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ABSTRACT

To alleviate the economic problems of youth, the Australian Education Council has expressed the need for a comprehensive youth policy whose aim should be to provide young people with options in education, training, or employment. Facts show a declining rate of retention to completion of secondary schools for males due to the present low employment levels and increased unemployment benefits. Conversely, a sharper decline in full-time employment opportunties for females and a reluctance to accept unemployment benefits influences females to stay in school. Student enrollment directly from school at universities, colleges, and technical and further education (TAFE) institutions has declined; the shortage of jobs, less value placed on degress, and unattractive scholarship plans act as disincentives. A decline in full-time employment is almost offset by an increase in part-time job opportunities but, unemployment benefit policies discourage part-time work. Full-time students hold most part-time jobs. A youth policy will provide options which will make unemployment the least acceptable alternative as full-time employment opportunities decrease. Success depends on (1) responsible schools teaching the basic skills, (2) a counseling system emphasizing pastoral care, (3) a rationalized education and training allowance scheme, (4) institutional responsiveness, and (5) work opportunities. Too hasty emphasis on the role of vocational education and TAFE should be avoided. (ILB)

Youth, Education and Employment

PETER KARMEL

Chairman
Tertiary Education Commission

The Radford Memorial Lecture

delivered to
the Australian Association for Research in Education

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The Radford Memorial Lecture is presented each year at the Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education in recognition of the contribution of the late Dr William C. Radford to the establishment and development of the Association.

YOUTH, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

When I was invited to give this lecture, I accepted with a special sense of pleasure. I had an association with Dr Radford over a number of years. In 1968 I became a member of the Australian Council for Educational Research and was involved in regular meetings with him over nearly ten years. My association with him was very close during the Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia 1969-70, of which he was a member and I was Chairman.

The recency of the concern that educationists are showing for the problems of the transition from school to work could not be better illustrated than by reference to the report of the South Australian enquiry. In a report of 650 pages and over 1200 paragraphs, the word 'employment' appears in only 28 paragraphs and there are only six index references to 'employment and education' and none to 'unemployment'. In those happy days the problems of unemployment belonged to an earlier generation. Of the six references to 'employment and education'[1], five appeared in the chapter on the purposes of the educational system, a chapter whose principal author was Dr Radford himself. In one paragraph he wrote:

> The rapid expansion of opportunities for employment for both women and men has been accompanied by a demand for greater skill and maturity in those entering employment. This has meant a demand for more education before employment begins. At the same time there has been an increase in the rate at which people change jobs. The rate of job obsolescence, and the need either for upgrading skills or for developing new ones, have become important as they never were before. Most of those entering jobs can expect to need periods of retraining, or to face constant learning, over their working lifetime, of new skills, new attitudes and even new approaches.

Further on in the same chapter he referred to important implications for the curriculum and the methods and organization of the schools. In this connection he advocated:

> A broad general education rather than a specific vocational or pre-vocational one, although this broad general education should include the world of work. It may include work experience, and should certainly provide courses of study which prepare the child to face the major conditions of his work with confidence.

As in many other areas of education, Dr Radford displayed a prescience for which rightly he had a reputation.

I am taking the opportunity of this lecture to bring together my thoughts on policies for youth in the context of employment and education as they have developed over the past 12 months.[2] I am sure that Dr Radford would have appreciated, and certainly contributed to, the topic I am speaking on this evening.

I propose to start by setting out certain facts and trends relating to the education and employment of the young. These will illustrate current trends from which conclusions for the future can be drawn. I have for the last year been advocating an 'integrated' (or what is now being called a 'comprehensive') policy for youth, and I shall set out the broad content of such a policy and its cornerstones. Finally, I want to issue a series of warnings so that we do not substitute new sacred cows for old ones.

FACTS AND TRENDS

School leavers

At present about 250 000 young people leave secondary school each year. Table 1 is a balance sheet of these school leavers, indicating the grade from which they leave and the activity in which they find themselves in the middle of the year following the year during which they left school. Almost one-half of the school leavers have completed ten years of education or less; about 35 per cent leave from Year 12, although those successfully completing Year 12 must be a smaller fraction. About one-quarter of the leavers enter further full-time education, roughly evenly divided between universities, colleges of advanced education (CAEs), and technical and further education (TAFE) institutions. Nearly 60 per cent obtain full-time employment, and of these a significant number enter apprenticeships; one-sixth remain unemployed. It is worth emphasizing that although the number that remain unemployed is substantial, and a proper cause of great concern, those who obtain full-time jobs are still a majority of school leavers.

The relative magnitudes in Table 1 are the culmination of powerful trends in education and employment over the past 25 years. Retention to the completion of secondary school has multiplied four-fold over this period, and participation in tertiary education nearly three-fold. Full-time employment for the young has become a less significant activity, and 25 years ago unemployment was negligible. These long-run trends are well known. It is, however, important to understand what has been happening in the recent past.

Table 1 School Leavers, Rough Magnitudes, Australia circa 1978

Source		Destination	
Year 9 or below	25 000	Full-time education—	
		Universities	20 000
Year 10	90 000	CAEs	20 000
		TAFE	20 000
		Full-time employment—	
Year 11	45 000	Apprenticeships	40 000
		Other	100 000
Year 12	90 000	Unemployment	40 000
		Other	10 000
Total	250 000		250 000

Table 2 Apparent[a] Retention Rates to Completion of Secondary School, Australia 1967 to 1978

	Males %	Females %	Persons %
1967	26.5	18.7	22.7
1968	28.5	21.2	25.0
1969	31.1	23.7	27.5
1970	33.0	25.5	29.3
1971	34.1	26.9	30.6
1972	35.7	28.9	32.4
1973	35.2	30.8	33.1
1974	34.1	31.6	32.8
1975	34.6	33.6	34.1
1976	34.6	35.3	34.9
1977	34.0	36.6	35.3
1978	33.1	37.2	35.1

[a] Ratio of final year enrolments to enrolments in the first secondary school year when the cohort of that school year commenced.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Schools*; Commonwealth Department of Education.

School retention

Table 2 sets out retention to the completion of secondary school over the past ten years. Retention began to level out from 1976 onwards, but this concealed contrary trends for males and females. For males, retention reached its peak in 1972 and since then has declined quite significantly. For females, however, retention has continued to rise over the whole period, to such an extent that substantially more girls are now staying on at school than boys; indeed in 1967 the ratio of boys to girls in the final year of secondary school was about 3:2, whereas now girls outnumber boys by more than 10 per cent.

There is little doubt that recent trends in retention have been influenced by the shortage of full-time jobs and by changes in unemployment benefits. The shortage of jobs acts to encourage both early leaving, as scarce jobs become available and are seized by young people, and retention, as young people decide that it is better to stay at school and obtain higher qualifications than waste time looking for non-existent jobs. Unemployment benefits for 16- and 17-year-olds increased sharply in 1973 and 1974, thus altering the balance of incentives between staying at school and leaving and receiving the dole; indeed the decline in retention for males appears to date from these increases in benefits. These factors have operated differently for males and females. In the case of girls, full-time employment opportunities have declined much more sharply than for boys; this, combined with perhaps a greater reluctance for parents to see their daughters on the dole, may account for the differential retention trends of boys and girls.

It is difficult to predict future trends in retention. The long-run increase in retention rates which has been going on for at least 60 years suggests that the decline in male retention of the past few years may be only a temporary aberration. The decision to leave school is taken in terms of the attractiveness of the various options open to young people; this has changed markedly over the past few years, but the changes could easily be offset by government action in

respect of financial support. On the other hand, it is well known that retention is a function of socio-economic class. This can be illustrated in a crude way by the different patterns of behaviour in government, Catholic, and non-Catholic independent schools; for example, in 1978 retention to the final year in government secondary schools was 29.6 per cent, in Catholic schools 43.1 per cent, and in non-Catholic independent schools 85.5 per cent. It may be that there are saturation levels for retention in the various classes of our society and we are approaching them.

Tertiary participation

Table 3 sets out numbers of students commencing undergraduate courses at universities and CAEs direct from school. In both university and advanced education sectors, entry direct from school has either levelled out or declined over the past five or six years; in the case of universities there has been a significant decline. Most students coming direct from school enrol full-time but the proportion of commencing students coming direct from school has been falling; more students have been entering institutions later in their careers and this has been associated with a marked swing towards part-time attendance. As far as entry direct from school is concerned, the entry of women has held up slightly more than that of men.

Data on commencing students are not available for TAFE institutions, but the number of full-time enrolments can be used as an index giving parallel information to that contained in Table 3. This is shown in Table 4. Full-time enrolments in major TAFE authorities, of whom three-quarters are aged 15 to 19 years, have been rising steadily over the past few years; the trend is clearly a contrary one to that exhibited in the university and advanced education sectors. However there is no evidence that many students who have completed secondary school, and who might otherwise have attended universities or CAEs, have switched to TAFE institutions as full-time students. Most of the young full-time enrolments in TAFE are of people who have left school after Year 10; there may, of course, be an increasing number of students who choose to leave school at Year 10 and proceed to TAFE institutions rather than stay in traditional education.

If the data relating to students commencing undergraduate courses in the university and advanced education sectors are related to school statistics, it is possible to calculate the proportion of young people in the final year of

Table 3 Students Commencing Undergraduate Courses at Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education Direct from School, Australia 1974 to 1979

	Universities	Colleges of advanced education
1974	22 329	19 525
1975	22 037	19 925
1976	22 038	20 006
1977	21 614[a]	20 403
1978	20 243	20 084
1979	n.a.	19 925 prelim.

[a] Includes Deakin University for the first time.

Source: Tertiary Education Commission, Advanced Education Annual Statistics Collection.

Table 4 Full-time Enrolments in Major TAFE Authorities, by Stream, Australia 1974 to 1978

Year	Streams 1 to 4[a]		Stream 5[b]	
	Number	Increase %	Number	Increase %
1974	19 358		7 796	
1975	25 849	33.5	10 343	32.7
1976	27 513	6.4	10 517	1.7
1977	29 531	7.3	11 159	6.1
1978	31 460	6.5	12 875	15.4
1978 increase over 1974		62.5		65.1

[a] Includes professional, para-professional, apprenticeship and other skilled trade and vocational courses.

[b] Preparatory courses such as matriculation and migrant education.

Source: Tertiary Education Commission, TAFE Annual Statistics Collection.

secondary school who transfer to higher education in the following year. This is done in Table 5. The sharp decline in the rate of transfer from secondary school to higher education is obvious, and is particularly marked in the case of universities. Over the last five or six years, the rate of transfer has declined by about one-fifth.

There is a number of possible explanations for this decline. In the first place, it can be argued that the guidelines given by the Commonwealth Government to the Universities Commission and the Commission on Advanced Education in 1975 and 1976 respectively, namely that intakes into universities should be

Table 5 Students Commencing Higher Education Direct from School as a Percentage of Final Year Students in the Previous Year, Australia 1974 to 1979

	Males %	Females %	Total %
	Universities		
1974	32.3	25.1	29.1
1975	31.7	24.7	28.4
1976	30.5	23.0	26.9
1977	28.8	21.4	25.0
1978	26.9	19.0	22.9
1979	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	Colleges of Advanced Education		
1974	20.2	31.6	25.4
1975	21.0	31.0	25.7
1976	20.2	29.0	24.4
1977	20.0	27.3	23.6
1978	19.9	25.4	22.7
1979	19.2	24.7	22.0
	Total		
1974	52.6	56.7	54.5
1975	52.6	55.7	54.1
1976	50.6	52.0	51.3
1977	48.9	48.4	48.6
1978	46.8	44.4	45.6
1979	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Schools*; Tertiary Education Commission.

maintained at the 1975 level and into CAEs at the 1976 level, have resulted in a restriction in the number of places in higher education available to young people. However it is difficult to sustain this argument because there is evidence that it has become easier to gain entry to most courses in most institutions; accordingly the levelling out and decline in numbers entering higher education from school must be interpreted as a change in the preferences of students. It can also be argued that some of these students are now entering TAFE institutions; again this is a difficult argument to sustain, since most of the additional full-time entry to TAFE is of students with Year 10 qualifications.

There is some evidence that some high attaining students are leaving school as soon as they can in order to obtain jobs, presumably with the intention of undertaking study part-time, perhaps later in their career. The shortage of jobs may well encourage school leavers to seize employment opportunities rather than persist with higher education. This trend has probably been strengthened by changes in the perception of the value of further education. Until comparatively recently a university or advanced education qualification ensured ready employment which was well paid and reasonably attractive. Now graduates take time to obtain jobs and some remain unemployed. With the large flow of new graduates joining the workforce, people with degrees are being forced to accept positions lower down the job hierarchy. The value of a degree is *perceived* to be less and this will discourage enrolment in universities and CAEs. To some extent these perceptions are misleading, because graduates do in fact find jobs more easily than non-graduates and usually in higher paid occupations. The perceptions have, however, common currency and this has been encouraged by an exaggerated view of the problems of unemployment for graduates, promulgated by the media.

Decisions of the young are affected not only by their perception of the value of further education, but by the incentives implicit in the various forms of support for the young. As I pointed out earlier, unemployment benefits for young people increased significantly in real terms in 1973 and 1974, although their real value has been eroded more recently. At the same time the allowances paid under the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme (TEAS) have declined in real value and the means test has become more rigorous. In the last few years, teaching scholarships have all but been abandoned in the Australian teaching services, and this has removed an important and attractive form of support for young people proceeding to higher education. The shifts in the relative values of these support schemes have militated against participation in higher education.

Apprenticeships

Although the importance of apprenticeships has been emphasized in recent discussions on manpower planning, it is often not appreciated how significant it is in terms of destinations of school leavers. The number of young people entering apprenticeships is at present almost exactly the same as the number entering higher education, namely 40 000 per annum. Moreover the number of new indentures registered has risen significantly over the last 15 years: it is wrong to suggest that apprenticeship is on the decline. Table 6 sets out the number of new indentures registered from 1964-65 to 1977-78. Apprentices are enrolled as part-time students in TAFE institutions, although changes in ar-

Table 6 New Indentures Registered, Australia 1964-65 to 1977-78

	000
1964-65	29.8
1965-66	28.9
1966-67	28.0
1967-68	28.2
1968-69	28.3
1969-70	32.1
1970-71	34.7
1971-72	32.6
1972-73	31.9
1973-74	42.4
1974-75	35.5
1975-76	36.3
1976-77	36.0
1977-78	42.2

Source: Commonwealth-State Apprenticeship Committee.

rangements for the training of skilled tradesmen are resulting in some apprentices spending a proportion of their training full-time in educational institutions.

Youth employment

Table 7 sets out the numbers of employed persons aged 15 to 19 years for the past 15 years. Full-time and part-time employment are shown separately. Full-time employment of the young reached its peak in 1966, and since then has declined fairly steadily. This is a phenomenon of great significance; it shows that the decline of full-time job opportunities, which appears to have been especially serious since 1975, is a continuation of a long-term trend. There is, however, one major difference: in the earlier part of the period, the reduced

Table 7 Employed Persons Aged 15 to 19 years[a], Australia 1964 to 1979

	Males			Females		
	Full-time *000*	Part-time *000*	Total *000*	Full-time *000*	Part-time *000*	Total *000*
May 1964	322.8	16.6	339.4	280.8	19.9	300.7
1965	326.6	14.5	341.1	290.0	19.6	309.6
1966	334.8	17.5	352.2	296.6	21.0	317.6
1967	314.6	18.9	333.5	294.7	19.9	314.6
1968	300.3	21.1	321.4	281.1	23.2	304.4
1969	306.8	24.1	331.5	278.7	23.9	302.6
1970	306.2	26.4	332.6	281.2	24.2	305.4
1971	297.5	31.7	329.2	284.2	31.1	315.3
1972	290.9	24.4	315.3	265.0	25.7	290.7
1973	299.7	33.6	333.3	260.1	35.6	295.7
1974	310.7	36.6	347.3	265.5	42.4	307.9
1975	292.4	39.6	332.0	248.7	44.4	293.1
1976	291.8	51.9	343.7	235.3	55.6	290.9
1977	287.9	53.9	341.8	224.1	64.4	288.5
1978	291.5	54.2	345.7	235.0	73.0	308.1
1979	297.6	59.3	356.9	215.9	75.1	291.0

[a] Excludes Defence personnel.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *The Labour Force*.

participation in full-time employment was balanced by an increased participation in full-time education; in the latter part, this did not happen and reduced full-time employment opportunities were associated with increased numbers on unemployment benefit. The decline of full-time job opportunities has been much more serious for young women than for young men: the number of young men in full-time employment is now one-ninth less than it was in 1966, whereas for women the reduction is over one-quarter.

While the number of full-time jobs has declined, the number of part-time ones has increased greatly, almost to the extent of offsetting the decline in full-time employment. Part-time job opportunities are more plentiful for girls than for boys. It is significant that most of the part-time jobs in this age group are held by full-time students — in fact about 80 per cent. This is because the present rules for unemployment benefits for this age group permit the earning of only $3 per week before benefits are reduced on a dollar-for-dollar basis. There is therefore little incentive for a person on the dole to obtain part-time employment. Many of the jobs involved are for comparatively short hours, the average weekly duration being about 10½ hours in August 1979.

Youth unemployment

Table 8 sets out unemployment rates by age over the last 15 years. Overall unemployment began to become serious in 1975, although youth unemployment had begun to increase relative to unemployment among adults from 1972 onwards. Unemployment among those 25 years and over, although larger than was usual in the 1960s, is still comparatively moderate. However, for the 15 to 19 years group, it is at high levels and even those in the 20 to 24 years group have some difficulty in finding jobs.

Many factors can be adduced as contributing to youth unemployment. Clearly the general state of the economy is of considerable importance. When the demand for labour slackens, it affects, first, new entrants to the workforce;

Table 8 Unemployment Rates by Age, Australia 1964 to 1979

	Unemployment rates %			
	15-19 years	20-24 years	25 years and over	All ages
May 1964	3.4	1.7	1.0	1.4
1965	2.8	1.5	0.9	1.2
1966	3.0	1.3	1.0	1.4
1967	3.8	1.6	1.1	1.6
1968	3.7	2.2	1.0	1.6
1969	3.0	2.0	1.0	1.4
1970	3.0	1.9	1.0	1.3
1971	3.3	2.0	1.1	1.5
1972	4.6	3.0	1.4	2.0
1973	4.7	2.4	1.2	1.8
1974	4.2	2.4	1.1	1.6
1975	10.1	5.6	2.5	3.9
1976	12.1	5.4	2.5	4.1
1977	15.2	6.9	3.0	5.1
1978	16.0	8.5	4.1	6.2
1979	17.0	9.3	3.7	6.2

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *The Labour Force*.

Table 9 Unemployment Rates by Age, Australia August 1979

Age	Unemployment rate %
15	27.2
16	26.3
17	18.8
18	14.3
19	12.7
20	10.4
21	9.6
22	8.9
23	6.6
24	5.1

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *The Labour Force*.

these are young people and the level of youth unemployment will naturally be sensitive to the level of economic activity and the rate of economic growth. However there are other factors which have conspired against job opportunities for the young. These include the high level of juvenile wage rates relative to adult rates, the low level of productivity of a significant number of young workers partly through lack of skills and partly through attitudes to work, the increasing participation of women in the workforce, the high level of costs of on-the-job training for young workers, and the changing job structure whereby the proportion of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs has been steadily falling. These structural factors all make employers less willing to employ young and inexperienced workers.

The bias of the labour market against the young is graphically illustrated in Table 9 which sets out the latest unemployment rates by single ages. There is an almost perfect inverse correlation between unemployment rates and age. It is also worth noting that the average duration of unemployment among the young is close to six months, which indicates that much youth unemployment must be relatively long term. Moreover the average duration has been rising.

Activities of youth

Table 10 is a matrix setting out very rough magnitudes of the activities of persons aged 15 to 19 years. Broadly speaking, about 40 per cent of the 1.3

Table 10 Activities of Persons Aged 15 to 19 Years, Rough Magnitudes, Australia circa 1978

		EDUCATION			
		Full-time	Part-time	Nil	Total
EMPLOYMENT	Full-time		225 000	300 000	525 000
	Part-time	100 000	Relatively few	25 000	125 000
	Nil	520 000	Relatively few	130 000	650 000
	Total	620 000	225 000	455 000	1 300 000

million persons in this age group are engaged in full-time employment and about 50 per cent in full-time education. Many of those in full-time employment are undertaking part-time courses in educational institutions, and some of those in full-time education have part-time employment. However there appear to be relatively few who spend part of their time in employment and part in education or training. Similarly, of those unemployed, there are few who are engaged in part-time study. This latter is accounted for by the fact that persons on unemployment benefit are not permitted to undertake more than eight hours study per week.

CONCLUSIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The pattern of activities of the young is affected by the financial returns (incentives) which different activities offer. At present, full-time job opportunities are limited and for many young people, particularly those who have left school early with low achievement and poor motivation, prospects of full-time employment are slim. The conditions associated with unemployment benefits operate against acceptance of part-time jobs and the undertaking of part-time study. Support under TEAS is comparatively low and subject to a strict means test. These factors work in the direction of reduced retention at school, lower participation in tertiary education, and a lack of part-time employment combined with part-time training.

It is reasonable to assume that there will be some revival of economic activity and an increase in the rate of growth of the Australian economy. However, the workforce is predicted to continue to grow by rather more than one per cent per annum for the next 20 years, i.e. by about 60 000 per annum. In addition, the present level of unemployment is about 400 000; and there is an unknown but substantial number of people who have withdrawn from the workforce (disguised unemployment) or are underemployed and who will seek employment as economic conditions improve. It is unlikely that the rate of economic growth could be so high as to create enough additional employment to produce full employment in the sense of the 1960s. For this reason, as well as for the structural factors contributing to youth unemployment that I have outlined above, the young will remain at a significant disadvantage in the employment market. This is particularly the case for the bottom 20 to 25 per cent of school achievers. Unemployment is concentrated among the young, and among the young it is concentrated among special groups. It is worth commenting that there is unlikely to be any long-term relief for these groups through the expansion of traditional apprenticeship training, although this is frequently advocated. The fact is that the present level of intakes of apprentices appears likely to satisfy manpower needs[3] and, in any event, entry to apprenticeships has become increasingly competitive.

With the present low employment opportunities and the present levels and conditions of unemployment benefits and TEAS allowances, there is no reason to expect an immediate resumption of the upward trend in the retention of males at secondary school, and retention of females may level out. While I would not wish to retain more young people unwillingly in secondary school, it is difficult to argue in favour of a reversal of the long-term trend towards more education for boys. This is particularly so as Australian retention to the completion of secondary school is comparatively low in relation to other advanced countries.

For similar reasons, direct entry from secondary school to higher education is

unlikely to rise in the immediate future, although entry to TAFE institutions has been rising and is likely to continue to increase. The Williams Committee argued persuasively for a continuation of some growth in enrolments in higher education, although it expressed the view that most of this growth should take place in colleges of advanced education.[4] In spite of apparent surpluses of manpower in particular professions and the necessity for graduates to accept employment lower down the job hierarchy, there are benefits from a better educated population both in terms of the sophistication of our society and the personal satisfactions to be obtained from wider cultural horizons. Educational policy should not be governed solely by narrow economic considerations. The developed countries are not turning their backs on education and Australia's faith in the worthwhileness of an expanding system of education needs to be restored.

The economic problems of youth will certainly be with us for the 1980s, if not permanently. It is sometimes argued that when the numbers in the 15 to 19 years group begin to decline, the labour market will swing in favour of the young. The structural factors mentioned above are reasons for not relying too much on such relief but, in any case, numbers in the age group are not going to decline until the early 1990s and even then the annual decrements will be comparatively small; by the latter part of the 1990s the numbers in the age group are expected to rise again. This is illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11 Population Aged 15 to 19 Years, Australia projected 1978 to 2000[a]

Year	Population *000*	Increase on previous year *000*	*%*
1978	1286.2		
1979	1290.2	4.0	0.3
1980	1285.9	-4.3	-0.3
1981	1276.3	-9.6	-0.7
1982	1266.0	-10.3	-0.8
1983	1261.3	-4.7	-0.4
1984	1266.9	5.6	0.4
1985	1284.0	17.1	1.3
1986	1308.3	24.3	1.9
1987	1334.6	23.3	1.8
1988	1344.4	12.8	1.0
1989	1341.1	-3.3	-0.2
1990	1322.6	-18.5	-1.4
1991	1293.6	-29.0	-2.2
1992	1260.7	-32.9	-2.5
1993	1233.5	-27.2	-2.2
1994	1208.2	-25.3	-2.1
1995	1194.7	-13.5	-1.1
1996	1193.9	-0.8	-0.1
1997	1206.7	12.8	1.1
1998	1229.4	22.7	1.9
1999	1267.4	38.0	3.1
2000	1307.3	39.9	3.1

[a] June 1978 base.
Assumptions: Fertility — replacement from 1984
Mortality — Australia 1975-76
Migration — 50 000 net

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Projections of the Population of Australia.*

The conclusions that I draw from these facts and trends are that, in the absence of a positive policy for youth, an increasing number of young people will slip into unsatisfactory activities (including being on the dole) and that this will impinge more harshly on girls than on boys. If relatively fewer young people are to be in full-time employment and if unemployment is to be regarded as an unacceptable option for the young, a spectrum of activities must be developed ranging from full-time education at the one end to full-time employment at the other, with many half-way houses in between. This will have to be a government responsibility. Already governments spend a great deal of money on the 15 to 19 years group through full-time education, education allowances, employment subsidies, unemployment benefits, and special manpower schemes. If our economic structure is such that full-time employment opportunities for the young become less, society will have to be prepared to provide alternatives even at the cost of additional funds.

COMPREHENSIVE YOUTH POLICY

The above situation has now been recognized by Australian Governments, as evidenced by the deliberations of the recent meeting of Australian Ministers for Education in Perth. At this meeting, the Australian Education Council expressed the need for a comprehensive policy on transition from school to work. In the words of the press release:

> The aim of the comprehensive policy should be ultimately to provide all young people in the 15-19 age group with options in education, training and employment, or any combination of these, either part-time or full-time, so that unemployment becomes the least acceptable alternative. The Council recognizes that a comprehensive policy will need to encompass a rationalisation of existing benefit schemes and incentives to young people and to industry in order to ensure that they are mutually consistent and do not provide disincentives to participation in education and training.

As pointed out above, traditionally most young people have either been in full-time education or in full-time employment. A comprehensive youth policy, however, would include a *range* of options for youth:

- traditional senior high school leading to tertiary education, mainly at universities and CAEs;
- modified secondary school programs to hold the interest of young people with a previous school record of low achievement and low motivation. This may involve not only the development of new courses within secondary schools but also the development of specialist institutions;
- pre-skill training of a broad kind, including general education, either at secondary schools or at TAFE institutions, leading to skill training, including traditional apprenticeship (e.g. pre-apprenticeship and pre-vocational courses as at present conducted in a number of States at TAFE institutions). Provision should be made for the possibility of transfer to institutions of higher education at a later stage;
- skill training outside the traditional apprenticeable trades. TAFE institutions could be expected to be heavily involved in this option, which is of particular importance in opening up employment opportunities for young women;
- integrated school-work programs on a half-and-half basis. This might involve work activities run by schools (e.g. school firms, school factories,

school craft shops or other entrepreneurial or community activities), part-time employment in the public or private sectors, or organized community service;

- combinations of part-time study and part-time work undertaken independently;
- employment subsidies in the form of payments to employers to undertake the training of young people (e.g. the Special Youth Employment Training Program (SYETP) of the Commonwealth Government). Such training should be under external supervision organized by an appropriate authority; or
- employment under normal industrial conditions.

CORNERSTONES OF YOUTH POLICY

For a comprehensive youth policy to have a chance of being successful, certain major conditions must be met.

Basic skills

It is now well recognized that a proportion of young people, perhaps up to one-quarter, are ill-served by the operation of our school system in the present social context. Children who emerge from primary school without a capacity to read, number, and communicate are so seriously handicapped in their subsequent secondary schooling that they are unlikely to be anything other than low achievers. Similarly those who leave secondary school with poor cognitive skills and without a capacity to work with others will not compete on an equal basis in a limited job market. It is essential that schools accept the responsibility, at least until the completion of compulsory schooling, for ensuring that students have cognitive skills (literacy, numeracy, and oracy) and affective skills ('life role competencies') to acceptable standards. This should be essentially a responsibility of primary schools and junior high schools, but it may require remediation of both cognitive and affective skills by special post-school activities. Good teachers are expected to pay attention to and deal with individual differences among their students, but their expectations of certain classes of students are often low. Teachers must learn to have high expectations of all their students, however difficult that may seem.

Pastoral care

In recent years, counselling and guidance services have improved in educational institutions; and individual students are usually able to obtain assistance if they seek it. However, in order to ensure that all persons in the 15 to 19 years group find themselves in acceptable activities, it will be necessary to take care of those at particular risk on more than a casual basis. This will require a counselling system, the main emphasis of which is pastoral care rather than careers or vocational guidance. Each counsellor should take responsibility for a number of individuals over the necessary period of years so that individuals may be assisted into appropriate activities. It is possible that such a system of counselling might be better located outside the schools, on the grounds that it can operate for people whether at school, at work, or in some other activity.

Financial assistance

At present, financial assistance is provided to young people through a number of educational and manpower schemes. The schemes provide different be-

nefits and are subject to different conditions. Benefits differ significantly among the three main schemes, namely the Unemployment Benefit, the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme (TEAS), and the National Employment and Training System. Benefits under the Secondary Allowances Scheme (SAS) and under the Education Program for Unemployed Youth and the Community Youth Support Scheme differ again. TEAS and SAS allowances are means tested on parental income, although the means tests differ. Unemployment benefits and the other assistance schemes are means tested on the recipient's own income. Students on TEAS allowances are permitted to have personal income up to $1500 per annum without loss of benefit (and beyond $1500 with a loss of $1 benefit for $2 income), whereas persons on Unemployment Benefit are permitted to earn only $3 per week, after which benefit is reduced dollar for dollar. The conditions for receipt of unemployment benefit also make serious part-time study impossible. If there is to be a comprehensive youth policy, these schemes for financial assistance will have to be modified to rationalize the incentives that they offer for work or study.

A rationalized education and training allowances scheme would not discourage students from staying in full-time education or training whether at secondary school, TAFE institution, CAE, or university. It would encourage young people to gain work experience by part-time employment and permit a combination of part-time training and part-time employment. Unemployment benefits would be available only as a last resort. An education and training allowances scheme along these lines would necessarily involve a greater coverage than the present TEAS and SAS schemes and would certainly involve additional expenditure, although there would be some offsetting savings by way of reduction of expenditure on unemployment benefits and on allowances under manpower programs.

Institutional responsiveness

An education and training allowances scheme of the kind outlined in the preceding paragraph would, by modifying incentives, educe demands on the part of young people for education and training courses and manpower programs. Educational institutions and manpower authorities would then be required to respond to these demands. The outstanding success of the Commonwealth Reconstruction Trainees Scheme (CRTS) at the end of World War II is an example of the effectiveness of such 'challenge and response': the CRTS scheme, which provided ex-servicemen with educational allowances, resulted in a doubling of university enrolments within three years. I believe that the correct approach to providing activities for the 15 to 19 years group is to offer young people incentives and expect institutions to respond to their demands. If more young people chose to stay on in secondary school or attend TAFE institutions or require other training facilities, the appropriate authorities would respond; indeed they have already responded to a massive increase in the demand for secondary and tertiary education over the last 25 years.

Employers and trade unions

A satisfactory youth policy is by no means the sole responsibility of education and labour authorities. Employers and trade unions have a duty to ensure that work opportunities are kept open for young people. It would not be unreason-

able to expect employers (other than the smallest) to aim at a reasonably balanced age distribution of their employees. Training in educational institutions cannot be a substitute for on-the-job experience and employers should accept the responsibility of maintaining a number of training positions. The obverse of this is that trade unions should be as concerned about employment opportunities for young workers as about protecting the interests of the older. In spite of the marked deterioration in the employment situation in Australia in recent years, unemployment among adult workers, particularly male ones, is comparatively moderate; in this situation there is a danger that the interests of the workers of tomorrow may be sacrificed to those of the workers of today.

WARNINGS

It would be wrong to give the impression that the adoption of a comprehensive youth policy will cure the faults of the education system and the ills of unemployment. In a period in which there is disenchantment with the educational system, it is all too easy to swing from old traditions to new fashions. I wish therefore to conclude with a series of warnings.

Vocational education

It has become increasingly popular to emphasize the importance of vocational education and skill training. There is no doubt that Australian industry and commerce require a supply of trained workers with specific skills. However it would be wrong to sacrifice the long-term advantages of a broad education to the short-term requirements of employers for specific skills — requirements which are based on a certain present rather than on an unknown future. The structure of Australian industry has changed greatly over the past two decades and it will continue to do so. Social, economic, and technological changes may render many current occupations obsolete and may, in the longer term, reduce the demand in those very occupations which are popularly regarded as being in short supply today (for example, some of the traditional trades). Courses which students undertake ought to fit them for a range of occupations so that not only should they have options when they complete their courses, but they should have the capacity to change their employment during their working lives as the structure of industry changes. Courses within a given discipline should be broad based; they may then be combined with specialist training undertaken subsequently either in educational institutions or by way of on-the-job training. To channel more students into narrow vocational courses whether at secondary school, TAFE institutions, CAEs, or universities will almost certainly prove to be wrong in the long run. Moreover the problems of unemployment are more acute for those with highly specific training than for those with a capacity to move into alternative fields.

Role of TAFE

In the development of a comprehensive youth policy, emphasis is being rightly placed on the important roles that TAFE can play. These roles include skill training, which has been the special responsibility of technical education since its inception, and the provision of remedial and pre-employment courses which are alternatives to traditional secondary schooling. There is a risk that the emphasis on TAFE may tempt secondary schools to limit their responsibilities

to their more academically inclined clientele. A comprehensive youth policy will require a diversification of offerings available within secondary schools and of secondary schools among themselves; it cannot be assumed that TAFE has an appropriate infrastructure to assume all these responsibilities as well as its commitments to skill training.

Education for unemployment

While it is likely that full-time employment will become less the norm for the 15 to 19 years old and that some unemployment among adults will be a permanent characteristic of our economy, the notion, which is gaining currency, that young people should be educated for unemployment, is one which should not be accepted by educators. It is certainly important to teach young people about the realities of work and the labour market, and how to operate in a world in which people will have to change jobs from time to time and perhaps suffer some periods of unemployment. However, the notions that unemployment is a norm, that work has to be spread around and that technology is to be resisted and productivity kept down are not only defeatist in spirit but are destructive of a society which can afford to consider these options only because of a high level of production stemming from past technological progress and attitudes to work.

Disadvantaged groups

However energetically a comprehensive youth policy is pursued, it is likely that there will be disadvantaged groups in the society for whom it will be difficult to provide acceptable opportunities. Unless these groups can be identified well before the end of compulsory schooling and given special attention, policies of the kind outlined in this paper are likely to be of little benefit to them.

Education and unemployment

Finally it is important to emphasize that a comprehensive youth policy will be able to contribute to the expansion of employment only to a very limited extent. If the policy is successful, the productivity of the young will be raised and they will become more employable. Some additional employment may result, but for the most part their increased employability will simply give them a fairer chance of obtaining employment in a limited job market. The expansion of employment opportunities is the responsibility of economic policy, not of education or youth policy. Statistical measures of unemployment among the young will, of course, be reduced by a comprehensive youth policy because young people will be encouraged into alternative activities involving education, training, part-time work, or a combination of them.

It is sometimes argued that there is little point in developing a policy for youth so long as there is significant general unemployment. Why go to the trouble of teaching people skills if at the end of their training they are unable to obtain jobs? This attitude ignores the fact that the purpose of a comprehensive youth policy is to provide satisfying activities for young people up to the age of 20 and to ensure that they are better equipped to compete in the labour market. Such a policy is important irrespective of the level of unemployment. It has merit in itself, although the stimulus for it undoubtedly has been the high levels of youth unemployment recently experienced. Certainly it does not relieve governments of the responsibility for maintaining high and rising levels of

employment. However, unless a policy is developed to provide satisfying activities for the young and an easier entree to the world of work and adult responsibility, divisions will develop in our society which, in the longer run, may become insupportable.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 South Australia. Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia. *Education in South Australia:* Report of the Committee . . . 1969-1970. (Chairman: P.H. Karmel). Adelaide: Government Printer, 1971, paragraphs 3.7, 3.17, 3.29, 3.30, 3.42, 10.4.

2 See also *Work for Tomorrow:* Proceedings of the Victorian Government Conference on Structural Change and Employment: Structural Change and its Implications for Education, Training and Re-training, Melbourne, 12-14 December 1978; and Peter Karmel, *A Policy for Youth:* Address to University of New South Wales Commerce Graduation Ceremony, 24 April 1979.

3 Australia. Committee of Inquiry into Education and Training, *Education, Training, and Employment:* Report . . . (Vol. 1). (Chairman: B.R. Williams). Canberra: AGPS, 1979, paragraphs 8.51 to 8.53.

4 ibid., see Chapter 3 and Chapter 17.

5 Australian Education Council, Press release, Perth, 26 October 1979.