they will look favourably upon this system. As I mentioned, we only have the four regional areas, so we have the other five yet to expand into, and their challenges are all different as well.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Are there any Indigenous people working in these centres?

**Dr Shean:** Yes, we have a very high level of Indigenous employment. For example, in the Kalgoorlie one, both of our staff there call themselves Indigenous. In each of the centres, there are different arrangements. Until such time as we can make the centres ongoing, we will not be making permanent appointments, however.

**The CHAIR:** Going back to those fantastic figures you gave us for WA's completion rates, can I just clarify that was a 66 per cent completion rate for VET students at TAFE?

**Ms Micale:** That is apprenticeships. They are at —

**The CHAIR:** Apprenticeships?

**Ms Micale:** Yes, apprenticeships —

**The CHAIR:** At TAFE?

**Ms Micale:** That is with public and private training providers both.

**The CHAIR:** But at that post-school level?

**Ms Micale:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** You said you are not responsible for the school level. Because in fact we are very concerned about the VET that is going on at that school level, can you tell us what the statistics are at the school level and then maybe we can look at what assistance you give when someone comes into one of your courses, maybe to make sure they are going into the right course, and possibly what further assistance can be given? If the figures are not quite as high with the school VET programs, then what more can we recommend to government that be done for those younger ages?

**Dr Shean:** You asked me lots of questions in that question.

**The CHAIR:** I am sorry, I tend to go —

**Dr Shean:** The first point is that when you have quoted me as saying we are not responsible for school level, we are not responsible for the school system and I cannot answer the education department's questions for them. We do, however, contribute to the VET in schools programs in a number of ways. We fund—our sector does some of the training. When I say “we fund”, we put \$24 million in, which is a very small proportion of what it costs, but we fund some specific areas. We certainly fund those areas of greatest interest to us. Our sector does some of the provision, but not all of the provision. Clearly, we are responsible for the framework under which the VET training is done —

**The CHAIR:** In schools.

**Dr Shean:** In schools, yes. So, it is the VET framework.

Moving on, though, you do need to keep in mind that just one of the success indicators—I cannot give you a detailed success indicator because, as I have mentioned, we do not have those data; we

certainly can look at completions, but they are a very inadequate assessment of success—is looking at those students doing pre-apprenticeships as part of their VET in schools program who then transition into an apprenticeship or traineeship contract. This is where you get the best outcome because you take advantage of the training that has already been provided. In the past four years we had 2 000 school students transition from pre-apprenticeships training into apprenticeship and traineeship contracts; 18 per cent of these were in regional and remote areas.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry, was that 2 000?

**Dr Shean:** Two thousand school students, yes.

**The CHAIR:** Do you know how many school students do VET at school?

**Dr Shean:** Yes. In 2011, there were 30 000 VET schools students reported in our provider collection. So, these are the data that the providers themselves provide. That is 35 per cent growth since 2007, so there has been significant growth since that date.

**The CHAIR:** But that is 2 000 out of 30 000 that have gone from school VET-based programs to —

**Ms Micale:** Just into apprenticeships–traineeships for just one program.

**Dr Shean:** In lots of other programs too. I am not sure that I have any other data here that is going to be particularly helpful to you.

**The CHAIR:** If by way of supplementary information you are able to provide us with, if it is 30 000 doing those courses in schools, it is great that 2 000 go straight into the other course, but where do the other 28 000 go?

**Dr Shean:** I know we cannot give you those data because —

**The CHAIR:** At all? You do not know where they are at all?

**Dr Shean:** No. We could tell you how many completed, we should be able to do that, but we cannot tell you when students do not complete where they go because we cannot track them.

**The CHAIR:** On Friday, our secretariat and I are going down to Manea college in —

**Dr Shean:** Bunbury; it is co-located with the South West Institute of Technology.

**The CHAIR:** It appears to us to be a wonderful new approach that they are taking down there to health sciences and would very much, I guess, fit with almost a VET approach to education. Would you care to discuss that model with us and whether you think that that model is a good model and should be maybe considered in other areas?

**Dr Shean:** I think you should discuss that model with them.

**The CHAIR:** We are on Friday.

**Dr Shean:** Other than to say, in every region you will find innovative approaches, which are locally responsive. One of our concerns, as with our Aboriginal workforce development centres, would be to say that one size fitted all; there was one approach which should apply. The issues which we believe are enduring across the sector, the critical success factors, are those things that I already mentioned, which is strong leadership from the principal, strong leadership from the VET coordinator, there being a fall-back position, flexible arrangements with the local training provider and the school, strong parental involvement. To say that a single model will work, I think, is a problem because then you spawn so-called other models which maybe do not have the same critical success factors underneath them. So, I would hesitate against giving—for a start, I do not know the state of every model that is there—any particular comment —

**The CHAIR:** But you are aware of the models and —

**Dr Shean:** There are lots of models that operate.

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**The CHAIR:** This is the only school that we have heard who is doing something like that, so could we maybe by way of supplementary information ask if you could—we do not want a full essay on them—identify where they are, then we can look at who is doing what.

**Dr Shean:** Once again, I think you are asking the wrong department. I think the sensible thing to do would be to ask the School Curriculum and Standards Authority—Allan Blagaich is the acting CEO there—to give you the top 20 VET providers with the best outcomes. They are the people who collect those data with their league tables. This is what we —

**The CHAIR:** Manea, then, is that considered a VET course?

**Dr Shean:** You will need to get the classifications from them because I do not want to step outside of our scope; it is not appropriate for me to do that. But if you were to ask them to give you the top 20 providers there and then you will get —

**The CHAIR:** School providers, you mean.

**Dr Shean:** You ask for the top 20 VET in school providers, those who get the best results, that is probably the best way to go.

**Ms Micale:** The top 20 VET in schools, so they work in partnership with registered training organisations, public and private ones, and Manea is just an example of a school that has a strong partnership and identifies off those critical success factors that Ruth mentioned. In every region you will find similar arrangements in different industries. Manea focuses on community services and health and education. You will find in Denmark, there is a trade training centre in Denmark that has an excellent program around mining, but you need to talk to the schools because it is the school who manages that partnership arrangement.

**The CHAIR:** We can certainly follow up with Allan then.

**Dr Shean:** In 2010, we did this; we took the top dozen and we went to look at those across a range of government and non-government schools. They were all different. The critical success factors were all pretty similar throughout. Another thing that was similar was that the people who made a success of it were working in partnership with others; there was not a single school that we saw just working on their own.

**The CHAIR:** And that is again those five key factors that you just mentioned earlier that they were —

**Dr Shean:** Yes, and a few other things too. One of the things —

**The CHAIR:** Did you do a report on that trip you did back in 2010?

[3.00 pm]

**Dr Shean:** No, I did not. I did that for my own personal development, my own professional understanding of what was happening. One of the things that you have not begun to talk about, which I think is relevant, is that when we speak about VET in schools, there are different cohorts. When we went to John Curtin college, the cohort we saw was the high-achieving kids, most of whom were going to go on to an academic future, but were also doing VET in schools courses too. That is the first category, if you like. They are the kids who want to do it all, who will succeed, and who, by the way, may end up with full university entrance capacity and decide to do a trade. Our apprentice of the year from the year before last, Emerson Lievense, did that. He was a very capable student who chose to complete his electrical trade and is now doing very well indeed.

The second cohort is the vocationally bound students who are always going to do a trade. Dad did a trade, mum did a trade; it is in the family blood, the family business—they were always going to do that. They were the kids who traditionally, after their junior certificate, left school and went to tech. There has always been that cohort there.

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The third cohort, which is very different yet again, is the group that you may call those at risk of long-term disengagement. We went to some of these schools. We went to Sevenoaks, which also has an excellent program. The sorts of supports that are given to the kids include things like meals and the capacity to stay overnight somewhere. You can see that the three groups are particularly different. The problem then with saying “one size fits all” is you will exclude two of those three groups.

In each region, there are groups that do this cohort well or that cohort well. I do not think we saw any school which did the whole lot well. One of the things we realised was important was the capacity for flexibility for enrolment.

**The CHAIR:** It is very much the principle of knowing the students and knowing the community and having the contacts in the community?

**Dr Shean:** Yes, that is a relevant point.

**The CHAIR:** If we go back to that 66 per cent again —

**Dr Shean:** Of apprenticeship completion?

**The CHAIR:** Of your TAFE completion.

**Ms Micale:** Of apprenticeship completion.

**The CHAIR:** Did you say you do not have a list of the courses of that 66 per cent?

**Dr Shean:** No. I said —

**The CHAIR:** If we are saying there is 100 per cent apprenticeships and 66 completion, can we have from you, by way of supplementary information, of that 66 per cent, 15 per cent was in this course, five per cent was this course, three per cent was this course, and, for the 34 per cent, when they did not complete, five per cent was this course and five per cent was that course? The reason I am saying this is because we heard that some courses have a much poorer outcome —

**Ms Micale:** That is correct.

**The CHAIR:** — than other courses. Why, if traditionally they have had that poorer outcome, are they still being run?

**Ms Micale:** Speaking within apprenticeship programs only, the total average for apprenticeships in this state is around 66 per cent. Within that group there are some industry sectors that have a completion rate that is much higher. Electrical, as a licensed trade, and plumbing, has a substantially higher completion rate. But we also know that there are some industry sectors that have a substantially lower completion rate.

**The CHAIR:** Hairdressing is one of them.

**Ms Micale:** Hairdressing is one—hospitality, commercial cooks. There are industrial factors that contribute to that. Not dismissing that, there can be issues with language, literacy and numeracy that the student may withdraw or not succeed, but we also know that working conditions, rates of pay, and other social and economic factors are much more important to the decision not to complete than some others. When you look at hospitality, you know that split shifts, weekend work, particularly poor remuneration in the first years of the trade, contribute significantly to a cancellation or a non-completion rate. Hospitality is probably one of the more extreme cases. Then you have the building and construction industry that in itself does not have a great completion rate. Part of that is because young people get poached off into higher-paying roles in associated industries or, indeed, an arrangement is made between the apprentice and the employer to abandon the training and work as a semiskilled worker. We do not keep data because this is an arrangement between the employer and the employee. We do not keep data. Much of our data is anecdotal; it comes to us through our field officers.

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**Dr Shean:** Do we do completion data by course breakdown?

**Ms Micale:** We do completion data by trade, yes.

**The CHAIR:** Could we have that data?

**Ms Micale:** Would you like something like the top five completing trades and the bottom five?

**The CHAIR:** The top 10 and the bottom 10.

**Ms Micale:** We can provide you with that.

**The CHAIR:** Can we have gender tied in with that?

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** You would pick it up from the trade, would you not?

**The CHAIR:** Not necessarily. Hospitality could be both genders, whereas hairdressing is likely to be predominantly female.

**Ms Micale:** The only trade that is not considered non-traditional for a female is hairdressing. All other trades are considered non-traditional for women. The take-up of women in trades is very low, even with hairdressing in there.

**The CHAIR:** What would your gender balance be for people doing the courses?

**Ms Micale:** That is something I cannot give you the statistics on, but something I could provide to you on notice.

**Dr Shean:** For apprenticeships overall you mean?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Dr Shean:** We probably do have that somewhere.

**Ms Micale:** We would have it on notice, yes.

**Dr Shean:** We could get that on notice. I do not have it with me.

**The CHAIR:** I think that would be interesting to look and see, particularly to see where —

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Ruth, you have your workforce development centres. They provide career development services to assist individuals of any age or point in their lives about making informed educational, training and occupational choices. Could you discuss the roles of these centres, particularly the eight regional centres? Actually, I have about four here. Have you got a good memory, Ruth?

**Dr Shean:** I better write them down.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** The eight regional centres; the centre for ex-offenders, where is it, is it accessible to regional ex-offenders, for example Broome; the centre for culturally and linguistically diverse client groups; how many people access them; and do you evaluate their effectiveness?

**Dr Shean:** Let us start at the beginning, the eight regional centres: we actually have eight main ones but they subcontract around. For example, in the Pilbara our main centre is based in Karratha but they subcontract Bloodwood Tree in Hedland which primarily has an Aboriginal focus there, but not entirely. In your area, for example, Barbara—what is her name? I always forget her name. At the workforce development centre, you have a fabulous one. I think they had a story in *The West* today in fact.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** I have not read today's *West*. Barbara—I know who you mean.

**Dr Shean:** Yes, we do have them in regions. They are very different in every region. The reason for our subcontracting rather than providing them ourselves is so that we can capitalise on local knowledge. In Geraldton, Leon Norris, who runs that one, also runs our ApprentiCentre. We have devolved our government apprenticeship system to them because they have such a good handle on how this is run. They are different in every single area. In Kununurra, I think we engage Wunan to

provide our workforce development centre. They have various groups with whom they work. They do have a focus on school leavers but they also will take anybody and give advice as requested. They do try to work in with Job Services Australia centres. They find that difficult. I know the culturally and linguistically diverse centre out at Mirrabooka finds it very frustrating where they are picking up roles and responsibilities which should sit with the commonwealth government, and in particular résumé preparation. That is the eight regional centres generally. I make a point of going to see them. The one in Esperance, for example, SMYL, runs out on Pink Lake Road, I think. That is a very, very effective little centre. They work very, very well with the high school too.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** What road is the Albany one on?

**Dr Shean:** It is the one behind York Street. If you go down York Street and turn left where the —

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Aberdeen Street and Serpentine Road.

**Dr Shean:** Is that what it is? Okay. I know I got lost —

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** You knew the Geraldton one; I just wanted to make sure you knew the Albany one!

**Dr Shean:** I do know; I have been to them all.

Onto the ex-offenders: I have not been to the ex-offenders centre in Moore Street, Perth, but I am pretty sure that is where they are. When I met with them, I met with them at Wooroloo. They were showing us some of their planning with people who were soon to be released.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Do ex-offenders in regional areas have access to that?

**Dr Shean:** They would do; although they are primarily based in Perth, I understand. I cannot give you an answer to that.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** So there is no access for them to go into any of your centres in regional areas to get the contact or personal touch?

**Dr Shean:** I am sure we would be happy to work across boundaries. Keep in mind, though, in places like Albany, Lidia Rozlapa has a very good working relationship with the Albany Regional Prison. I have been into the prison with Lidia last year for NAIDOC week to look at some of the offenders she was working with there. I think in regional centres, people are less likely to get lost in the system when they are released.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Then again, we get a lot of people released into the community in Albany who are from all over Western Australia. They are not just locals. We have not got that many bad people to fill the prison. They come out and they are in our community. That is of concern to the community.

**Dr Shean:** Rather than me giving you the answer to this through this inquiry, I would suggest that you probably talk to our career development centre. I can get somebody to give you a call through your electorate office, if you wish.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Thank you.

**Dr Shean:** Perth-based Outcare, I am sure, would be happy to provide guidance and advice but I do not know what their contracting rules are that we have set up for them.

Your third question was culturally and linguistically diverse groups: I believe there are two centres. Where is the other one, Brenda?

**Ms Micale:** There is Fremantle migrant centre and Mercy in Mirrabooka.

**Dr Shean:** They have a very broad brief, because not only do they help people to find jobs, but they help them find the things that are necessary to go with jobs, such as rental accommodation. They teach them how to care for their rental accommodation. They do quite a bit of training themselves. They have a group run by Maggie, who has a broad Glaswegian accent. She trains new Australians

in how to keep rental accommodation clean. Quite a few of those people then go on to work for cleaning agencies as well. Their scope is all nationalities and all forms of employment. It ranges from people who are completely unskilled through to people who are highly skilled but having trouble seeking employment.

Your final question, I have written down “how many” but I did not finish the sentence. Can you remember what your final question was?

**The CHAIR:** How many people access CALD?

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** How many people access, and how do you evaluate your effectiveness?

**Dr Shean:** Our provider data will be on our data system. In terms of how we evaluate, we did a large evaluation in 2009 where we went and talked with people from the respective communities. After that, we reshaped the way we provided services. We would evaluate annually to make sure that client targets were met, plus we do a periodic service review to ensure that the service met our broader needs.

**The CHAIR:** There were several other questions, and again my apologies for not getting there. Could we put those questions to you in writing?

**Dr Shean:** I am very happy to take questions in writing.

**The CHAIR:** Time is running on. I know Peter, in a moment, is going to give you a few minutes to sum up for us. I did not want any of those questions that we wanted to ask to get missed.

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Is there anything else you would like to add?

[3.15 pm]

**Dr Shean:** The only thing I want to say is that the definition of our department as a training and workforce development department has been a very useful approach. We have strengthened our links with industry. We have very strong links already with our industry training councils. As I mentioned earlier, our data, which we release publicly on our website and Minister Collier tables in Parliament from time to time, shows all of our trends pretty much going in the right direction. We get a few perturbations in the data. But we are seeing a growing respect for the role of training, a growing appreciation of the role that a trade can have for a person, and the comparatives in terms of capacity to learn that a trade can provide.

**The CHAIR:** We asked about gender. Could we also ask for age, because something else that we want to look at —

**Dr Shean:** We do have age profiles. I do not think we can give it to you by specific trade.

**The CHAIR:** The age for people entering and succeeding, because we want to see education become a lifelong learning experience. So what ages are you attracting, and has there been a change; and how do you get those older people to come back?

**Dr Shean:** There has been a change. There is now an increasing number of older people entering or re-entering the training system. Our concern with the most recent commonwealth government requirements is that we turn this back into a post-school system, which it was initially, and we have done a lot to expand it to a broad number of people to encourage people to change trades or to reskill, and we would be concerned with commonwealth reforms if we were to lose that flexibility.

**The CHAIR:** So you saying that their push is for it to become purely after school rather than across the age groups?

**Dr Shean:** If the targets were structured in that way, yes, that would be unfortunate.

**The CHAIR:** I just thought that age was important!

**Mr P.B. WATSON:** Yes, especially being an old man, I would agree!

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Thank you very much for your evidence before the committee today. The transcript of this hearing will be forwarded to you for correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within 10 days from the date of the letter attached to it. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, please include a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence. Thank you very much for your time today.

**Hearing concluded at 3.16 pm**