

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASHLEY, YOUTH DETENTION AND JUSTICE MET IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART ON MONDAY 26 MARCH 2007.

Mr DAVID HANLON, DEPUTY SECRETARY, **Mr NICK EVANS**, (PROGRAMS) LEARNING SERVICES (SOUTH), **Ms ANN FRENCH**, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AND **Mr SHANE STANTON**, PRINCIPAL AT ASHLEY SCHOOL, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Thank you very much and welcome everybody. We have three people from the department and Shane Stanton who is the Principal of the Ashley School. Shane, I thank you very much. We did have a look around the school on the day the Committee had a site visit and the only one who is missing from the Committee today is Mr Dean and there is an apology.

We have had quite a bit of evidence regarding the education unit and interstate, so I invite you, whoever wants to lead off, to talk about education as they you it at Ashley and the programs at this stage and then I will invite the Committee to ask questions.

Mr HANLON - Thank you, Chair. We see our responsibility in relation to Ashley very seriously and in particular we think there are two very important things that we could talk to the committee about and answer questions on. The first is our goal to work with others to keep young people out of Ashley as far as we possibly can. It would be our first and our overarching goal and I will ask Nick Evans to make some comments about that.

Secondly, when young people do end up at Ashley we see our responsibility to ensure their learning be positive and productive and in particular that that learning should have some outcomes that link beyond Ashley. So while they are there is important but how that might articulate to what happens for them when they are finished at Ashley and move on is equally important, and I will ask Shane to talk a little about what happens at Ashley and Nick can also cover the pathway planning aspects beyond Ashley. So with your indulgence?

CHAIR - Sure.

Mr EVANS - As David said, part of our role has to be to ensure as far as possible that general schools in the education system are doing their bit in conjunction with the other service providers involved to stop kids getting into Ashley in the first place. We think there is a lot of improvement that can be made, particularly in cooperation between the different arms of government, in attempting to do that better than we currently do.

To that end we have been working in the north of the State in particular and have an arrangement with the police in the north's Department of Health Youth Justice people. In the current situation the first time a young person's educational and training issues get talked about in the youth justice system is at the stage of a sentencing report or a pre-sentencing report for that individual, by which time they are likely to have had contact with the youth justice system for some time, either at an informal or a formal

caution stage before they have reached the stage of being charged. Usually the first time their attendance at a mainstream school or their engagement in some other sort of learning activity is talked about with them is at a stage where we are talking about sentencing.

We think there is a lot of benefit to be had by having that conversation and trying to put in place almost preventative measures relating to the education and training experiences of those young people. It would hardly strike anyone as surprising if the cycle is added to, when a young person has not been at school for an extended period of time and, although part of their bail conditions are that they must attend school five days a week it does not happen.

We are putting in place an arrangement with police and youth justice in Launceston that will enable us to be informed, either at an informal or formal caution stage. We are able to match that young person's school attendance record and establish what the pattern of school attendance has been, then work with the youth justice workers involved and the young person to try and put in place an education and training plan that meets their needs. If the young person has not been attending school, there is probably not a lot to be gained by simply insisting that they should, because they may or may not. If they do, they are likely to be a problem for the school if they don't want to be there and they are likely also to not get that much out of it if they are constantly fighting against the system, so to speak.

Mr MARTIN - Why is this only in the north of the State? Is it a pilot scheme or -

Mr EVANS - We are just trialling it initially. I know the police and the Youth Justice people in Launceston are quite excited about it, because it is something we think we can do using our existing staff. The trick is not so much in talking to the young person and developing their learning plan - which stays with them, even if they don't ever get to another stage, if they don't get to Ashley - but in brokering the different providers who might be involved in providing education or training that meets the needs of that young person and moves them on and has an eye to what is going to happen when they have finished that. That involves working with the school or college which the young person might be enrolled in. It also involves working with TAFE, private education providers, with employers perhaps, in trying to put together a whole plan for that young person's education at an early stage in their contact with the Youth Justice system. So far we have seen that there are a lot of positives to be had out of that, rather than first addressing the issue of that young person's education when it is almost too late.

Mr MARTIN - As part of this, have there been changes made to the school's suspension policy? I am a little bit out of the loop, but going back some years at one of the Glenorchy schools there was a former principal whose solution to everything was to suspend the kid and make him the community's problem and a police problem and they probably finished up in Ashley. What is the current policy?

Mr HANLON - I think we are working much harder on personalising learning for those kids, so that we try to hold them in education with the school as their base, rather than suspend them and have them, as you say, become somebody else's problem. There are high schools now, and Latrobe comes to mind, where school plus non-school learning is now a really important part of a kid's program. About one-third of the kids at Latrobe High

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are now on a combination of learning at school and outside of school. We want it to become more the norm. I think that helps because the kids who are suspended are often the ones who just don't cope really well with being shut into a school for five days from 9-3.30. I think it is evolving in that direction.

Mr MARTIN - Do you have figures available on what percentage of kids are actually on suspension?

Mr HANLON - Yes. I don't have them with me, but I can provide them.

Mr MARTIN - And how that might have fluctuated over, say, the last five years?

Mr HANLON - My recollection is that the figures improved last year, in the sense that there were less kids suspended last year than the year before. I don't have them off the top of my head, but I am happy to provide them.

Mrs JAMIESON - We would simply be rewarding kids for not attending school, send them home - this is primary school too. As Terry said, they become the community's problem and we are sending them home to mums and dads who don't have the authority over their kids anyway so it becomes a bigger problem. We should be looking surely at primary school - 12, that sort of age? Is there any thought that maybe we could do it better, once the child had misbehaved, but before they get to the sentencing situation, by making it mandatory that they join a group - and I will use Scouts as the example - somewhere where you have to learn discipline. Is there any value in something like that?

Mr HANLON - That is certainly worth thinking about. We don't at the moment mandate the joining of a group as part of a exit -

Mrs JAMIESON - Some of these kids are looking for something to belong to, aren't they?

Mr HANLON - Yes, I think that is a fair comment. I think the general point - and I am following up the previous question - is that we are working hard to try to find alternatives other than simply saying to a kid, 'You've played up in school so go away'. I agree that there is a temptation amongst some kids to say, 'That's good. That's an excellent reward for my effort. I am now free to do what I like five days a week', which is obviously not a desirable outcome.

[5.00 p.m.]

I take your point about primary schools, but our high schools are getting much better at constructing individual programs for kids, and not only the ones who are finding school difficult because lots of good learning can happen for lots of kids in places other than school. We want kids doing workplace learning, picking up employability skills and so on, so in that context it really becomes much more normal, whereas before, a kid who was on the program was obviously a naughty kid and there have been letters to the minister saying, 'How come you have rewarded this kid by doing this, that and the other for them when they have played up?'

Mr EVANS - I guess the only other thing I would say is that in this trial in Launceston we do have two young people in it who are so far along the youth justice continuum that they will be in Ashley, so we will have some experience of designing specific programs for

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young people who are, I guess, transiting into Ashley. Then we also have two young people in it who are currently in Ashley, so we will also get experience of following them up and making that transition, making the learning that they do within Ashley connect to something when they are on the other side, so to speak. This stuff is not rocket science; it is simply a matter of people being open to perhaps doing things differently than they have.

Mr WILKINSON - And communication between the different agencies.

Mr EVANS - Yes. The good thing about this is that I think people have reached the stage now that they realise we do this sort of thing and do not just stick to saying, 'This is our bit and this is your bit. Do what you've always done and you'll get what you've always got,' so we are very hopeful about that. There is an interagency group set up that is involved in the oversight of this pilot and certainly I think there is the willingness, if it succeeds the way it is going so far, to implement it in both the other regions of the State.

Mr WILKINSON - And should it only be at primary school and high school level? Should it be even earlier? There are obviously some families that you know are going to find it difficult. I could name three or four down here where you know the kids are going to be difficult and will probably be going to Ashley and then on to Risdon?

CHAIR - The Wilkinsons.

Laughter.

Mr EVANS - I think one of the strengths of what we are doing is that when we go and talk to these kids, we are talking to them about their education and training, their future, and they have a different approach to it than yet another social worker or someone turning up because, as you say, some of these kids have dealt with that sort of system from day one. So if you can put it in a different frame for them and say to them, 'This isn't about you and your problems; this is about having a good look at what you might be good at, what your strengths might be, and trying to make something of that', rather than saying, 'We know you have a whole lot of problems. I'm here to help you deal with your problems.' We are coming at it from the point of view of, 'I'm here to help you deal with your strengths.'

Mr WILKINSON - So you communicate with the parents as well?

Mr EVANS - Yes.

Mrs JAMIESON - Do you have the capacity, then, if the parents are struggling to cope with their own problems, to refer them on to some other agency to help them work through those problems?

Mr EVANS - Through this process the youth justice workers who have connections to other agencies where they might need assistance for housing and those sorts of issues are involved.

Mrs JAMIESON - Managing.

Mr EVANS - Yes, parenting skills, whatever it is - yes, that can happen.

Mr HANLON - I would like Shane to comment now about the Ashley learning experience.

Mr STANTON - Basically I think the school is travelling really well. I am very fortunate to have really good staff who are dedicated and keep coming back every day, wanting to be there. We cater for young people, as you know, from the age of 10 to sometimes up to 19 and even 20 in some cases. I think it is probably the best that the departments of Education and Health have ever worked together out there. I feel a real part of the team and that I have their support.

The school has come a long way, I believe, in the last five or six years that I know of. I have been out there since 2003 and when I first went there we had the old terrapin that used to be there which was a disgusting, old single classroom with an office tacked on the end that all the staff were in and if someone walked from one end of the building it rocked. As you saw on your tour recently, we have a very good little school which I believe the kids take a lot of pride in. A lot of people probably come from the outside wondering what they are going to see in the Ashley school and it is a bit of an eye-opener in that it is very good, and I think we do a really good job with the resources that are provided to us.

Mr WILKINSON - Can I talk about resources?

Mr STANTON - Yes.

Mr WILKINSON - There has been a lot of comment that 10 hours a week is nowhere near enough, that other States have 30 hours a week and therefore there is a giant gap there.

Mr STANTON - I think you have to take that in context as well. We are talking about 10 hours, I guess, if we look at our compulsory-aged kids from the age of, say, 10 to 16 currently, so on average, yes, they are getting an equivalent of two one-hour lessons a day in the school. But when they are not in the school they are also doing art, because the Department of Health and Human Services supplies an art teacher. There are two art teachers; one works two days a week and one works three days. Also this year, the Department of Health and Human Services has employed a health and physical education teacher, which is fantastic because no longer do we just have someone coming in and pumping iron or doing some exercises with the kids; we have a real health and physical education program up and running, and that person still works under me and the school but is paid by the Department of Health and Human Services.

CHAIR - Sorry, I just want to get that clear, Shane. So when they are doing their art classes, they are not actually doing it in the education unit, they are doing it outside - is that what you are saying?

Mr STANTON - No, in the old days there was a little on-site office at a building construction site when I first went there. It was just a single-room building with no heaters, no electricity - nothing - and the art providers then actually worked in that building, but when we had the new school open we had a spare classroom down there, because we only have three teachers including myself, so we quite often had the spare room which we then gave to the art providers, who work in there. Up until this year, the

artists in there working have been people off the street. This year we have two artists in there who are both registered teachers, so they are not actually working for the Department of Education but they just happen to be registered teachers, which is really good because now we have been able to bring them into our reporting process and we are just about to do reports that will go home next week to parents - Ashley reports. We are now able to bring the art teachers in on that too to give us a bigger capacity to report on.

Up until last year, as I said, Ashley used to employ a person to come in to teach sport, and just going in and pumping iron, for instance, is not what it is about. There is a lot more to it and since they have employed a health and physical education teacher now, each class now receives a health lesson a week where they might be looking at self-esteem, for example.

CHAIR - So that phys ed teacher, for want of a better word, how many hours a week is that teacher there? Is he or she there full-time?

Mr STANTON - Full-time, yes. It is only a trial thing.

CHAIR - But they are only doing one lesson a week, is that right?

Mr STANTON - Say there are eight groups of young people - they will receive one health lesson per week. That is a theory-based lesson where they are maybe looking at relationships, positive self-esteem, sexual health, hygiene, stuff like that. Then there are other lessons during the week where they are out doing proper programs and sporting activities.

Mr MARTIN - How many hours a week does a school-aged student spend in being educated?

Mr HANLON - About 25.

Mr MARTIN - Do you have documentation on what makes up the 25 hours?

Mr HANLON - Some of those things would be similar. They would include arts and other electives. I think the problem that Shane has, and it is a resource problem, is that he is trying to run his school using multiple small groups, so it is the only variable he has that he can, in a sense, play with. I mean, he could build it back and give the kids the same number of hours, but he would have to do it by having really large classes or classes equivalent to a regular school. Say he has 25 to 30 kids there at the moment. If he puts them all into the one class, which is a class size that is normal, he is really well staffed and he could almost offer them second shift at the school. He could give them the 25 hours that everybody gets plus probably another 25 hours, because that is how well he is resourced in theory.

However, good practice would say that these kids are hard to deal with so they need to be in small groups. Therefore he breaks them up into groups of six and by doing so obviously dissipates the teaching resource. The only other comment I make is that the kids are productively employed on a range of different programs between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., just like every other kid in the State.

Mr MARTIN - Run by whom?

Mr STANTON - By both the Department of Health and the Department of Education.

Mr MARTIN - The problem we have as a committee is that we have heard evidence after evidence saying that school-age kids are spending 10 hours a week in education, so how do we get to 25 hours a week? If you add on two hours for art and -

Mr STANTON - HBE, yes, that is right.

Mr MARTIN - Could we document how we get 25 hours?

Mr STANTON - Let us just take, say, group one, which is a group set up for ages 10 to 14. There are six young people in that group. The first period of the day might be in what we call education, over at the school. They are over there working with a teacher, doing their literacy and numeracy, ICT, challenges or whatever individual programs. Some young people might be on a reading program or a numeracy program specific to them. Each young person is also on an individual education plan as well. Because the nature of Ashley you have kids coming into your group, out of your group and everything else, so each person has to have an education plan. So that is period 1 in the school.

In period 2, they are off to art, so they are in the art room doing art or whatever they are doing in there. Period 3, back in school again doing another education lesson. After lunch, period 4, they may be off to a health and PE classroom - maybe a team sport or something like that. The fifth period of the day could be something that Health has organised. It could be White Lion or number of activities that the Health department has got up and running at the time.

Mr MARTIN - That is every day, so there are five hours a day of instruction.

Mr STANTON - Yes. The fifth period could be out doing maintenance or something like that, or there might be some free time - 'Okay, you've got some free time; what do you want to do?'.

Mr MARTIN - We have been told that there is a lot of free time, though.

Mr STANTON - I do not believe there is. I do not think there is a lot of free time. There might be a situation where a program has been cancelled or something like that, then we will say, 'Okay, what are we going to do with group four today?' Currently the numbers are down so we are not running eight groups. We would normally run eight groups but we are now running six groups of young people so there are some periods now that need to be made up. So my HPE person will say, 'I'll take groups five, six, seven and eight this week and give them extra PE', and so forth. I do not think there is a lot of free time, not between the times of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. It is a fairly structured day for the young people. There are times when there might be a maintenance thing or something like that.

Mr MARTIN - These quiet periods that you are talking about, some of those periods have just been conducted by the youth workers?

Mr STANTON - That might happen but that is not under my control. There is the Education department out there, myself and our school, and then there are the Ashley programs. We engage the kids between the two of us. All the programs that I cannot provide in the school have to be taken up by programs with Ashley.

Mr MARTIN - What percentage of the programs are precarious? This is a key question.

Mr STANTON - We would provide about 60 per cent of the daily program in our school.

Mr MARTIN - So that is 60 per cent of the five hours - three of the five hours?

Mr STANTON - Yes.

CHAIR - Who is responsible for running the Ashley programs? Is that the operations manager?

[5.15 p.m.]

Mr STANTON - No, that is the programs coordinator. That position is jointly funded between the Departments of Health and Education. I manage that person from the DoE point of view and he is also managed by the manager of professional services on site at Ashley.

Mr MARTIN - From what you are saying the kids would be under the control of an educator, a qualified teacher, for about 15 hours a week - 60 per cent of the 25 hours?

Mr STANTON - Each teacher has a teaching load of 20 hours, which is the same in mainstream schools. Two teachers at the moment are employed by Ashley School, so that is 40 hours we provide. Also, I teach up to four or five lessons a week or sometimes act as a teacher aide. Our health and PE teacher teaches 20 hours a week.

Mr MARTIN - I was really getting at how much time one of the young people spends with a qualified teacher during the week?

Mr STANTON - I am not sure what the statistics are. I would have to work how many programs and how many hours. I guess all my teachers teach the required amount of time.

Mr WILKINSON - You have a number of different age groups, therefore you would be teaching 13 to 14 year olds and so on, so that would take some of that time

Mr STANTON - Yes. Our first priority is to look after our compulsory-aged kids. That is how I have always seen it so we try to give them the maximum amount of time. The more young people you have, the more groups you have, and with more groups you have to cut back on something, but one thing we never cut back is our compulsory-aged kids. They are guaranteed two periods a day in the school doing their literacy, numeracy and basic schooling. That never alters.

Group 3 and group 4, for instance, don't alter much but groups 6, 7 and 8 will because if the numbers at Ashley rise to 48 or something like that then we have a serious situation.

we have non-compulsory-age young people. If there are eight groups of young people within the centre then they will receive only three lessons a week.

CHAIR - They would have about four students in each, or three at this stage? There are only 22 or 23 residents there at the moment?

Mr STANTON - Yes, we are running six groups at the moment.

Mrs JAMIESON - Health and physical education; is that mandatory?

Mr STANTON - Yes, they would be required to go.

Mrs JAMIESON - What about art? Is there any choice of other activities like home arts or music?

Mr STANTON - No, though each group cooks once a week in the school, so one of those 10 lessons for compulsory-aged students is a cooking lesson.

Mrs JAMIESON - And they all do art and so on?

Mr STANTON - Yes.

Mrs JAMIESON - And music therapy, as a therapy, not banging on drums?

Mr STANTON - There is a current music program at Ashley on Friday that I am aware of. We have just applied for an Australian Children's Music Foundation grant and if that is successful that will be starting in April.

Mrs JAMIESON - Drama, is that used at all?

Mr STANTON - No. I have an English speech and drama teacher, but she mainly works with our compulsory-aged young people. By the time she does basic literacy and numeracy there is no room left to for drama.

Mrs JAMIESON - Do you have the capacity, particularly with your one-to-one programs, for volunteers to come and assist?

Mr STANTON - At school?

Mrs JAMIESON - Yes.

Mr STANTON - Yes, we had a young person who would like to come in and volunteer. We have had a number of volunteers over the time I have been there.

Mrs JAMIESON - If somebody has problems with their literacy and numeracy and you feel they could benefit by having one-to-one instruction, how do you get around that?

Mr STANTON - That is very hard. We are funded for a bit over one full-time equivalent teacher aide so we are very careful where we place that teacher aide and in what class we place them. Normally we receive ITAS tutoring - Indigenous Tutorial Assistance

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Scheme. Normally we would have that operating already. The Department of Education, Science and Training used to dish out the money and hire contractors, but it has been given to the Department of Education to manage this year and they are still working through the rates. We have been assured that will be happening in the next couple of weeks. In our situation we have been able to use that tutoring money to employ our regular teacher aides and that has really helped. We are up to around 50 per cent of indigenous young people at the moment and last year we received 30 hours ITAS tutoring. We use that person as a teacher aide in the classroom working with that particular person or young people, which then gave the teacher the opportunity to work with those other three or four. That is how we do it at the moment.

Mrs JAMIESON - What about your class work? It only works in the school term, doesn't it?

Mr STANTON - That's right.

Mrs JAMIESON - Would there be any value at all in having some other form of employment, shall we say, outside the school term?

Mr STANTON - The kids really do miss us. There is a big block of time over the Christmas holidays at Ashley where it falls upon the programs coordinator to come up with as many programs as he can because school is not there. We have to take into account that some of those young people have been there quite a while and they need a bit of a break from school. They need a bit of a holiday, so there is always that to take into consideration.

Mrs JAMIESON - But there could also be some who have come in just before Christmas and gone out before the school year starts, so they miss out altogether.

Mr STANTON - Yes. There are a lot of young people who come in over Christmas who we don't even know about, and they could have used our services.

Mr WILKINSON - School for them is probably an outlet; they would rather be at school than in the yard doing the programs.

Mr STANTON - It is very hard to please everybody, I suppose. For many of our young people, the two-hour block per day doing literacy and numeracy is pretty hard work. We would love to be able to offer extra education time to someone who wanted it but we are not in a position to do that at the moment.

Mrs JAMIESON - What if you were allowed to use people who were training to be teachers, for example, who might like to do something through the school holidays? They could go into Ashley and improve their own personal skills, but also offer one-to-one instruction to individuals?

Mr STANTON - It is not as easy as to walk into that school and do that. I would have to be there to manage that, which wouldn't worry me because I am fairly flexible. However, it takes young people a while to trust others. I have a new HPE teacher in there at the moment and a couple of times he has hit the wall, as you do there. You have to measure your success in little bits and he is starting to be that way now. I said to him, 'You will find it will start to happen to you'. We don't want to see our young people coming back but if they do, and if you are the familiar face, then they think, 'Oh yes, I know what you

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want', and it just seems to happen. Bringing in new people while the regular teachers are away could cause problems.

CHAIR - How do you get the young people motivated to switch on to education? There are a lot of young people in Ashley against their will, and they have probably rejected the formal education system. How do you go about that?

Mr STANTON - With 99 per cent of the young people I meet, they come into my office and they sit down and we talk straight, 'When was the last time you've been to school? 'Oh, grade 4.' 'Okay. Have you been suspended from school?'. 'Yes, I have.' 'Well, you're here now and you are not going to be suspended here.' We just build that relationship. We have a philosophy that we treat the young people the way we want them to be, not the way they are, and I think that makes a big difference. Sometimes we get hit head on by a young person, but you just bounce back. You are always looking for the positives, building their self-esteem, rewarding them. We make school a positive experience. I am not saying that mainstream school doesn't do that, because I know good teachers out there are doing it, but I guess that when you have six of them in class you can have a lot more influence and give them the amount of time they need. I think it is about building a relationship first. It is no good making a young person come in and say, 'right, sit down and do that' or whatever. You have to lead them into it. You have to create that learning opportunity and make those young people feel that they are valued and that school is important.

Many of our young people, maybe 16 and 17 year olds, come in for the first time. One of the first things they will say to me is, 'Mr Stanton, can I get my grade 9 and 10 maths?' I don't know how many kids will say that. I say, 'How long do you reckon you are going to be here for? A couple of months. Well, we have this short graded course equivalent of 9 and 10 maths', and away they go because they seem to reach that age when they just realise that education was important and they have blown it but here is another opportunity.

CHAIR - You can give them accreditation and you can test them?

Mr STANTON - As best we can and we are working further on that now. We are doing Certificate 1 in Workplace Skills and we auspice that through the North East Education and Training Centre at St Helens. Basically we have a lot of young people out there doing that. They particularly like to do the occupational, health and safety module because they realise that is important for getting a job. It is a pretty tough course. It takes them about 60 hours to work through that. There is a lot of work involved and they take it back to the units with them at night and things like that. I do not how many would have attained that last year but maybe 20 odd young people attained that Certificate 1 in occupational health and safety.

There is room to move and I know you are aware that we would like to get horticultural and agriculture up and running. That is something that I have a real passion for.

Mr WILKINSON - That was my question, Shane. With the resources coming in to you, you are able to spend a bit of money. What do you believe the most appropriate programs are?

Mr STANTON - Here we are out in the sticks to some extent. We are not like some of the mainland places that are in the city. We have this 100 acre farm around us out there and I think we could utilise that better. I know a couple of my colleagues on the management team at Ashley feel the same. I have just applied for a grant and got it. It is a \$150 000 grant to build two new classrooms adjacent to the school and from one of those we would certainly like to run horticulture and agricultural from.

If you treat the young people the way you want them to be rather than the way they are they will rise to the occasion. I would like the young people to see that the farms outside there are not just for going out and digging a hole or something. There is real stuff happening out there and you can get a tractor licence, you can get all sorts of things out there. After a young person has served a certain amount of time or half their sentence and they are the right colours they are allowed to go off property and I think we need to create a culture out there where those young people think, - 'I want to get out there on that farm. How do I get out there? Okay, I need to do horticulture. Okay, this is really interesting because there is a lot of literacy and numeracy in that as well. Okay, I want to get to green so I get to go out there and work on the farm.

Mr WILKINSON - Is the farm used now?

Mr STANTON - It is. One of the guys, the head of the safety and security, runs 20 head of cattle on there and he runs 20 cattle for Ashley. It is one of those deals, and it just sits there.

Young people go out there at the moment. They work on the farm and presently they are putting the foundation in for a hothouse because that is where want to head.

Mr WILKINSON - Growing vegetables hopefully.

Mr STANTON - Yes, but we are only just scraping the surface at the moment. The potential is there and I think we should be managing that, and I really would like to see horticulture and maybe cut flowers and all sorts of things being done inside the centre. When we do it, it has to be sustainable and there for the long-term. I am sure that everybody, over a period of time in Ashley's history, has had vegetable gardens and they have become overgrown and then been dug up a few years later. But we have to do this and we have to do it well.

[5.30 p.m.]

I think we should be using it because the land is there. Maybe some of these kids can then be put on work placements. There is nothing wrong with young people going out on work placements, on farms or whatever close at hand. It is pretty hard taking a young person into the city to be put on work experience but I am sure, given the opportunity, the right sort of kid - they are all really good, one-on-one.

Mrs JAMIESON - Everyone used to be very supportive of community involvement with Ashley. Would animal husbandry be -

Mr STANTON - Definitely.

Mrs JAMIESON - I was just thinking that kids can be cruel to animals.

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Mr STANTON - But that is not necessarily -

Mrs JAMIESON - No, no.

Mr STANTON - But you have to be mindful of that. We have already done a walk around and made a bit of plan to have chooks to supply the eggs for the kitchen, whereas at the moment all the scraps in the kitchen are being wasted. How do we do all this?

CHAIR - Shane, if I can just go back to Mr Martin's line of questioning of a while ago when we talked about the evidence we have had in regard to the amount of school hours and there obviously seems quite a variation between what you are supplying and what is being given. So could you please provide to the committee, in written form, and the committee's secretary can provide this to you in the form of questions: firstly, the number of hours of educational opportunity provided each day to students who are required by law to attend school.

Mr MARTIN - And what subjects they are.

CHAIR - Yes, and what form of subjects. Secondly, the range of curriculum opportunities provided to each student and the opportunities offered by the Department of Education's staff.

Mr STANTON - Yes.

CHAIR - Does that cover it?

Mrs JAMIESON - Any formal links to outside education being a problem.

Mr STANTON - There is, in our submission, a fair bit of that information, but if I communicate with Wendy? Okay.

Mr MARTIN - Shane, Ashley, under the Youth Justice Act, is supposed to be a restorative model.

Mr STANTON - That is right.

Mr MARTIN - All have agreed on rehabilitating the young people. There has been evidence provided to the committee that a lot of the programs being run by DHHS are time-fillers, like throwing frisbees et cetera, and are not really doing anything concrete to try to rehabilitate the young people. Do you have any comments on that?

Mr STANTON - I have a list here of some of the programs that are provided by DHHS. In answer, no. There are drug and alcohol programs, relaxation therapy, and presently the young people are making paving stones and that sort of thing - that is a program and I think they need to go over there. It is learning work skills and learning to work in a team.

I guess at times they do struggle to get professional people in to do programs. They come and go. So I guess there is some difficulty around that.

I do not see too much during the day the young people going out and throwing frisbees or vortexes or whatever, but I have seen it. When a teacher is away I will get a relief teacher in. We are not sure what is going to happen when my HPE teacher is away, for instance,. I don't necessarily have the capacity, to pay for a relief teacher to cover him. So if that person is away today then we will have to look at some other alternatives for the young people.

But at the same time, these are kids too and the kids want to get out and kick a football or throw a vortex, for instance.

Mr MARTIN - It is a matter of balance, though.

Mr STANTON - It is a matter of balance - it sure is - and if someone was out there for two periods in a row throwing or kicking a football then you would have some concerns for sure.

Mr MARTIN - We have heard from both past and current employees that large chunks of time are spent throwing Vortex balls, et cetera.

Mr STANTON - I can't really say that. I would have to disagree that there is some concern.

Mrs JAMIESON - Do you have a reasonable pool of relief teachers?

Mr STANTON - It is difficult -

Mrs JAMIESON - And where do you get them from?

Mr STANTON - We have had some really interesting relief teachers come out there at times but I have one regular fellow who comes all the way from Lilydale and he is quite happy to travel there even if I ring him up the night before at nine o'clock and say, 'Can you come in, John?', so I have been very fortunate that he will just put everything down and come in. I have another ex-teacher aide, Carolyn, who will come in and do relief as well if she is not booked, so so far I have always managed to get a relief teacher. I have not had to use Manpower in probably 18 months, because it is a totally different environment for someone to come in -

Mrs JAMIESON - Regarding relief teachers coming in and particularly when it is their first time, what do you do about inducting them?

Mr STANTON - By the time they get out there, schools starts at nine o'clock but I'd like to see them out there at 8.30, so hopefully they are on time and I bring them through the gate and I will come up with a set of keys and I give them the best talk I can and I cross my fingers and in they go. But again, I would place a teacher aide in there and even though the teacher has the authority in the classroom, the teacher aide is pretty experienced and I can call on those, but I generally have to be around a fair bit and wander in and out and brief the kids up as well. It is a unique situation because you do not know that person and they do not know -

Mrs JAMIESON - They do not know the routine or the kids.

Mr STANTON - Yes.

CHAIR - Does the committee have any more questions?

Mr WILKINSON - Shane, you are from outside the DHHS system; you are from the Education department. Do you believe that there should be a demarcation between the custodial officers and the youth workers as opposed to them carrying out the same job? One minute they are chastising an individual and the next minute they are endeavouring to get on with them.

Mr STANTON - Gee, I don't know. Youth working is a good job. If you are the right sort of person and have the right qualities then it can be an easy job or it can be a hard job, and I guess in recent times I have been on an interview panel for youth workers and it is really good to be on that because I think I bring a different perspective to the group. They also see that I am on the panel and that education must be valued out here, because I think we are still growing at the moment and I think some people may not think that education is as important as it is.

I have seen good youth workers out there who can be good at custodial work but also be really good youth workers as well and I do not think is fair on young people just to have guards as such. Youth workers need to get involved in that young person's life and they need to encourage them to participate in programs. They need to look at pulling positives out of their job and I know that at times some people will have trouble with that. In the school we certainly encourage youth workers to really participate in the lessons and get involved and not just sit in the corner with a radio on or anything else but to come in and get involved in the lesson. Some youth workers tend to do that and some do not.

Mr MARTIN - We have been told there is a lot of inconsistency between the standard of youth workers.

Mr STANTON - I guess there is but I guess you would see that in anything really. There are times when you obviously wish that a youth worker would get involved more but I think Ashley has been trying to work on that too in recent times. I think we are still growing. The fence was not there five or six years ago, before my time, and here we are now a detention facility, so I think we are still growing. They are doing a certificate 4 now in youth work, whereas I do not know how much training they had before that was brought in.

CHAIR - Just to qualify that, Shane, you are saying that all youth workers there at the moment are doing a certificate 4?

Mr STANTON - I couldn't quote that. I am not sure if they all have to do it but I know it is there for them to do that and I know some graduated recently, so I would hope they are being encouraged to do that.

CHAIR - Is that done through TAFE?

Mr STANTON - It is through TAFE as far as I know, yes.

Mr MARTIN - On the same point, is there an issue with the contractors, the Platinum staff?

Mr STANTON - There has been in the past. It is like getting a relief teacher in, isn't it? Obviously these kids are pretty switched on and everything else, so if they have someone coming in from the outside they are going to try it on with a relief teacher just as they are going to try it on with a relief security person. So yes, we have certainly seen some that are not so good and some that are good, but I guess to step in off the street and be put into that is pretty testing. We have had some very good Platinum staff as well.

Mrs JAMIESON - I was wondering whether you have had a chance to go to the mainland to compare notes through conferences and the like?

Mr STANTON - Yes, I have. Through some national Department of Education, Science and Training Federal money, a couple of years ago we looked at doing some research around the spoken language of young offenders. It was called the Boy's Education Lighthouse program that DEST funded and Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania got together and in the end we developed a program to work with young people in schools based upon their limited vocabulary and so forth.

We have now received some money from Learning Services North to run a new literacy program and we are going to use that money to develop and run this program completely. So I have seen it and I have seen South Australia's and have been envious of them in some ways, but think we are doing pretty well in other ways as well. I think what they are able to offer outside the fence is really good there and that is the problem we have with our young people. Ideally it would be nice if we were located in a big city and they could move out into the city but could come back and finish off their courses and have the same teachers and know that, but we cannot do that at Ashley.

I have only heard about the model in use in Western Australia which is a different model altogether but I have been to a couple of centres in Sydney.

Mrs JAMIESON - What about internationally? Have you caught up with anybody or read anything?

Mr STANTON - No; I have read some stuff but it is quite limited as to what we can do.

Mr MARTIN - At any given time a large percentage of the kids are on remand, which must make it very difficult for you.

Mr STANTON - It does.

Mr MARTIN - I would be interested in your comments on that.

Mr STANTON - Yes, it is hard, particularly when you are trying to work with a young person and their transition back into some sort of training or whatever. You don't know how long they are going to be there so it makes it very difficult. As far as setting up your groups is concerned, maybe if there wasn't such a high number of kids on remand you could put them together with your sentenced kids to work on a long-term project. So that

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is the hardest part. You have people coming in and out of your groups all the time and I think all teachers find that difficult to work with there at first because they just start working with Jim and then Jim has gone and they do not know that he has gone and suddenly he has gone, and they are very hard to catch up with and follow up.

Mr MARTIN - Is there any better way of dealing with that problem?

Mr STANTON - I honestly don't know.

Mr MARTIN - There has been evidence given to the committee that in fact you have 10-year-old kids in there with 20-year-old dangerous people. Some people have suggested to us that there should be two separate facilities, not all lumped together, and that there is a hard-core element at Ashley that if you took them out, the whole system would work together. Any thoughts on that?

Mr STANTON - I think there are times when we can no longer work with some people. We hate to say that in education and it doesn't happen a lot, but there are times when a young person reaches that age of 17, getting close to 18, when they are wanting to move on. It makes it very difficult. We have had a couple of those where we have had to keep taking those people back and educating them and it disrupted the classes.

Mr MARTIN - Any thoughts on what should happen to them?

Mr STANTON - I don't know. I know that other people think that a special facility should be provided at, say, Risdon or somewhere like that, in which we would be very happy to continue education for them. Education has a lot to say about dictating what group the kids are in, too. I have a meeting every Friday morning where we look at our grouping, and we are respected for that. Ashley makes good allowances for that, too; sometimes it might not be good operationally but at least we know that that core of kids there are learning really well together. But we do come across those difficult cases. It might only be one or two a year on average, but it would make it a lot easier for us if they could be placed somewhere else.

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you very much for coming and giving your evidence. We appreciate it.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.