



EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Members present:

Ms KE Richards MP—Chair
Mr JP Lister MP
Mr MA Boothman MP
Mr N Dametto MP
Mr BL O'Rourke MP
Mr JA Sullivan MP

Staff present:

Mr R Hansen—Committee Secretary

COMMUNITY FORUM—INQUIRY INTO THE DELIVERY OF VET IN REGIONAL, RURAL AND REMOTE QUEENSLAND

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Monday, 10 July 2023

Cairns

MONDAY, 10 JULY 2023

The committee met at 5.32 pm.

CHAIR: Good afternoon. I declare this public meeting open. I am Kim Richards, the member for Redlands and chair of the Education, Employment and Training Committee. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. In this country we are very fortunate to have two of the world's oldest continuing living cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, whose lands, winds and waters we all share. I would like to introduce my colleagues here today: Mr James Lister, the member for Southern Downs and deputy chair; Mr Mark Boothman, the member for Theodore; Mr Nick Dametto, the member for Hinchinbrook; Mr Jimmy Sullivan, the member for Stafford; and Mr Barry O'Rourke, the member for Rockhampton. Quite a spread of regions are covered here on the committee today. I believe that Michael Healy might also be joining us if he is able to get here in time. He had a number of commitments today.

Today's forum forms part of the committee's work on two inquiries: the delivery of vocational education and training in regional, rural and remote areas; and the Cairns TAFE upgrade project. We have just walked 8,600 steps in traversing both the maritime college and the TAFE here. We were delighted to see some of the work.

This meeting is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. I remind everyone speaking today that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. We are very pleased to be here in Cairns today. The weather is a lot nicer up here than it was when we left Brisbane earlier this morning. It is very nice to have another local Redlander in the crowd today as well. Vocational education and training is critically important to the Cairns region. It is critically important across Queensland. Making sure that we get it right is extraordinarily important. It will drive and continue to drive economic opportunity, growth and development of employment.

As part of our work on vocational education and training, the committee today is examining the recent upgrades to Cairns TAFE, completed at a cost of \$18.59 million, and whether those upgrades provide value for money. We had a look at improvements to the specialised teaching spaces and campus navigation. This campus is the second largest campus—second only to the one in our Redlands patch of Alexandra Hills. We have seen: upgrades to B block workshops and the installation of new solar power systems; upgrades to S block by way of the hair and beauty and hospitality precinct and customer service centre—an outstanding result in the hair and beauty space; the creation of the new Banggu Minjaany art gallery space; and replacement of the air-conditioning and chiller blocks in K block; supporting infrastructure upgrades including electrical switchboards and transformer replacements. We have seen the spaces where electricians come in to get their final check-off on their tickets. They have great, state-of-the-art, brand new spaces.

All in all, as we have heard today, there is a quite significant amount of work across a very large campus touching so many different skills and training opportunities for Cairns locals and further abroad. This upgrade project is one of the largest investments in a single TAFE campus by the Queensland government, which has delivered \$277 million in upgrades across TAFE campuses since 2017. We look forward to hearing your views not only on this campus but also in terms of vocational education and training.

HOUGHTON, Mr Bruce, Principal, Bentley Park College

CHAIR: Bruce, I invite you to make some opening statements. Then the committee might have some questions.

Mr Houghton: Good afternoon, everybody. For those who do not know, Bentley Park College is located to the south of Cairns. We are a P-12 college of 1,750-odd students. There are 600 in the primary sector and about 1,100 in the secondary sector of the college.

I understand that you wanted me to make a few statements today on what we do and how we do it. I would like to talk about two things: firstly, the work that we do in the VET space in my college and what we are specialising in; and, secondly, the SchoolTech program, which is a program that was born and bred in Far North Queensland and is an absolutely outstanding program offered in conjunction with the Department of Education, TAFE, our local employers and industry people.

Very quickly, I will talk about Bentley. Bentley Park College, as I mentioned, is a big college to the south of Cairns. We are very fortunate. We have 1,750 to 1,800 students in the college. We are a low-ICSEA school of 875. We have 40 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students plus a number of students from the Pasifika region, Asia et cetera. We are a fantastic school with fantastic students and we have staff doing great work.

We offer a lot of the standard Certificate IIs that you will find in most schools. We have Certificate III in fitness and Certificate IIs in health, business, information technology, hospitality et cetera. Over the past four years we have really expanded into the health area. We are a Gateway to Industry health school. We were the first school in Queensland to be a Gateway to Industry school. That means that through the department of Employment, Small Business and Training, in conjunction with CheckUP, our role is to get students trained in the health fields and then into employment. We started that four years ago. There are schools in the state that do it better than we do. Kawana Waters on the Sunshine Coast certainly has stand-out schools that do this work well. We have copied a lot of our work from what they have done, and we have expanded upon and brought our flavour into the work we do up here in Far North Queensland.

We built a medical training precinct. It is a purpose-built medical training precinct. About \$1.5 million was spent to set that up in the college. That is primarily for our students to operate in the Certificate II in Health Services Assistance, go into Certificate III and then go into their Assistant in Nursing, their nano-qualification. Our whole idea is to get students through those Certificate IIs and Certificate IIIs and into AINs. We are doing that for the region. It is not just Bentley Park College students; it is students from all over. We have students from our local schools coming in to access our facilities. We are very fortunate to have those facilities.

Recently we have signed up 10 students from across the region on the Deadly Start program, the best example of which would be Metro North in Brisbane which has been doing that program for many years. This is the first time they have expanded outside the Metro North area, to Rockhampton. They are now in Mackay, Townsville and Cairns. This year we were very fortunate to have 10 students involved in that. That is particularly targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in that area.

Year 11s do their Certificate II in Health Services Assistance. They do their traineeships with Queensland Health. In just the last holidays the students started that course at Queensland Health. It is very exciting for us. There are two students based at Bentley Park College, but there are two students from Cairns High, two students from Trinity Bay, two students from Woree State High School and two students from Gordonvale. We have 10 this year. I would like to triple that for next year, but at this stage I think we will only double it. We will have 20 students next year involved in that course. Our whole idea is to get students into nursing or into the health sector in that way.

At Bentley Park College we also work to support some of our cape schools. We have been very fortunate to have these facilities and we do look beyond our boundaries as a college. We have students in our school from just about every Cape York community and most of the Torres Strait Islands. Having spent a long time in the cape, I know how difficult teaching and learning is in the cape. In terms of VET training, I know how difficult that is in various communities. We actually look north. We are supporting cape schools. One of the schools we are supporting is NPASC—Northern Peninsula Area State College—based out of Bamaga which covers that whole area. They are looking at doing block training with us in health. We are looking at various ways to assist with delivery of VET training in those schools in Far North Queensland—Kowanyama, Aurukun, NPASC and some work with Tagai.

At Bentley Park College we also run the VR Learning + Design Hub. We are also a Gateway to Industry technology school. We have been recognised for the great work that we do in technology. I have a whole team of coders and curriculum writers who work behind the scenes to develop the Australian Curriculum into modules that can be used in virtual reality. Committee members will have to come out one day and have a look at that. We have over 30 units of work in the Australian Curriculum built into VR that students can access to help them with their studies and their work. A number of those are related to health. We also do a lot of augmented reality work. Augmented reality is with our primary school students. VR is with our secondary students.

Going back specifically to health, we are using the HoloLens technology. HoloLens technology, especially in America, is for augmented reality programs that they use to assist students with health. We are doing that specifically at the moment in assisting students with work health and safety areas when it comes to health.

I can talk for hours on the VR Learning + Design Hub. We are selling that program across schools across Queensland, working with 30-odd schools at the moment. We are also exploring the use of HoloBox technology for the delivery of VET in remote areas. I am still trying to find someone to give me a couple of hundred thousand dollars to help us to get that across, if you have any money.

CHAIR: I do not have the chequebook with me!

Mr Houghton: In all seriousness, we have played around with that HoloBox technology. There is a shortage of teachers in Queensland, especially in remote areas. We are smack bang in the middle of Cairns and still experiencing shortages in Cairns. As you get further west and north, it is obviously a major issue. There is a lot of technology we can use. We have been particularly supporting HoloBox technology as a way of delivering VET into remote areas. We play around it, but we are yet to get right into it. That is Bentley Park. I can speak for hours on that. Are there any questions around Bentley Park before I move on?

CHAIR: Do you want to finish and then we will come back to questions?

Mr Houghton: Yes. The last thing I want to talk very quickly about is the SchoolTech program. Many people in this room would be aware of the SchoolTech program that has been operating in Far North Queensland. I do not run it now. I was very fortunate to be the principal of Woree State High School for many years and ran the SchoolTech program. Even though it is based out of Woree State High School, it is a regional program. It is only based out of Woree State High School because students enrolled in the course have to be enrolled in a state school somewhere—for staffing, funding and so on. If you are involved in the SchoolTech program, you are located at the TAFE college here in Eureka Street. You are enrolled in SchoolTech and you work with the teachers in SchoolTech, with TAFE and with local industry in getting the skills required to get into the workforce. I guess the aim is to get a head start into the workforce.

The students basically do the six core subjects that they need to do in grades 11 and 12 through the teachers and SchoolTech in G block, based over here. They will do that for three days a week if they are in grade 11. One day a week they go and work with the TAFE teachers in whatever trade. The trades that they cover—the latest trades I had to grab off the list here today—are construction, engineering and reconstruction, construction and plumbing, engineering in metal fabrication, automotive, maritime et cetera. Those are the main trade areas—the traditional trades—and maritime is built in there as well. They will do one day a week in the trade rooms with a TAFE teacher, either here or at the International Marine College. Then they do one day placement with industry. They do that over the course of two years. When they get into grade 12 they do two days placement in industry, and that is where you get the traineeships happening. The students are involved in traineeships or school-based apprenticeships. It is an outstanding program as it gives students week-by-week training and real-world experiences in the skills that they will need and that are required to go into the particular industry they want to go into.

I noticed with interest that you have been over to the Great Barrier Reef International Marine College, which is actually a Woree State High School initiative. Before my time, the great Tony Fuller set that up over there. It is a great vision as to what we can have in Far North Queensland for marine. In the last couple of years we have seen that vision come to fruition in what they are actually producing over there at the moment, which is outstanding work.

As part of the SchoolTech program they have marine tech, which is a subject that focuses specifically on getting students into the maritime industry. One such program that focuses specifically on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is the Shoreline program. Shoreline is the brainchild of the Hayden Reynolds Foundation. I put on record a conflict of interest: I sit as an educational adviser for the board. There are no payments, of course. I helped set up the deal in the first place and I have continued a very behind-the-scenes role with that group. They sponsor Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through their traineeships.

The most outstanding piece of work in this area, not just in the whole of SchoolTech but especially in this marine area with Shoreline, is that it is not just about pumping out students with VET certificates, which many schools do. To get a QCE you need a cert I in this, a cert II in that and a cert III in this. This is about getting kids directly into the employment that they want to go into. With Shoreline and the relationships that they have with various industry groups in marine, Experience Co being the main one, the students who start their traineeships with them then finish their traineeships and there is guaranteed employment for those students.

I go back to the health partnerships that we have established with Queensland Health through the Deadly Start program. When those students finish their completion—successful completion, I might add—they are guaranteed employment in that particular industry. That is all very exciting stuff.

Those are two things that I want to mention. One is what we are doing at Bentley. The region one, which is SchoolTech, is open to any student in any school in Far North Queensland. We have had students come from the tablelands and down around Innisfail. Going way back we had some students from interstate. Of course, we have some students who come out of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who reside at AFL Cape York House in town. They are also part of the program.

An example of the Hayden Reynolds work being done over the past couple of years is that in 2015-16 the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the SchoolTech program was around five per cent and it is currently in the mid-40s. That program has been very successful in getting kids into industry and getting full-time jobs in that industry. I am very fortunate to catch up with those students often at functions. To see where they have come from and where they are going is absolutely outstanding.

CHAIR: Today we had the delight of meeting with some of those students who are in the Shoreline program. They are doing the marine mechanics work. I think we were equally impressed with the trainer. He is an absolute powerhouse. The experience that he brings with him for those students is second to none. Incredibly talented teachers and a fantastic—

Mr Houghton: And none of this could happen without the relationship with TAFE. It is Woree State High School, the region, TAFE and also—

CHAIR: Industry.

Mr Houghton:—industry-based, yes. Those are the key people. I have not run the SchoolTech program in about four or five years because I am now at Bentley Park College, but we have had some employers that have been there since day one. Every year they take on a trainee or an apprentice. It is really good at the moment. Going back to 2014-15, you could not buy a traineeship or apprenticeship in Cairns due to the downturn in the economy. Now it is going gangbusters. It is going really well. That is all I have to say.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. That was very comprehensive and a great insight into the role that our secondary schools play in getting people ready for the pathway that they are looking at. Thank you for that. I will throw to the deputy chair for the first question.

Mr LISTER: Thank you very much for your appearance, Mr Houghton. It is very nice to have you here. I appreciate the briefing you have given us. I want to focus on the Indigenous students who come from elsewhere in the cape. Do you keep in touch with them later on to find out what sort of experience they had, if they returned to their community to continue their training and their trade—what experience they had in keeping up with the TAFE portion of their training?

Mr Houghton: No. Unfortunately, we do not have communication. The only communication that you will have will be post year 12 when they do the surveys around next steps, finding out what those students are doing post schooling. On my statement that we have students who come from around the cape and from the Torres Strait, they will come down to live with family or they will come to live at AFL House or they will come and live with various other members of the extended family and so on to attend school. Not all those students are involved in these courses here. That would be the ultimate aim. The ultimate aim would be to get students with cert IIs and IIIs in health services to go back to their communities and work, if they wanted to, in the local health clinics to keep that work going. We have had lots of conversations with Apunipima, which is the health services provider in Cape York. At some stages we have had some traineeships with them as well, or looking at having traineeships with them.

Mr BOOTHMAN: In terms of the survey you send out to the year 12 students after they have finished, what type of information do you get back?

Mr Houghton: That is the departmental survey called the Next Step survey. They find out what the students are doing. With our local students in our local area, we keep in touch with a lot of those students post year 12. The data they are gathering is the number of students who have gone to university, the number of students who have their first option at university—many students go to university but do they get their first option?—how many students are involved in apprenticeships, how many students are involved in traineeships, how many students have work and how many students are still looking for work. That is the information that we get from our Next Step survey data. We try to use that information to work out how we can adjust the programs that we offer in the school. A lot

of us are trying to move away from simply having VET as a subject to get your QCE to having 'VET equals jobs'. That is the beauty of the SchoolTech program and the work we are doing in health. It is no use doing all this work if students are walking out there without going into some sort of meaningful employment or traineeship or apprenticeship or going on further.

CHAIR: Or that what they are doing in the VET space is not necessarily related to what they see their pathway as being but is just a course for the sake of points.

Mr Houghton: Correct. We have had a lot of success in health. In the last holidays we had 15 students from across Cairns attending the Medical Training Precinct with their RTO, which is Connect 'n' Grow. We have students who are on an ATAR pathway and want to go to university. They do not necessarily want to go into a medical field. However, they are doing a cert II in health or a cert III because they see it as a pathway to employment while they are at university. That is a bit of growth that we have seen. Not many of our students go to university without a part-time job. They see that as a direct pathway for holding a part-time job while they are completing university studies. In saying that, we have had quite a lot of students go into the medical fields, whether that be paramedics, medical research, into the Army, medicine et cetera.

Mr BOOTHMAN: What is the retention rate? Do you find that when they are at school they are going down a certain pathway and they continue down that pathway or do you find that they are changing over in the future because they feel they want to do something else?

Mr Houghton: I could not really answer that. We are too early in the health work that we are doing to really answer that question. I do know that it is the biggest area in the college. What you have to understand about Bentley Park College is that this work we are doing in the Medical Training Precinct is something that a lot of these students would have had no idea about at all. Health was something that is done in Cairns at the Cairns Hospital. For us, this all came about when the Cairns South Health Facility was built in Edmonton. It is about identifying for students the local industry in their local area and showing that they could be working in that local industry in their area. It is really hard sometimes on the south side of Cairns when you have a drive-in drive-out workforce. They are driving somewhere to go to work. Now they can see the industry based in their local area. We have 60 to 80 students enrolled in our cert II and cert III courses in an industry that they would never have thought of in a billion years.

Mr SULLIVAN: On the issue of transition from school to workforce or school to study—I am talking particularly about health—I think you mentioned that you target them basically to become an enrolled nurse. That is the employment target. Do you get ones who use it for their ranking—so they use the certificate itself to go on to higher studies? Are you getting people going on to uni?

Mr Houghton: Yes, we have some students. Under the new ATAR arrangements, you can use the cert IIIs to generate your ATAR. We have some students. Once again, it is probably too early. We have been doing this work for four years and it is only in the last two years that we have had mass enrolments and a lot of students coming through. You would have to ask me years down the track to see where that data is going and what the students are doing. It is certainly generating a huge amount of interest in that area.

Mr SULLIVAN: Do you think there are enough local health providers or good enough cooperation with the Cairns Hospital, for example, to keep that local—

Mr Houghton: Yes. Queensland Health has been outstanding, especially with the Deadly Start traineeships. I did a lot of work in the marine industry. I thought the marine industry was hard to break into when you are looking at putting kids on boats and so on. I found that the health sector was difficult but it is difficult for a reason. There are a lot of controls and environment and risk and so on that you have to manage.

Mr SULLIVAN: Standards and so on.

Mr Houghton: Dr Clive Skarott has been outstanding in his help with us and opening doors for us. It is all about getting students into that employment area.

Mr SULLIVAN: That is good to hear, thanks.

Mr O'ROURKE: Thank you for your presentation today. It was great. I am very interested in the health space. North Rockhampton State High School has only recently got into doing certs II and III in health. In Rockhampton they have ended up in a partnership with the private health system. Is that something that is happening here?

Mr Houghton: We will go into partnership with anyone. We have a whole range of partners we try to work with. We work with Apunipima, Wuchopperen, Queensland Health or anyone who wants to take a student as far as a traineeship goes. We are more than happy to do that. We are very fortunate that Queensland Health has opened their doors and is taking on our trainees.

Mr O'ROURKE: That is good. The school was saying that some of their students, during school break et cetera, are working in the aged-care area and things like that and are very much excelling as a result of the responsibilities and life skills they have now developed.

Mr Houghton: That is what we are finding. We are finding that is a career pathway now for students in that area.

CHAIR: What you have spoken to 100 per cent supports getting people early into aged-care facilities, disability care support work—

Mr Houghton: Disability is a big one.

CHAIR: All of that with those initial qualifications. It is outstanding.

Mr DAMETTO: Thank you very much, Mr Houghton, for coming along and giving us your insight into VET training and what you are doing with your school at the moment. It is pretty impressive. From your opening statement it sounds like you are doing a lot of hard work to get people through those VET training courses and into employment. From your opening statement I am guessing that TAFE is your RTO of choice?

Mr Houghton: Yes and no. We use a range of RTOs. We are our own RTO and then we use various organisations. We are using externals in some areas. With SchoolTech, which I do not run, TAFE is the RTO. It provides all of the training and does all of that work behind the scenes. We use a number of them depending on what the qualification is that we are taking with our students.

Mr DAMETTO: What would you say the split would be between RTOs other than TAFE and TAFE, and how many are using TAFE as compared to the other RTOs?

Mr Houghton: We are only using TAFE in our college with the TAFE at School program, which is what they are offering here on a Thursday. It is a very successful program. They run a course—I think I wrote it down; I just cannot remember it off the top of my head. There is TAFE at School and there is also TAFE tasters, which is our year 10 course where the students come along and try out a number of trades. We have had a number of students go through that. For our Certificate III in fitness and our Certificate II in health, we are using external providers. Also, a lot of schools are now using external providers, especially in the engineering or construction space. You use TAFE where you can, but sometimes you have to use external providers.

Mr DAMETTO: So that I understand, Mr Houghton, what would TAFE have to do better for you to use them more? That is a pretty broad question to ask, but I am just trying to get a good understanding.

Mr Houghton: It depends on what course you are running. With SchoolTech, for instance, TAFE does an outstanding job. The students are based here at TAFE and they work with TAFE, and it is a very successful program over a long period of time. That has worked really well simply because TAFE have been flexible in their delivery. DESBT have been really good with their second-chance funding. The partnership that we have between TAFE and the region with the use of their facilities here has been absolutely outstanding. One of the dramas you have with TAFE at School, for instance, is that students have to give up one day in school to go along to TAFE, which is different from the SchoolTech program because all the work experience, the traineeships and the apprenticeships are built into the program so you are not playing catch-up at all. I guess it is that flexibility that is required for students to maintain their full program onsite and then to access a TAFE course, and then they still have to follow up and keep the work they are doing. It comes down to the flexibility of TAFE and it also comes down to the flexibility of the school to be able to work around that. I am not sure I have answered your question. It depends on what you are doing.

Mr DAMETTO: Excellent.

CHAIR: On what you submitted, it sounds like, from a high school point of view, you have a lot of success to celebrate, particularly in the health space and the nursing area. In your former experience with the SkillsTech, what are the keys to success to delivering in a place like Cairns for regional communities?

Mr Houghton: The No. 1 thing, I believe, is having industry partnerships and collaboration. If you do not have industry partnerships and collaboration then you are wasting your time. I do not want to run a school where I am just pumping out Certificate IIs and Certificate IIIs for kids to get QCEs.

For some students that is very important if they are not doing an ATAR course. I think a big piece that has been missing that we need to really continue to work on as a secondary sector is the industry partnerships. I am very fortunate that I sit on the Cairns Regional Jobs Committee. We know what the key industry areas are that are looking for work. We had a massive expo organised through Marine Jobs and a lot of companies came on board around it. We closed Tingira Street for a day and had a big expo on everything marine. Students had access to Norship and all the big companies down there. That is really what is required for success: getting those industry partnerships and getting the students to see that they can go in and take on a VET course where they will get guaranteed employment at the end. That is the real success.

Schools can deliver certificate programs. We can get external providers in. There is a lot of online work being done these days. That can be done anywhere, but it is the industry partnerships that are key. The further you get away from the centre of Cairns and into more isolated areas, that is the key body of work that has to be done. If you do not have industry partnerships on board then you are wasting your time, I believe.

CHAIR: Was that the way you identified that the grade standard in the VET space was delivering in the health area for your community?

Mr Houghton: Yes.

CHAIR: Is it you, as the principal, driving those connections to understand what the employment opportunity and skills shortages are—

Mr Houghton: Correct.

CHAIR:—through things like the regional jobs plan?

Mr Houghton: I have no background in health at all. We just recognised that as a growth area in our local area. There was a hospital being built around the corner.

CHAIR: Was that through the Regional Jobs Committee?

Mr Houghton: No, that was just as a school. This was before I was on the Regional Jobs Committee. We know that the data coming down the line is that health is a major sector. There is something like 300 AINs required in Queensland now, as we speak—something along those lines. Do not quote me on that. We know that if we can get our students involved in the health sector and encourage them to get all the way through, there are plenty of jobs going. That is the only reason we went down the health route. We were looking at something and that came up in our local area and we took it on. We developed that not just for our own school but for all schools in Cairns. We have students coming from all over Cairns into that health hub to get access to training.

CHAIR: So there is collaboration amongst other principals as well to understand the need?

Mr Houghton: Correct. It was not about us wanting to take students from other schools. We are an enrolment managed area. I live in Gordonvale, which is right down the bottom end of Cairns. We want our students to go to the local schools in their local areas—my kids went to Gordonvale High—but if something is good going on at another school that they can access for a day or for four hours or the traineeship or the room or something like that, let's make it happen. That is what we are doing with health. A lot of schools are accessing our school. It is not about taking students from other schools and plonking them in our schools. We are trying to work like that across Cairns, in that area.

CHAIR: I would like to bottle some of that.

Mr Houghton: That is just what we do.

CHAIR: That is really good—good to hear.

Mr BOOTHMAN: In a perfect world, what would you like to see additional infrastructure in? Are there any additional programs to help facilitate your students going on further to additional career pathways? What types of programs would you like to see expanded or additional skill sets put in—additional infrastructure?

Mr Houghton: That is a very good question. I think an expansion of the SchoolTech model. I am a great believer in the SchoolTech model. I would like those pathways to the SchoolTech model to be expanded across the Cairns area, or across Far North Queensland. It is a model that has been going on nearly 15 years and it is due for a bit of a review. That is a program where the students are getting their QCE qualifications, they are getting their direct qualifications from TAFE and then they have direct lines into industry. That is the key part of that SchoolTech program. An expansion of the SchoolTech program, I believe, would be absolutely fantastic.

As far as funding goes, there would be ongoing access to that second-chance funding because we sell the program based on two qualifications. VETiS pays for one qualification. There is a second qualification that comes with that course. There is ongoing support with the second-chance funding and students getting involved in SchoolTech.

SchoolTech does require students to leave their current school and to be enrolled onsite here at TAFE and moving there. I believe we could look at some slightly different models—a hybrid model where students could still stay very connected to their school. There is a school online, for instance, where students in grade 12 have been together since prep. It is very hard to leave your school to go and enrol in another place for the last two years of school. It is very important that kids complete their graduation and have their formals and all that type of thing from schools. That is totally understandable. That is an area where I am pushing pretty hard in our region to come up with maybe a hybrid version of SchoolTech. I think SchoolTech is the best thing.

Mr BOOTHMAN: It shows the flexibility you are after when it comes to TAFE to remain in your school itself?

Mr Houghton: In the SchoolTech program, yes. I understand the International Marine College is getting a bit of an upgrade down there—

CHAIR: That is an impressive facility.

Mr Houghton: It is very impressive.

CHAIR: State-of-the-art. I have had the opportunity to go to Maritime Safety Queensland's ship simulator at Portside down in Brisbane, and that experience today was absolutely comparable. It is state-of-the-art and great for the Cairns region.

Mr Houghton: It also helps when you have Mick running the show.

CHAIR: Phil was pretty good, too!

Mr Houghton: He is very passionate about his job.

CHAIR: Absolutely.

Mr Houghton: For students getting into the maritime industry, the facility is always important, but it is that incentive for industry to come on board, to take a lot of pride in the fact that they are taking on trainees or apprentices and seeing that there is state building or nation building and coming along with that. Some sort of really solid pathways in that area would be the best.

CHAIR: Terrific. There being no further questions, I thank you very much for presenting here in front of us today. You definitely have given us some useful information and wonderful insights. Congratulations on all the success you are delivering for your school community in Bentley Park and for the broader Far North Queensland region in delivering in health, because we know that that is a priority area when it comes to employment opportunities. Thank you very much for all of your work.

Mr Houghton: Thank you.

CHAIR: Is anybody else comfortable coming to the table? If not, I am happy to close the session.

ROBY, Ms Sharne, Private capacity

Ms Roby: My name is Sharne. I am an independent mental health peer worker. I support young people to access programs. I do have some feedback.

CHAIR: You are representing yourself, not your organisation?

Ms Roby: I am a mental health peer worker, working independently.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Sharne, for appearing.

Ms Roby: I am really nervous. It has been a long time since I have done this. I ran away from home when I was 16. I was part of the first state youth advisory committee that started back in the late nineties and I have not really been involved in this since.

CHAIR: Thank you for appearing before the committee today. I invite you to make an opening statement with regard to vocational education and training. Then the committee might have some questions for you.

Ms Roby: There are two parts of vocational education that are amazing. What you heard is that some of the state schools are doing an amazing, fantastic job, which I have been a part of since I was at high school—vocational education and entry programs after school. Bentley Park is an excellent one. Woree State High School does a very similar excellent job as well. I am from a different region—just before COVID. Toolooa State High School does a fantastic job and the region down there has an excellent program as well. That has been my experience.

I have two high and complex needs children. Both are very intelligent, which makes it worse. One has learning difficulties with autism and communications. We have used a lot of different and various school programs since we arrived here. My daughter is gifted and has complications within her physical health. We access a lot of those alternative ways of schooling. They have a great friendship group and I spend a lot of time helping parents and their children who have fallen through the gaps through mental health. One of the main issues we are seeing is the inability of VET programs to deliver on their promises. I want to talk about some of those deliveries.

I am not targeting anybody. I think there are three parts to facilities that need to happen. Sometimes students are put into VET programs because they are having a mental health problem at high school as the support through VET is better. I think the weight to the TAFE program is that they provide better mental health programs than other organisations. Sometimes a lot of kids—and adults—are put into VET programs and they do not finish, or they finish below capacity and their work outcomes are not clear. I just finished helping a young man who was promised that if he finished his course he would be guaranteed employment. He was not. We spent some months stabilising the entire family because they spent \$10,000 out of pocket for a course that did not deliver an outcome.

CHAIR: That was through a private training organisation?

Ms Roby: Private education. I just helped a young man this weekend re-establish. He is leaving year 12. He was given a Certificate I in construction with his school and he wanted to be at uni. He is not qualified for uni. I have had to show him pathways into uni. The schools are not delivering on that. Some schools are doing it great, and other schools are failing their students in large amounts and those students are experiencing large amounts of mental ill health because they feel like they are failing their parents, their families and the community by not being into it. I know that AFL Cape York House has an amazing entry into those programs. I know that the health program—I know one of the tech deliverers—is doing a great job with this, but there is a big gap.

The second gap that I am seeing is in people like myself—people who are vulnerable, people who have children, people who were maybe married and their relationships have failed and they are trying to get back into work. It is extraordinarily difficult. Because you need a certificate to be work ready but you want to go to uni, you cannot do both at the same time. My daughter left school because her certificate III was not being managed appropriately, so we went to an independent private place to fix it to get her certificate. She then enrolled into uni and needed a certificate for her workplace, so she left uni to go and finish the certificate for her workplace and then go back to uni. There was a lot of chopping and changing and it does not look great on a resume saying you started uni but you left to do a TAFE program so you could stay employed. In vulnerable families like mine where we have health issues, employment issues and sometimes transport issues, the difference between finishing a certificate and almost finishing a certificate is a roof over your head because you can keep employment.

I wanted to come as a mum because I have supported four or five people this year who have had critical mental health and they have either been put on a VET program or lost employment because they did not finish their certificates, and it is becoming a pattern. The last pattern I am seeing is that mental health delivery services are using employment and really low entry programs such as a certificate I or certificate II, which are not employment ready, and using the funding gap for those people to fund their mental health organisations and delivering lower than expected certificates, or like me: I did a certificate IV in peer work and it is the only certificate in level 4 that is not under the NDIS, so I had to go and do a second certificate and I had used my funding and I could not do it, so I had to go back to education again. We have had some really poor education outcomes in our family, not because the education pathway that we picked was not safe but because the education provider changed what they were doing through it.

CHAIR: These were all private registered training organisations?

Ms Roby: A lot of them were private registered training organisations. My children went to a private school in Cairns. If I chose it again, I would send my kids to a state school. We went to a private education and I have seen that, with all of those deliverers, every single one of my kids' friends have needed me to come in and help them with the pathways of ATAR. ATAR is giving lots of choices, but a lot of people do not know those choices. Particularly with boys, they will pick the easiest thing when they are 14 and 15 and when their parents go, 'You need a job that does it.' They are not qualifying for university entry or they have not finished their certificate. This one kid that I am helping has three months to do a certificate III to bridge into university. He is brilliant. He is very smart and he was not supported.

I think one of the things is the mental health support and using peer workers or health nurses in schools telling them that the outcomes for education and transport and housing are more of a clear indicator for mental health stability than other kinds of programs, because I do love it and this TAFE does great. The second thing is that I have a young boy who is a brilliant pianist. Everybody wanted him to be a performer. He does not. He wants to be a piano technician. We have to send him to Melbourne to do his course, so he has to leave his family, which is not great, and get funding for nearly \$15,000 for him to do his course. If he was in Queensland it would have a gap with it, but because he has to move to a different state he has to pay out of pocket.

CHAIR: And that was for a piano technician?

Ms Roby: A piano tuner. In this area piano tuning is a really highly paid job which has great outcomes. What I think a lot of people have with VET programs is they do not understand VET is not, just like being a teacher or a nurse or a doctor, university and a certificate II or III is not.

The last one I have seen—and this made me very angry and why I turned up—is that some large organisations—and I am going to name one of them, McDonald's—are running kids through a certificate II or III using up their funding from governments for it and those kids do not have real job outcomes and they are being locked into employment that is not sustainable for them. I think as organisations or government we need to make sure that larger organisations are held to a higher account than smaller ones, because I have seen it with Woolworths, McDonald's and other organisations that have side training organisations training kids in things that are not real jobs. They cannot use computers and they cannot spell and use it. It does not give them any more pathways.

For kids and young people that I support every day with mental health, the first thing I aim for with them is getting their education back on track. Young mums that are vulnerable in DV: where are we getting their education back on track? I would like to thank the Queensland government and TAFE Queensland. In the last 20 years that I have watched this they have done an amazing job. Some of the things I am bringing to you are just the complications that the job has done so well that people like me can expect it, but some of those little organisations are offering parents placements and workplaces and then the kids are not doing it and those kids are becoming mental health risks as a result.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your presentation, Sharne. We are very grateful. Deputy Chair, did you have any questions?

Mr LISTER: No, no questions from me, but thank you very much. I appreciated what you said.

Mr DAMETTO: Thank you very much for being brave enough to sit up there this evening and give us your account of what is happening in VET training here in Queensland and in particular Cairns. Do you have any ideas of how to improve some of the training outcomes?

Ms Roby: With regard to individual people or for organisations?

Mr DAMETTO: For individual people, the students.

Ms Roby: There are three organisations that have popped up in education in the last five years, because I have accessed all of them. One is a school called Holy Spirit. It is a private Catholic school that does alternative education. They need somebody within government and within the state system to draw alongside them to walk them through expectations and how to do their job better. It is not that they do not have the right heart; they are just underselling. There is another school in it called Busy Schools that employed teachers who were not qualified enough to deal with complex teacher issues alongside their issues. They are having what I would call mixed outcomes. Some students I have met there are having good outcomes. My son had a terrible outcome. I moved him back into mainstream schooling. Again, that system looks good on the outside; there are very few policies on the inside that I would say are safe for people with complex needs.

When you have a complex-needs family, you have complex-needs parents and so the parents and the child have to go on a journey of education together, as in we want the parents to do it. If I was going to win, I think when we have vulnerable parents and students we should send them both to school together. We should send the parents in to do their VET training as well. We should let the parents have an education outcome alongside their children. It is the best time for parents to relearn. My mum was illiterate. I tell my kids all the time that I am much better placed in our lives than I was then, but my husband left after 15 years and I was back on Centrelink fighting for education outcomes again, and it has been hard work. I think if we put people who are still going through the process of learning together, we want an outcome for the parents, too. That would reduce your domestic violence outcomes for women because they would have jobs and options for leaving as well. Educate families with certificates on the way through.

Mr DAMETTO: Thank you very much for that. That is a very insightful answer.

CHAIR: As there are no further questions, thank you very much for appearing before the committee. We are very grateful for your time and contribution.

HAYES, Mr Andrew, Enterprise Development Manager, Norsta Maritime Pty Ltd

CHAIR: Welcome, Mr Hayes.

Mr Hayes: You will have to excuse me: I have not really prepared for today's presentation—

CHAIR: No, that is okay.

Mr Hayes:—but the story of the business I am representing and the industry and our relationship with TAFE I think is worth sharing with you.

CHAIR: Fantastic.

Mr Hayes: Thank you, Madam Chair, for providing me with the opportunity to do a presentation on Norsta Maritime, which is a startup defence contractor—

CHAIR: We drove past your venue as we came back from the maritime college.

Mr Hayes: Great! I would just like to acknowledge a couple of people who are in the audience here who are working with us. Danny Taylor is from the Australian Navy and he has been doing a lot of work in the skills area, particularly looking at skills gaps so we can take electricians in the building industry and put them through a skill set and bring them over to the maritime industry. I also would like to acknowledge Leanne Bell, the director of TAFE Queensland, who is in the audience here today. They are a great partner of what we are doing. There is also Desley and Michael from the department and the work they are doing there, particularly in doing the maritime careers day on 13 May this year which brought 1,200 people together with about 30-plus businesses, including the whole marine precinct. That was very successful.

CHAIR: We hear there were big queues for the simulator that day.

Mr Hayes: Very big queues. I will give just a little bit of a background of who I am representing here tonight. I am representing, as I said, a defence business that started in Cairns. We would term it a defence startup business. It is called Norsta Maritime Pty Ltd. The business was created as a vehicle by the two shipyards here, Tropical Reef Shipyard and Norship, to create this vehicle. It is an Australian owned and controlled business. It also includes an amazing business called Nova Systems, which is a great Australian engineering systems business, and Secora. They won the \$70 million five-year contract to deliver the regional maintenance to the Navy, and that is a really good story for Cairns—fantastic story—and it challenged all of the traditional international defence primes to win, so that is very exciting.

It is a very unique model in the respect that, in terms of the sustainment model, we need obviously a very highly skilled workforce and it is very challenging, particularly with all of the competitors and competing interests with industries looking at essentially the same pool. What differentiates Norsta, I suppose, from other businesses that I have been familiar with is that we have the chief academic officer, Jo Pyne, from Queensland TAFE on its board which I think is a revolution and a really good innovative model. It is very European, whereby the vocational training provider has a seat at the table and can deal directly with the board and the chair and the decision-makers on what skills and workforce are all about. That is a direct line of communication on what is going on on ground into decision-making. I think it is a model that a lot of industries should consider looking at.

Obviously in terms of who is our preferred provider in terms of providing skills, I will say that the TAFE is our preferred provider. We are very lucky that we have very good relationships at a decision-making level of TAFE right through to people delivering programs and we are in contact with them on a very regular basis. In terms of the setup, that is a good start and we have only been in business for 12 months.

For those who are not familiar with the exciting maritime opportunities that are ahead of us in Cairns, there is about a \$700 million investment in the maritime precinct at the moment which is committed funding—it is not a promise; it is committed—and we are going to be building a new shipyard next to Austal. That already has \$360 million in approved funding from both the federal and the state governments which we are extremely pleased about and support. The idea is that it will be a facility that will handle four vessels of up to 5,000 tonnes and 120 metres in length. Essentially, we will have four shipyards here in Cairns that will not compete against one other; they will be complementary to each other.

When you have a look at that investment of \$360 million, it is not only in the construction but also in the operations. There will be a range of skilled worker requirements, from systems engineers right through to all the trades through to the schedulers and through the supply chain in doing the

maintenance itself across the maritime precinct. Obviously there is also the Pacific patrol boat training program, which was the first that TAFE Queensland secured, which is 14 Pacific island nations getting trained here locally. They came here as opposed to going to Tasmania, and Cairns can be very proud that they won that. Obviously the trick is to keep it and evolve it over time, and I believe that that is already taking place.

That \$690 million that is being invested in the marine precinct also includes the upgrades to the Great Barrier Reef International Marine College, which is very exciting and a benchmark. That \$690-plus million does not include private investment. If you took that big figure and put it somewhere else, obviously you would attract a hell of a lot of attention because that is a really good signal that the investment is happening now and we are going to have to have a lot more skilled workers come here and work. We are actually building opportunities for secondary school students and primary school students to come and work locally.

One of the initial difficulties I have had in this position is really understanding what the workforce skills requirements are going to be over time. It is a very challenging exercise to get an overview and a profile because it is about what sort of data we need to collect. One of the challenges of the maritime and defence industries is that, under the APS industry codes, these two industries are not recognised as key industries. Building a profile of what the industry looks like along with the labour force is quite challenging because of the data we have to use to create that profile. We are looking into that issue right now, but it is a difficult exercise to get a platform to use to get correct data.

The other challenge is what the demands of the future will look like. We have just started some preliminary investigations. When I started this role as the enterprise development manager I was doing some very detailed analysis with a consultant in Canberra looking at that question for me. We have already identified areas of the future. We have also identified some pretty acute skills already. They are mainly in systems engineering and also across the typical trades.

In understanding our workforce requirements we need to also understand the end user, but often we underestimate the supply chain. We are trying to capture what are the supply chain demands to service the three to four shipyards or end users not only in defence but also in reef boat operators or anyone else who is an end user in that process, because essentially we are also using the same sorts of suppliers. It is about understanding what labour each of those suppliers requires to execute their repair and maintenance contracts. That is something we are looking at now. I do not have an answer to that question yet because it is pretty difficult to do, but we are looking at it at this stage.

On the maritime precinct, it is fair to say that the two shipyards have in excess of 400 accredited suppliers. We have sufficient capability within the supply chain to meet current demand, but obviously future demand is what we are looking at. In the next month you are going to see a very big increase in foreign Navy vessels visiting Cairns because there is a major exercise off the coast up until about 7 August. We are also seeing a huge increase in the number of cruise ships coming in.

Here at Norsta Maritime we are also setting up what we call a one-stop shop. Under Plan Galileo—are people familiar with Plan Galileo? If you do not mind me explaining what this major change in naval sustainment is all about, I will give you a little bit of an example of what it means. Danny, you can correct me if I am not sharing the right model.

Plan Galileo was developed in response to the Navy's significant increase in the production and manufacture of new surface ships. In the past, the repair and maintenance or sustainment was done on a class variety. There are patrol boats, frigates and destroyers. In the past model, those different classes would have a different defence prime looking after them. Under this new model—and it is a bit of a revolution, so it will take a lot of time to bed down—there are four geographic locations around Australia. They are: Cairns—we are the first one—Darwin, Perth, which is at Henderson, and Sydney. There are four regional maintenance centres. Essentially, they will act as a one-stop shop to any vessel that needs to be repaired or maintained. Obviously, the four regional maintenance centres will have certain Navy vessels assigned to them to home port, but over time those vessel varieties will change and also where the vessel varieties are based will move around. The idea is to set up nationwide four networked hubs to do the repair and maintenance, and Cairns is the first one to get started. We are creating quite a pioneering example because we are the first one, so there is a lot of scrutiny on us.

CHAIR: You are breaking the ground for the rest of the nation. Good job.

Mr Hayes: We are breaking the ground and we are setting the standard—we hope. That is a bit of background information on what we are doing in the maritime sector and we are sharing with you information about our relationship with vocational training.

One of the key things we are looking to do currently—and this is just to pre-empt any questions—is develop these skill sets in traditional trade areas like electrical, mechanical and welding to provide some sort of crossover skill. Obviously an electrician in the building industry who is building a house has a different skill set to an electrician on one of these Navy ships. There is a lot more risk and obviously a lot more things to worry about. TAFE have existing courses that we have had a good look at. We think we would really like some support in getting some sort of bridging course or skill set so someone can transition into this industry and have much more flexibility over time.

CHAIR: As is done for recognised prior learning? How do you take that and transition it or upgrade it to meet the needs of that industry as it goes forward?

Mr Hayes: Correct.

CHAIR: We heard a very excellent presentation from Principal Houghton about the SchoolTech work at Woree. Are you talking to Woree about that? You have only been in the game 12 months, I think you said.

Mr Hayes: Correct.

CHAIR: Presumably having the Defence Force contracts would suggest that there is a very long-term gain in this. Are you starting now to talk to high schools to position growth?

Mr Hayes: We are. It is a very early stage, yes. We have also had a lot of discussions with the university sector about how we attract young people or career changers into this industry. It has been very reassuring to hear that presentation, particularly about the technology side of things. I said to Danny that we have to come down to your office or you can come to ours so we can start that engagement.

CHAIR: I think that is really important. I think that is where it starts. Apart from meeting the demands you have today, as you have just presented and really clearly articulated the investment by both federal and state government into that marine precinct, it is only going to grow into the future. It is about thinking about where you go from here and building that pipeline. It is no different to when you build a pipeline of projects; you need to build a pipeline of skills. Cairns regional job committee—sounds like it!

Mr LISTER: That was a very impressive presentation. I would hate to see the torrent of work available under Plan Galileo escape to centres away from Cairns. Is the tight market for the skills needed in this industry going to hamper Cairns having a deeper level supply chain here? You are putting it all together, but there will obviously need to be people doing engineering support, logistics and everything else that happens deeper down the pipeline. Can that be done here? How much of the 'maybe' depends on having the skills now?

Mr Hayes: That is a really good question and it is a difficult one to answer. However, as part of Plan Galileo, one of the key documents provides that under the contract we have to have an Australian industry capability plan. That plan gives preference to local and regional businesses first. Secondly, we have to maintain a significant proportion of Australian content under the contract. I think our minimum is 90 per cent, which is not easy. As the new vessels arrive over time, there are going to be different technologies—

Mr LISTER: Security, IP—all those sorts of things?

Mr Hayes: Yes, all those sorts of things. Thank you. You are very much on top of this. Workforce is a big part of it. Technology transfer is also under the Australian industry capability plan. We will work closely with the local universities to establish what that might look like. That is to encourage local experts to provide local solutions where they can. Industry participation is one of the significant ones.

CHAIR: Presumably there are challenges, and my guess is that if Plan Galileo covers Sydney, Darwin and—

Mr Hayes: Cairns.

CHAIR: Western Australia, was it—in Henderson?

Mr Hayes: Yes, sorry. That is correct.

CHAIR: There are similar workforce challenges around the nation, so presumably Cairns would not be at any disadvantage in terms of access to today's need for skills than—

Mr Hayes: That is right. Part of the Australian industry capability plan is developing local capability, as the name suggests. We are not about replacing businesses. We get a lot of inquiries externally, but our preference is to support local industry first. That is a part of the contractual obligation we have. As the model matures over time there could be opportunities for local businesses to partner with someone external but maintain the local control.

CHAIR: Perhaps being first out of the blocks, Cairns has an advantage over the three other locations.

Mr Hayes: We have tried to take a very good stand and that is why there has been quite a lot of publicity, because I have been very mindful of showcasing our achievements to date. We had an industry briefing on 8 March which was attended by the Rear Admiral Steve Tiffen, two commodores and four directors-general from the Navy. That was the first time a collection of decision-makers had been in one location. We actually had 159 RSVPs in three weeks and I think about 130 people attended the industry briefing, which I hope to replicate next year but with an update as well.

CHAIR: That is brilliant.

Mr Hayes: The RMP North contract will be announced later in the year, which is the Darwin one. It will be very interesting to see the outcome of that tender process.

CHAIR: We will have to keep our eyes open.

Mr Hayes: Please do.

Mr BOOTHMAN: When it comes to skills and what you require for the future for you to expand to make the business a lot larger, what areas do you think the government needs to focus on to give you the workers you desperately need for your growing business?

Mr Hayes: That is a good question. The areas we are looking forward to are electrical and systems engineers, because they not only design these platforms but also maintain them. It was really interesting to hear about the programs that are being started up in your school. I think they are very much aligned to what we are doing. I particularly liked how you emphasised that there is a maritime flavour to your courses. I think coding is one and also PLC training, because a lot of the serving personnel on these vessels are more systems operators. Traditionally there would also have to be on-board technicians et cetera, but you are seeing more sophisticated operating systems so there are fewer personnel on vessels because as technology improves over time a lot of their functions are being replaced by new technologies.

We have all heard about the Industry 4.0 revolution. Maintaining investment in those technologies and business improvement systems, particularly in the supply chain, I think is critically important, because that will also help us deal with the labour shortage. As technological advances increase it will help manage scarce resources. It is also robotics and drones. I think over time we will also see the introduction of 3D printers where, if there is a vessel out at sea and something breaks, you can transfer a digital file to a vessel and they can potentially manufacture a temporary part on board until they get into port. I think we are going to see a lot more of that.

Mr BOOTHMAN: In other words, we really do need a big, broad range of skill sets.

Mr Hayes: It is a big, broad range. It is a really challenging issue because it is traditional skills with new skills.

CHAIR: It is very nuanced.

Mr Hayes: Exactly.

Mr DAMETTO: Andrew, it was brilliant to listen to your introduction. By the sound of things, Norsta is changing the industry up here. It made my ears prick up when you were talking about the skill sets and trade skills you need to attract. I want to explore a little bit further why you said that maybe TAFE needs to create what I am going to describe as a bridging course to go from one industry to the next. I am a tradesperson myself, so I understand what it is like to go to different industries with the same trade skill. From my perspective, if you are a boilermaker then you want to be a boilermaker in a workshop in town, out at the mines or on a ship. One thing I noticed from industry is that when you go to different industries you have industry-specific induction training. Is that something you think Norsta or the state should be investing in?

Mr Hayes: That is a good question. We can execute it.

Mr DAMETTO: And pay for it?

Mr Hayes: I think any sort of assistance from government in this area where there is training required to have more of a maritime focus, let's say, is important.

Mr DAMETTO: I am happy with that.

Mr Hayes: As I said, I have been working very closely with Danny looking at these bridging courses, and I think assistance in this space would be most welcomed.

CHAIR: Then it comes back to, I say again, what Principal Houghton put out there about industry collaboration at those early stages to create a pipeline of skills and expertise. Without that early understanding of what the skills are that you need today and what you are going to need into the future being ingrained and implanted at that starting point, it is a missed opportunity.

Mr DAMETTO: My point was that when you take on a skill set which is bound to the maritime industry it is hard for a tradesperson to then go to another industry when you have spent time and money acquiring that trade. To attract people into the maritime world we need to find the easiest pathway for those tradespeople to enter. As long as there is an easy pathway, I think you will bring them on board eventually.

Mr Hayes: I could not agree with you more.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Where have you been trying to obtain the skilled workers for your industry? Where are they coming from?

Mr Hayes: That is a good question. Most of the skilled workforce is already here in Cairns. Most of the skilled workforce is in the supply chain that basically provides the subcontractors to the end user, being the shipyards. The shipyards have their own workforce, but they cannot execute all of the tasks within a scope of works for repair and maintenance so they have to draw on the services and products of the local supply chain to deliver that outcome.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I am from the Gold Coast region, and down in my neck of the woods a lot of our employers compete with each other to try to get those skilled workers because there are simply not enough in the industry.

CHAIR: They are cannibalising it a little bit.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Yes, they are. I was just very curious as to how you are getting those workers.

Mr Hayes: It is a work in progress.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. Is there anybody else who wants to present before I close and open just for general conversation? That brings our forum to a close for Hansard purposes. Thank you to everybody for sharing their views and supporting the committee's work today. We appreciate your interest. A transcript of these proceedings will be available in due course. If anyone here would like to speak privately to the committee about any of the issues after we finish, we are going to do that momentarily. I declare this forum closed.

The committee adjourned at 6.50 pm.