



EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mrs LM Linard MP (Chair)
Mr N Dametto MP
Mr MP Healy MP
Mr BM Saunders MP
Mrs JA Stuckey MP
Mrs SM Wilson MP

Staff present:

Ms L Manderson (Acting Committee Secretary)
Ms E Jameson (Inquiry Secretary)

PUBLIC BRIEFING—PORTFOLIO AREA BRIEFING

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

MONDAY, 14 MAY 2018

Brisbane

MONDAY, 14 MAY 2018

The committee met at 10.36 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I now declare open this public briefing of the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee by Jobs Queensland and the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting this morning and pay my respect to elders past, present and emerging. My name is Leanne Linard, the member for Nudgee and chair of the committee. With me today are: Mrs Jann Stuckey, the member for Currumbin and deputy chair; Mr Bruce Saunders, the member for Maryborough; Mrs Simone Wilson, the member for Pumicestone; Mr Michael Healy, the member for Cairns; and Mr Nick Dametto, the member for Hinchinbrook.

The committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and broadcast live on the parliament's website. All those present today should note that it is possible you may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings. I ask everyone present to please turn mobile phones off or to silent mode.

The purpose of today's proceedings is for the committee to receive an introductory briefing from Jobs Queensland and the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre. I remind committee members that our public sector witnesses are here to provide factual or technical information. Any questions seeking an opinion about policy should be directed to the minister or left to debate on the floor of the House. The program for today's briefing has been published on the committee's web page and there are hard copies available from committee staff. I now warmly welcome representatives from Jobs Queensland.

HENNEKEN, Mr Peter, Interim Chair, Jobs Queensland

SMITH, Dr Caroline, Executive Director, Jobs Queensland

CHAIR: Thank you for coming today and for your written brief to the committee. We are all very interested in the work of Jobs Queensland, and it is lovely to have the opportunity to hear a bit about what you are doing and to ask some questions. I offer you the opportunity to make any opening remarks and then we will have questions.

Mr Henneken: Thank you for the opportunity to appear and provide information on the work of Jobs Queensland. I have been a board member of Jobs Queensland since my appointment in September 2016 and the interim chair since 5 April this year. It has certainly been my pleasure to serve in these capacities. I am pleased to be here today to talk about the extensive work that has been undertaken by Jobs Queensland since its inception. I am here with Dr Caroline Smith, who is the executive director of the Jobs Queensland secretariat. I will provide some introductory comments and then hand over to Caroline to provide further information, if that is suitable.

Jobs Queensland is helping to plan for a skilled and productive workforce that meets the demands and future needs of industry. The Jobs Queensland Act 2015 commenced on 4 January 2016 to establish Jobs Queensland to provide independent expert advice to the minister on matters relating to future skills needs, workforce development and planning, and the apprenticeship and traineeship system in Queensland. The focuses of Jobs Queensland are: to give advice to the minister about the skills it anticipates will be needed for particular industries in regional areas; future workforce planning and development; and the apprenticeship and traineeship system in Queensland.

Jobs Queensland's advice is informed by strong consultation with industry, community, regions and employee and employer and union representatives. A skilled workforce is able to work productively by undertaking more complex and dynamic tasks, respond to evolving environments with innovative solutions and attract investment from new and innovative industries. Jobs Queensland is contributing to a skilled and productive workforce through the delivery of the following projects: the Advanced Manufacturing Skills Training and Workforce Development Strategy to support the advanced manufacturing industry road map; targeted advice on the 2017-18 annual VET investment plan, which was released on 25 August 2017; a Queensland Tourism Workforce Plan to inform VET investment priorities and to meet a key commitment under the Advancing Tourism Strategy of the

government; advice on the implementation of the \$4 million Training in Emerging and Innovative Industries Fund to support industries impacted by digital disruption to upskill existing workers; research to support the development of a workforce report and action plan for the Fraser Coast region; a review of the Queensland apprenticeship and traineeship system; and the Ipswich manufacturing environmental scan to support the development of a workplace report and action plan for manufacturing in the Ipswich region.

Within that there are some major projects. The first major project is around *Positive futures: apprenticeships and traineeships in Queensland*. Delivering on a key legislative function, Jobs Queensland undertook a review of the apprenticeship and traineeship system in Queensland. In November 2016 the *Positive futures: apprenticeships and traineeships in Queensland* discussion paper was launched by the then minister for training and skills. An industry advisory group was established to provide advice on the development of the project. Extensive industry and regional consultation focused on what works well within the apprenticeship and traineeship system in Queensland and what could be improved. Feedback on the Positive Futures discussion paper resulted in 292 survey responses and 33 written submissions, and face-to-face consultation involved 26 regional forums attended by 404 stakeholders.

As part of the review, Jobs Queensland also sought advice from stakeholders including the department of education and training at the time, TAFE Queensland, ACPET and business and industry representatives on how the current funding model impacts on the choices that employers, students and employees make in relation to apprenticeships and traineeships.

The Queensland tourism industry is experiencing significant growth and will continue to grow over the coming decade. By 2020, around 20,000 additional skilled and unskilled tourism workers will be needed in Queensland. This provides industry with an unprecedented opportunity to further establish itself as a leading contributor to Queensland's economy and a major source of employment. The Tourism Industry Advisory Group helped to guide the development of the plan, which included 29 consultation sessions across Queensland. The Queensland Tourism Workforce Plan is the industry's response to the challenge of ensuring that employers have the right workers with the skills and training needed to take advantage of these opportunities.

The core themes identified in the plan are to: build the tourism industry's profile and attractiveness around careers; build a sustainable labour pool, particularly around the local workforce; build the industry's capacity to grow and flourish skills; and build the industry's capacity to address local issues and develop innovative solutions. Jobs Queensland is currently finalising 13 regional tourism workforce plans which reflect the 13 tourism regions.

The third major project is advanced manufacturing. Jobs Queensland has delivered the Advanced Manufacturing Skills, Training and Workforce Development Strategy to support the advanced manufacturing industry road map. In developing this project Jobs Queensland undertook an environmental scan as well as a survey of employers, a survey of employees and regional forums. Over 800 unique individuals provided input to inform the advanced manufacturing strategy. The project was overseen by the advanced manufacturing industry advisory committee. The strategy was delivered to government in February 2018. I am happy to continue, Chair, but I want to check to see what you would like me to do.

CHAIR: I think you said Dr Smith wanted to make some comments too; is that right?

Dr Smith: I can give some more detail on some of the other projects that are currently underway if the committee is interested?

CHAIR: Committee members, would we like to hear some more opening statement or would we like to move to questions?

Mrs STUCKEY: Could we have an overview of those projects? We do not really need the details unless there are any that have not already been mentioned by Peter. Was Dr Smith going to elaborate on what Peter already said?

Dr Smith: I was going to be talking about some different projects that Peter has not mentioned already.

CHAIR: I am mindful of the time because I know that we want to ask questions. Would it be okay, Peter, if we move to Dr Smith now to make some comments? Some of your information is likely to come out with questioning. I apologise that time is always limited. I know that there is a lot you are doing.

Dr Smith: I am pleased to be able to present to the committee a briefing on some of the projects that are currently underway. The first is anticipating skill needs. One of Jobs Queensland's responsibilities is to provide advice to the minister on anticipated skills needs for industries and regions.

Jobs Queensland is leading an economic modelling research project to assist in anticipating the skills needed by industries and regions. The research includes economic modelling of plausible scenarios developed with advice from regions and industries. This project will assist Jobs Queensland in providing advice about anticipated skill needs and also feed into other programs of work such as workforce planning and advice on VET investment. The outcomes of this project are currently being finalised.

The next project I want to talk to you about is the workforce planning hub. Jobs Queensland is also developing a workforce planning hub to provide industry and regions with tools to match their workforce with business and industry needs. Workforce planning is a continuous process of identifying a workforce's existing skills, desired future skills and the gaps and developing strategies and actions to close those gaps. For businesses, it allows businesses to respond quickly and more strategically to change as business managers can recognise emerging challenges in the market, workforce and business, plan for future workforce requirements and build workforce skills to support the achievement of business product and service delivery now and in the future. The first phase of this project focuses on small business, and this project will continue to evolve.

Place based workforce planning and development is another that I want to raise with the committee. Jobs Queensland is committed to developing place based approaches where industry, at a local level and supported by government, is equipped with the right tools and capacities to develop innovative employment strategies and meet its local workforce needs. Partnerships developed using place based approaches can connect local leaders, businesses and industry. At a local level this connectivity leverages local resources, expertise and knowledge to develop shared local responses to workforce structural adjustment, local economic development and productivity.

Projects that are currently being undertaken in this area by Jobs Queensland include, in Ipswich, the development of a workforce report and action plan for the manufacturing sector in the Ipswich region. This project has included the development of an environmental scan to provide a profile of the current and future workforce as well as interviews with manufacturing employers to support the development of an action plan.

In Townsville, Jobs Queensland is working on the development of a Townsville workforce plan in partnership with Townsville City Council. To date, this project has included an initial supply and demand analysis of the Townsville workforce and an employer expo in Townsville on 22 February, in partnership with the Townsville chamber of commerce and the federal government Department of Jobs and Small Business. Also, the Jobs Queensland board met in Townsville on 6 April and hosted an industry breakfast which was attended by more than 50 representatives from local industry, peak bodies, employers, federal, state and local government as well as community organisations.

The last project I mention to you is in relation to the Fraser Coast. In September 2017 the then minister for training and skills launched the research report *Growing opportunities in the Fraser Coast: informing regional workforce development*. This research was the outcome of an innovative partnership between Jobs Queensland, TAFE Queensland and the CSIRO to support the development of a workforce report and action plan for the Fraser Coast region.

CSIRO undertook the research report, drawing on literature reviews, employment data and stakeholder interviews to reveal how the demand for and supply of skills is changing over time in the region. The report focuses on identifying employment patterns and skills in demand to maximise future economic opportunities for workers and businesses on the Fraser Coast. Jobs Queensland is working closely with the Fraser Coast regional advisory committee, which includes representatives of the council, education providers, three local chambers and employer representatives, to finalise the workforce plan and support the local actions to deliver the plan.

CHAIR: Thank you for providing us with an in-depth understanding and more detail about the work of Jobs Queensland. We will kick off with questions. I am sure we will have many. In your opening statement you actually answered a number of my questions with regard to the hub and the economic modelling you are doing. You just mentioned that that has not been finalised. I appreciate that you are probably somewhat constrained in terms of what you can talk about in that regard.

We are all unashamedly focused on our local electorates and communities. My electorate has a very large manufacturing sector in it. I do notice that Rohan Webb is on your advisory board. He lives in my electorate but also represents a group of employees who are significant in my community—that is, those in broad based manufacturing.

There is a big move, and there has been a big move, to advanced manufacturing. I am always incredibly surprised and proud to see what is happening in my community. Could you expand a little on the transition to broad based advanced manufacturing and what your environmental scan showed in terms of how successfully people are transitioning to that, or what is happening in our manufacturing sector?

Mr Henneken: The projections from both our own work and the work of department of state development does show a growth in employment in manufacturing over the next five to 10 years. Manufacturing is changing. There are obviously some base activities like making cement, working in abattoirs and so forth, but there are a number of people who are starting to use the new technologies, whether that is printing technologies or computer based arrangements. That does create a range of issues around skilling. People need upgraded skills. They need to make sure that their initial training is broad based so they can build on that. I will get Caroline to add some points about the themes that came out of our advanced manufacturing study.

Dr Smith: Some of themes that came through the study were really picking up on that notion of needing to upskill the workforce. There are transitions that are underway. It is important to have the skills base to reflect that. Often what we see is that there are different tasks required within particular jobs and, even if there are jobs that change in some areas, there are often opportunities that open up in other areas. Having support for those transitions for the workforce was a key theme of the work.

CHAIR: There are a lot of very passionate people in this industry who work in my community. My concern is whether they are being left behind. Are we doing a good enough job? Do we understand well enough how to make sure that they are finding opportunities in this move to advanced manufacturing and not being left behind as some traditional industries are changing, evolving and struggling to be competitive?

Mr Henneken: In a sense the government has the advanced manufacturing strategy to make sure that Queensland industry participates in the new part of manufacturing. Obviously the mass produced things will take place in China and those sorts of places. There is so much more opportunity with technology to tailor products to individual people.

You are right: that does mean the workforce has to adapt to change and pick up new skills. One of the things the government did in its previous term was have a fund for training in emerging and innovative industries. We are now getting some of that money out there. Some of that money will be provided to the manufacturing sector for a range of activities such as upgrading workers in terms of new technology and upgrading supervisors and managers in terms of understanding how the new technology can be used for marketing and a whole range of other activities. I might ask Dr Smith to address whether the themes that came out of the advanced manufacturing project added to that.

Dr Smith: Probably one other theme that I think is important to mention is that the workforce in manufacturing is an ageing workforce. Over time there is going to be quite a strong replacement demand as some of those workers leave the industry and there is a need to attract people into the manufacturing workforce. There have obviously been a lot of representations in the news and other places about the decline in manufacturing. The Queensland manufacturing industry is actually quite strong. Its profile is quite different from those of other states. The industry is certainly concerned about attracting new people into the industry over time.

Mrs STUCKEY: Thank you, Caroline and Peter, for giving us this briefing. It is informative. Are you able to tell us what your budget for 2018-19 will be? Is it still going to be around \$10 million?

Mr Henneken: I might get Dr Smith to go through that. Are you asking about the budget in 2018-19?

Mrs STUCKEY: Yes.

Mr Henneken: The budget for 2018-19 will be set as part of the budget process and it will be released in about a month's time. All the program statements will be released as part of the budget.

Mrs STUCKEY: Thank you. I have heard a lot about some of the programs you have underway. Do you track specific job creation for those programs? If so, how do you go about measuring and tracking that? What sort of conversion do you get, or what measuring tools do you have?

Mr Henneken: Our role is primarily as an adviser to the minister and to the government. If the government has accepted the recommendations, that is a matter then for the department and for the department to track the impact of those recommendations. We are purely an advisory body. Having said that, we get extensive input from the industry, employers and unions. The number of people who have been engaged in advisory activities on advisory boards or who have been consulted and so forth is very extensive.

Mrs STUCKEY: Just to clarify, you cannot measure or say how many people have successfully found work as a result of these programs?

Mr Henneken: As I said, we do the analysis as to what might make a difference in particular industries. We get advice from industry people and then, based on our own consideration, we provide advice to the government about things it might change or things it might implement. If the government accepts it, the implementation is a matter for the department.

Mr SAUNDERS: The Fraser Coast inquiry seemed to be centred more on Hervey Bay, with education facilities. What was done in Maryborough city with regard to manufacturing? We are in a transitional change. For 21 years Maryborough city never moved ahead with the new economy, with new manufacturing. As you know, a lot of people still thought we built corvettes and steam trains when the economy has moved and manufacturing has moved. What was done in Maryborough specifically with the CSIRO report? By the way, it is a good report.

Dr Smith: Thanks for the question. The initial work by CSIRO had a very strong focus on the opportunities that domestic migration and the ageing population would have on a whole range of different sectors within the community. It also recognised manufacturing. I would say that, through the work of the advisory committee that we have established, manufacturing is a key priority area. Strategies around supporting skills and the workforce in relation to manufacturing are being looked at through the committee.

Mr SAUNDERS: Is this advisory committee the local advisory committee?

Dr Smith: It is, yes. It has the three local chambers, it has the council, it has education providers and it has some industry representation in specific industries including manufacturing.

Mr SAUNDERS: I would like to talk to you about that later. Digital interruption is what worries me. You were talking about small business. I was in retail for many years and had a lot of retail outlets. My major concern—and this came up in the report—is that retail has been affected heavily because of digital interruption. I know that is going to be hard to combat, but is there anything in place to help retail combat digital interruption?

Mr Henneken: There are probably two things that I can say about that. The first issue is that small business is part of the portfolio and components of the department of state development. They are the units of the government that have the responsibility for industry development. In terms of the skills issue, earlier I mentioned the training in emerging and innovative industries. The funding round for that program is underway at the moment, but I am aware that a number of retail projects will get funded. That involves a whole range of things about using the internet for sales, the efficiencies available through linking your cash registers to your analysis of sales and so on. They are two issues that I am certainly aware of.

Dr Smith: CSIRO undertook research that identified some different scenarios for the region and digital disruption was certainly one of those. It identified in particular the potential impact on retail. On the upside, an increase in population was also projected and is expected to occur. In many ways that has a counterbalancing impact on industries such as retail and, overall, those service sector areas and occupations were expected to be quite strongly positioned.

Mrs WILSON: Can you advise how many full-time staff you currently have working with Jobs Queensland?

Dr Smith: We have 17 full-time-equivalent staff and one trainee.

Mrs WILSON: What is the mandate that you have received from the minister in relation to outcomes—where we are heading—with Jobs Queensland?

Mr Henneken: As I mentioned earlier, our mandate is set out in the legislation. Our role is to provide advice to the minister about the skills that we anticipate will be needed for particular industries and regional areas. At the moment we are finalising a large econometric study of the economy that projects the number of jobs in industries and regions for occupations, future workforce planning and development. We have gone through some of those activities that we were involved in. Fraser Coast was one but Townsville is another.

Mrs WILSON: You have been talking about the current projects that you have on the Fraser Coast and in Ipswich and Townsville. Are you able to advise whether you have any planning underway for my electorate of Pumicestone, which covers the Moreton Bay Regional Council, where there is quite a high level of unemployment and upskilling needs to be done to ensure the community is able to get jobs?

Mr Henneken: The work program for Jobs Queensland is currently being discussed with the minister. We have put a proposal to the minister and she has some ideas as to what she wants to do over the next 12 to 24 months.

Mrs WILSON: Will you be able to advise whether the Moreton Bay Regional Council area is one of those areas that is being considered?

Mr Henneken: We have not finalised our discussions with the minister.

Mrs WILSON: Thank you for that.

Mr HEALY: Thanks very much. I am finding this a very enjoyable topic. I get what your charter and responsibilities are. If I were investing in the stock market or businesses, I would be reading a lot of your reports, because you have to predict what our labour requirements are going to be in the future. Caroline, you are spot-on: in a lot of the discussions that we have in business we look at our existing labour force and ageing and take those components into account. From the manufacturing perspective, particularly with the mechanisation, it is a very different world. That is my statement. I get what you are doing. Peter, from a personal perspective, I am more than happy to give you my background. I notice that you are an AM. I am an inquisitive person. I am interested in your background. What did you do?

Mr Henneken: I spent about 40 years in the Queensland government. I retired from the government in 2009 and I have stayed active. I am very proud: I have been in the labour market for 50 years. In government, I ran the department of employment and industrial relations. I spent most of my time in aspects to do with the labour market—when I did something wrong, I was given industrial relations—workers compensation, workplace health and safety, employment programs, training and so forth.

Mr HEALY: That is good, because that gives me an understanding. I have done 36 years in the tourism industry and a range of other areas. That gives me an understanding of who is heading the organisation. Caroline, from your perspective, the government comes to you, you identify certain areas and you make recommendations. Are the documents that you provide to the government in consultation with trades picked up? Are they utilised? Are they effective?

Dr Smith: There are a number of areas where Jobs Queensland's advice has been taken in account. For example, the advice that we provided on training in emerging and innovative industries was advice that we provided to the minister and that has subsequently been implemented as part of that program. We also provided advice on the expenditure in vocational education and training and it has been adopted.

Mr HEALY: Thank you very much.

Mr Henneken: You mentioned tourism. The chair of our advisory committee was Daniel Gschwind.

Mr HEALY: I know Daniel very well. You have a good source of information there.

Mr DAMETTO: Peter and Caroline, thank you very much for coming in this morning. I appreciate your time and your briefing. My question is about a trade shortage in Queensland and especially in Townsville, which is part of my electorate. I attended the jobs expo on 25 February. I thought it was great. It was attended by both sides of politics at the federal and state levels and they celebrated how we have reduced our unemployment rate to 8.5 per cent, which is great. I had a meeting with a key board member of Townsville's chamber of commerce. With the training packages that are happening in Townsville at the moment, Jobs Queensland believes that we will not have a trade shortage. We have about \$4 billion worth of government and non-government works in the pipeline for Townsville. The chamber of commerce is very concerned that Jobs Queensland has its numbers wrong and that we will have a trade and skills shortage. Are you able to comment on how Jobs Queensland will be happy to address these concerns?

Mr Henneken: I will let Dr Smith go into detail about the work that we are doing in Townsville. We had a breakfast workshop there recently.

Mr DAMETTO: I went to that as well.

Mr Henneken: There is a lot of enthusiasm for activities in the Townsville area. As you mentioned, one of the tricks is to get all the pieces of government working together—the federal government, this department, the chambers and so forth. We have recommended to the department that there is what is called a regional RSIS.

Dr Smith: Regional Skills Investment Strategy.

Mr Henneken: Regional Skills Investment Strategy. That actually gives an officer to a particular region. The way we have suggested the department use that officer is in part to do with linking all the pieces together: the training providers, the employment agencies, the employers, the local governments and so forth. It is interesting: when we were up there and there was talk about trade shortages, we got into a cab and the driver was an ex-boilermaker. There are—

Mr DAMETTO: My roots are also in trades and manufacturing. I am a fitter boilermaker by trade. I acknowledge that there are a lot of tradespeople in the region who are still looking for work. A big problem that we are seeing in a lot of the manufacturing firms around is that the good tradesmen and the good, skilled people have had to move out of town because of a lack of work in the last five to 10 years. The trades will come from places like Charters Towers, Ingham and the Burdekin region but they are thinking, 'We're just going to exhaust that labour force before we actually fill all these roles.' It is a real worry. It might be worth having that person on the ground to look at the numbers again and maybe address the concerns of the chamber.

Mr Henneken: The chamber is part of our processes. Construction Skills Queensland has done some projections for that area. Caroline, do you want to add to that?

Dr Smith: I am certainly aware that there are a number of different projections for the construction industry and some of the occupations within that industry. I mentioned in my comments that we have done some initial work on a supply and demand analysis. We are continuing to work on that, and that particular area is one that we are continuing to look more closely at. Often you will get different projections and numbers, so we identified the need to look closely at that. One of the things we do understand is that there are some pressures that are coming locally from demand from interstate. That certainly is something that we do acknowledge, and we will continue to work on this area as we continue to work around the workforce plan.

CHAIR: The time for questions has expired. On behalf of the committee I thank you again for coming and briefing us further on the work of Jobs Queensland. I appreciate that your website also has some very good resources, and I am having a look through that. We genuinely appreciate having you here to answer questions that, as we have just seen from the member for Hinchinbrook, are relevant to our local areas. We do not always get that opportunity. Thank you. We really appreciate your time.

Mr Henneken: Thanks, Chair. Thanks, members.

ANTHONY, Mr Phillip, Chief Technical Officer, Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre

GRIFFITHS, Dr John, Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre

CHAIR: Thank you for joining us today. Thank you both for also providing written information before you came today to assist the committee to be across your purpose. I invite you to make a brief opening statement, if you would like to, and then we will open to the committee for questions.

Dr Griffiths: Thank you, Chair and committee, for welcoming us here today. Perhaps I could summarise the briefing paper we sent across. We are very pleased to provide this briefing paper. QTAC was established by the Queensland universities in 1975 to provide a one-stop shop for admissions across postgraduate and undergraduate predominantly in the state but extending into northern New South Wales as well. We recognise that students do come from that area and we have ambitions to have a wider Australian presence as it is well recognised that students are drawn to good-quality programs in Queensland from other states as well. We process around 75,000 applications a year and make offers on about 1,700 tertiary programs. We are owned by the Queensland universities and the board comprises representatives of the universities.

As committee members would be aware, up until now in the state we have been using the overall position, the OP, as a measure of performance. Shortly we will be moving towards the ATAR, the Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank, which is used in all other states and territories throughout Australia. Principally, that involves moving from a 25-point scale to a 2,000-point scale. Essentially, Queensland is aligning itself with the rest of Australia and we have looked closely at what other Australian states and territories are doing in designing the ATAR. As part of that change, the calculation of the ATAR will transition from the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority through to QTAC as an agent of the universities, which again is consistent with what occurs in other states.

There are some changes with the ATAR moving forward. It will comprise five subjects, or five inputs. A big change will be that it can be four general subjects and one applied subject or VET subject. Previously, VET was not considered as part of the overall position. We recognise that, especially in Queensland, VET is a major component of school and it should be recognised in the ATAR. We have, again, carefully looked at what other states and territories have done and made sure that they will be happy with having VET included in there—and they are. VET will also of course be a stand-alone qualification and universities can admit students to programs, as they do now.

We have been actively involved in communication, in terms of QTAC-specific communication, with the schooling community, with a range of stakeholders—they were outlined in the briefing paper—and with the QCAA. We have been on the road with the QCAA around the state a couple of times. That will be starting again next week as we start to engage right across the state with the school sector in particular but also the wider community around what will be moving forward. At a QTAC level we have also been engaging with parents to make sure they understand the program. As a parent myself, I can understand the nervousness that some parents have as we transition through, especially considering the program is going to take a couple of years, so we do not want to undermine those who are in the system now. As I say, we work very closely with the QCAA, and that has been a good partnership. We have had wonderful support from them and the department.

Finally, we have taken an opportunity to launch a new product which we have labelled My Path, a planning tool that can be rolled out for year 10s that will help them choose their senior subjects and check their eligibility for ATAR. We do not want someone getting towards the end of year 11 or year 12 and finding out they thought they were on an ATAR path and they are not, and they are satisfying the entry requirements for tertiary education programs. Again, we have worked closely with the state, the Catholic and the independent sectors in rolling this out, and it seems to have a reasonably good take-up. It is a reasonably new program, but it is largely to engage students early on in year 10 about their options and so they can make good, informed decisions as they move forward. That is probably a snapshot of the brief that I put together.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. You may have missed my opening comments, but as I thanked the previous witnesses from Jobs Queensland I also thank you for coming. This is a great opportunity for the committee. We are a new committee—as obviously all the committees are in the parliament—and are just getting across our particular subject area. I think it provides a great opportunity to understand and have that opportunity to ask you questions about our particular policy area. Obviously your work is very topical at the moment, with significant change, but it is also very important. We thank you for coming along and giving us this opportunity to deepen our understanding of what you are doing.

Mrs STUCKEY: Thank you very much for coming along, gentlemen. Seeing as we are meeting with you, I am interested to know whether you have met with the new minister yet?

Dr Griffiths: We have not met with the new minister. We did invite her to come to the My Path launch and to have some discussion, but unfortunately due to other circumstances she could not meet.

Mrs STUCKEY: Thank you. We feel very privileged, then. I am fascinated with My Path as well. Could you, in a nutshell, say what brought us to have that? It says here that it is the first of its kind for Australia. It certainly sounds like a very useful tool. Some, of course, would say that year 10 is perhaps not as early as year 8 when we should be starting to get them to think a little bit about their grades. How did it come about?

Dr Griffiths: Basically, it came about from some internal discussions we had had at QTAC. We were also looking to see how we could strengthen the advice that was given to students early on. I do take note that year 10 is quite a long way down the track. Having a couple of sons myself, in grades 8 and 10 at the moment, I think early intervention is extremely important. We wanted to try to digitise some of the existing material that we had, so we put out a prerequisites guide—a book that goes out in year 10. We wanted to make that an interactive tool. I also had a reservation about making sure that there was really good advice being given to students, particularly around subject selection, so they understood they would be meeting the prerequisites and meeting the ATAR eligibility. The discussions we had with parents, schools and students were that they wanted to access something electronically rather than look at a range of material in written form and to bring it together into one portal. That was the idea of where we wanted to push with My Path.

Mrs STUCKEY: I hope it is a great success. Given the scope of the subjects permitted, will the new senior assessment have any impact on the international baccalaureate, given that the subjects at the moment are included in sitting for that?

Dr Griffiths: I think the international baccalaureate—Phillip might be able to correct me on this—will obviously be a stand-alone qualification. I do not think there will be a significant impact on the international baccalaureate, per se.

Mr Anthony: No. The international baccalaureate is a totally separate program. It is designed not so much for the range of student capabilities as the current QCE system and the future QCE system that will be implemented in the state. The IB is really for a more academically able student, which is not applicable to every single student in the state as the QCE is—QCE being the Queensland Certificate of Education.

Mrs STUCKEY: Thank you. That has a lovely name to it, hasn't it? It is something to aspire to. Just really quickly, I want a clarification here. Thanks for that helpful briefing note. You said that you receive and process approximately 75,000 applications every year and you make an offer in 1,700. Does that mean that 73,200 are not successful?

Mr Anthony: The 1,700 refers to the number of courses. In a particular course they might make hundreds or even more than a thousand offers.

Mrs STUCKEY: Do we have any idea how many of those 75,000 applicants are successful?

Dr Griffiths: Generally we find that almost all year 12 students will be made an offer into a program if they want that. There will be some who are not made an offer, and they will be the ones who are chasing high-demand courses, for example medicine, and they will be chasing an offer in every state. There will be a portion of non-year 12 students who do not receive an offer, and that is for a variety of reasons: they do not send us the documentation that is required, they have had a change of heart or they do not have high enough grades to get into a program. We actively work across both the year 12s and non-year 12s to try to find a program for everybody that is suitable.

Mr HEALY: Relative to Cairns, we have two satellite campuses—James Cook University and CQU—and 16 English language colleges. Last year in Cairns, I think we had about 32,000 international students, admittedly for a week or two. About 2,000 or 3,000 of those were there for the 12-month period. I am interested in whether, in our part of the world, we are providing the courses that are available and that are attracting? I see and others see that Cairns is growing and is becoming an international education hub, because of our close proximity to the Asia-Pacific region. In relation to courses that are being offered, could you make any recommendations or any suggestions? We would love to get interstate students, but for international students are we providing the appropriate courses?

Dr Griffiths: I am probably not qualified to answer that question, which is probably more for the universities. Certainly I know both JCU and CQU are actively pursuing that part of the market and are trying to broaden their appeal. As to whether they are meeting the needs, I am sure they are actively looking at the breadth of courses and the type of courses, based on their enrolments and the feedback they are getting.

Mr HEALY: I have a child in year 8 and one still in fifth class. Bearing in mind that the jobs that they will get probably have not been invented yet, how do you go about picking the courses?

Dr Griffiths: It is extremely difficult. At QTAC we have a notion of unimagined possibilities and getting people to think about jobs that do not exist. Part of My Path is also about getting them to think about jobs or career options that they might not have thought about. We also focus a lot on developing capabilities rather than particular jobs. We think about the capabilities that will underpin jobs going forward, some of the soft skills in particular, while noting that, when trying to pin down a particular job and say that that is a job that is going to exist in 20 years, all the evidence says that jobs will emerge that have not even been thought of at the moment. The advice that we give to year 12 students in particular is to pick a broad range of subjects to try to give themselves every possible advantage, so when they do head to university they think of their first degree or first qualification as not necessarily being their last qualification.

Mr HEALY: That is a good point, thank you.

Mr DAMETTO: Firstly, I acknowledge the work that is going on with the transition from OP to ATAR. It must be an enormous task. My son is in grade 12, so he will not have the drama of going through the transitional period as he will finish under the OP system at the end of this year. My question is about trying to iron out some of the 'clunkiness' of going from one system to another. What sort of training is being put forward to make sure that teachers are ready for this transitional period?

Dr Griffiths: Certainly I know the curriculum authority is investing quite considerably in teacher education and there has been a number of workshops with teachers to make sure they are across the new curriculum—and there are some changes in the curriculum that I am aware of—and also understand how the transition from the OP to the ATAR is working. Obviously, QTAC has a key role to play there. We are working very closely with the curriculum authority, both in road shows and in presentations, at every opportunity that we can to make sure that teachers both understand the curriculum side of things and understand how the ATAR will transition through. As I alluded to earlier, we are making sure that the credibility of the existing OP system is maintained through this transition period.

Mr SAUNDERS: I have no questions but would like to say thank you for the good work that you are doing. I have been following it. Any transitional period is hard. Keep it up, as it is for the betterment of the state.

Mrs WILSON: As a mother, I have experienced the OP system and I am going to go through the ATAR system. I have twins in year 9 but I have not heard anything through my school yet. Is there a reason it has not filtered down to year 9 and year 8 students?

Dr Griffiths: I cannot comment on individual schools, but I think the schools and principals in general have been focusing on making sure that the year 10s are transitioning through and thinking about how that works.

Mrs WILSON: That was a general comment, because I have friends who have children at various high schools and we all have similar conversations that we have not heard very much yet. How will intersubject scaling be calculated and how will it impact students completing different combinations of subjects, compared to a single tertiary entrance rank?

Mr Anthony: The hardest part of the new system, at our end of the shop, will be intersubject scaling, not in terms of doing the actual intersubject scaling but having parents, teachers, students, yourselves and the wider community understanding the mathematics that goes on inside of it. We are putting out a publication next week when we are on the road show with the QCAA. In fact, on Monday we are in Cairns, where we will be releasing a document. The document is an introduction to intersubject scaling and is for a non-technical readership. It explains some of the terminology, the 'why we need to scale' and the 'how we are going to do it'.

I do take your point. It is a very difficult concept to wrap your head around. This is something that has come out not just in our own state but in other states as well, and even in the last week: the scaling of subjects is a process to ensure fairness. To have fairness, unfortunately, you cannot also have simplicity. Suffice it to say, to the best of our ability we will show what goes on in the intersubject scaling process and make it as accessible to as many people who want to read it as possible. The

system will be such that it does not matter what group of subjects or range of subjects a student does; the intersubject scaling process will take a fair and credible account of the student's performance and then the accumulation of those subject results as we go to calculate the ATAR.

CHAIR: The document on intersubject scaling would be of interest to the committee. There is no urgency, but we would love to see that document. That was certainly one of my questions too, member for Pumicestone,

Dr Griffiths: I will make a copy available to you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you. Does QTAC still have student representatives sitting on a board to give you the students' point of view? You used to have a publication that went to the schools. From the look on your face, that is still not the case?

Dr Griffiths: No, it must predate me. Certainly we work closely with students, for example on the My Path and other initiatives, to make sure that we have some feedback. They provide really good feedback. Quite often we have done complete U-turns on what we thought was appropriate and the university sector thought was appropriate but the students say, 'We wouldn't read that, but we would read this.' We end up with the same outcome but in a language that suits them.

CHAIR: I am sure that they are giving you that feedback. I used to sit as one of the student representatives for Queensland on that QTAC board. It is so important that students have that opportunity to understand what you are doing and also, as you say, for you to understand the way that they are thinking and the way that they read things, which is not necessarily what you perceive they would read into it. I appreciate that things have moved on with My Path now, instead of the printed newsletter that we used to get as students. I was looking at My Path last night, but maybe it is representative of being 37 instead of 17 because I could not get it to work with Internet Explorer, but I will keep working. It looks like a great idea.

The admissions landscape seems to have changed significantly since I applied for university. Back then, the big step was the OP 1 to 5 guarantee but, very strictly, if you did not have the OP to get into the particular course that you wanted to do you needed to upgrade. I sit on the ACU McCauley campus Brisbane chapter in my community. From discussions there, it seems that the admissions landscape has changed significantly over the past 20 years since I completed my first qualification. Can you talk a little about what has driven that? There seems to be more flexibility and there are different pathways in. It is far more dynamic.

Dr Griffiths: Absolutely. Following Denise Bradley's review seven or eight years ago now, demand driven funding was introduced. That effectively guaranteed places to anybody who wanted to get into university, so the pathway options are wide and varied. I think Queensland probably has more opportunities than any other state to gain admission to university. Yes, gaining an ATAR or an OP is an important part of the equation, but we had only 50 per cent of students going through on an OP. They are gaining entry mostly through vocational qualifications generally, so certificate III and IV or a diploma, and a significant number of students were admitted on the basis of music or performing arts qualifications and a range of other options. Driven by a federal government initiative, we do see some pulling back on that now with all the current policy settings and how that will change going forward.

Essentially, particularly any year 12 student who wants to gain a place into university can gain a place into university. It might not be the ideal course that they wanted to get into or the campus they would like to study at and they will have to go on an upgrading pathway. However, essentially, if you have taken some good advice and not tried to chase medicine when you did not even qualify for an OP, you will gain a place into university. Often students have not done particularly well at school but they may do particularly well in their first year of university. I think passing all your subjects gets you the equivalent of an OP 4 or 5. You can go from quite a reasonably low OP into quite a competitive program, just by going to university and perhaps doing a basic science degree and then heading off to physiotherapy, for example. There are lots of options.

CHAIR: I think it is a wonderful thing that is opening up the world for a lot of people. If you do well academically at school you would hope that you would do well at university, but it does not always follow vice versa. I appreciate that it is very dynamic. QTAC provides information to the students. I think it is wonderful what you are doing in focusing on subject choices in grade 10, because it is so vital: you do not want those young people to get to grade 11 and 12 and then graduate but feel they made the wrong decision. Given what you have just said, I appreciate that it is not your one opportunity and there are other ways. I think that is great.

I am interested to know the nature of the advice that you provide to universities. If you look at where the applications are coming from, what are students demanding? What do they want? What are the most popular courses? Often there is a discussion in the community that we do not have enough teachers and nurses, and then a few years down the track, when they come out of university, we do not have enough jobs for them all. I am interested in the role that you play in that supply and demand space.

Dr Griffiths: It is always difficult to predict the future. We are very good at providing advice in retrospect to universities around where the preferences lie. Part of My Path is also an attempt to get a feeling of and a handle on what may be popular going forward. At the moment, often universities will do a lot of marketing, but midway through year 12 or when applications open in August they will get a real sense of what particular programs are trending. We are trying to give them a feel for what that might look like a bit further on so that they can plan. They can make some investment decisions—that is probably the best way of putting it—as to where they want it and what they want to commit to, taking into account the likely future demand and what they are hearing from their communities, which is always a difficult decision for them, and then locking that into place. That varies obviously, depending on the type of course. With a commerce course, you can fit a lot more students into a lecture theatre, but if you are going to where clinical placements are required then a longer lead time for that is obviously fundamental.

CHAIR: I know we are coming to the end of our time. I have young children, although they are far from this process. We just spoke to Jobs Queensland. Of course, there is modelling and economic scanning about where the jobs will be. Young people tell me a lot—that is why this is of particular interest to me—that they are also trying to read the future. Some will study what their passion is, knowing that ultimately, if they are passionate about it, they will find an opportunity. Others will scan the environment and say, 'Where am I most likely to find gainful employment?' Do you feel that you have any role to play in that or are you really about communicating information from universities that will make investment decisions, to use your terminology—and it is the right one—about where they are going to get demand and really where they are going to get the most funding? They are businesses as well and they need to stay operational. Is there any kind of thinking around trying to encourage young people to pick courses that are going to lead to those sorts of jobs or is there no picking winners in that sort of space?

Dr Griffiths: We obviously represent what universities have on offer. In time I would like to provide information on our website which would talk about future careers and future jobs, although it would probably steer more away from jobs but might say that 'these are the capabilities that might be useful going forward'. We are trying to make our offering a sticky sort of website, where people thinking about tertiary education come back and think of QTAC as an information repository with lots of useful information. We cannot predict what the jobs will be in the future, but we might say, 'Here are some scenarios and here are some case studies of someone who started here but changed degrees.' Approximately 25 per cent of the year 12s will change their mind in the first year, or perhaps they got to the end of their degree and went off and did something else. I am a classic example of going on and doing further qualifications but perhaps not necessarily at university. People might think, 'I just want to upgrade, so I'll go and do a certificate IV which will give me a set of capabilities which will allow me to not necessarily change industry but move into something else because I don't have those sets of skills at the moment.' It is a lifelong learning. We are trying to create a relationship rather than a transaction with students.

CHAIR: I think that is great. Thank you for that. I think that is wonderful. I think your recognition of TAFE is important too, because it is not either/or. I certainly did a certificate IV concurrently, as part of my university degree at QUT. I do not think they still do that, but the skills are so important in both of those realms and young people who are doing VET can absolutely come and make a significant contribution at university. I think it is wonderful that that is being recognised as well.

Dr Griffiths: We certainly see VET in schools and then people transitioning into university, but we would also see VET just as a stand-alone program—that is, people finishing a university program and then coming back to do VET. I see close collaboration and working across both sectors as really important.

CHAIR: That is wonderful. Thank you so much.

Mrs STUCKEY: I am wondering what sort of level of staffing you have. What are your full-time equivalents?

Dr Griffiths: We have about 65 full-time equivalents.

Mrs STUCKEY: Has that number grown over the last couple of years?

Dr Griffiths: It has probably shrunk a little bit, but that is just as we have automated more and more things.

Mrs STUCKEY: What other changes are happening that impact your operations? I realise there are some fairly major ones happening.

Dr Griffiths: Yes. At the federal level the federal government obviously, with its initiatives and policies, is putting a lot of pressure on universities to become more efficient. The big initiative that the federal government is running is around an information platform where universities list all of their courses so there is Australia-wide visibility of those courses. That is impacting on us. The other agenda is around transparency—that is, just making more visible and more clear what the entry requirements are. That is a federal government initiative. That is obviously testing for the universities. It is testing for QTAC, because we have taken a whole-of-Queensland approach to presenting that information back to the government and coordinating it from the universities rather than them coordinating directly with the federal government. They are very happy with that, but that is a significant body of work to make sure that it is fairly represented and students are going on to make good choices.

Mrs STUCKEY: I know that we are standardising a number of things, but I have Southern Cross University in my electorate. It is right on the border. It is probably the only university in an airport precinct and on shared land. Do you see a lot more of that harmonising? What is your involvement with courses that that university runs?

Dr Griffiths: Certainly they are one of our clients. I think going forward there will be some degree of harmonisation in challenges across the universities. There are lots of reports. There is a recent Ernst & Young report that talks about universities and the universities of the future. I say to my staff that we live in very interesting times. How it will shake out I am not too sure, but I think there will be more challenges for the university sector over the next five to 10 years than it has probably seen in the last 100 years.

Mrs STUCKEY: Thank you.

CHAIR: There being no further questions, the time for our session has now expired. John and Phillip, I thank you very much for coming in to answer our questions. We wish you the best of luck with your roadshow and your explaining of subject scaling. We look forward to reading this document and hopefully understanding it. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's parliamentary web page in due course. With that, I declare this public briefing for the committee closed.

The committee adjourned at 11.48 am.