

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Early Childhood Engagement of CALD Communities

Geelong—Wednesday, 20 November 2019

MEMBERS

Ms Natalie Suleyman—Chair

Mr James Newbury—Deputy Chair

Ms Christine Couzens

Ms Emma Kealy

Ms Michaela Settle

Mr David Southwick

Mr Meng Heang Tak

WITNESSES

Mr Max Broadley, Executive Director Client Services,

Ms Barbara Hayes, Director Early Years Services, and

Ms Zorica Dasic, Family and Community Services Barwon Child, Youth & Family.

The CHAIR: Good afternoon. I would like to declare open the public hearing for the Legal and Social Issues Committee Inquiry into Early Childhood Engagement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities. All mobile phones should be turned to silent. I take this opportunity to welcome Max Broadley, Executive Director Client Services from Barwon Child, Youth & Family; Barbara Hayes Director Early Years Services of Barwon Child, Youth & Family; and Zorica Dasic, who is also from Family and Community Services of Barwon Child, Youth & Family. All evidence taken by this Committee is protected by parliamentary privilege. Therefore you are protected against any action for what you say here today. But if you go outside and repeat the same things, including on social media, those comments may not be protected by our privilege. All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard to my right. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript for you to check as soon as available. Verified transcripts, PowerPoint presentations and handouts will be placed on the Committee's website as soon as possible. I now invite you to proceed for a brief 5 to 10 minutes with an opening statement to the Committee, which will be followed by questions. Thank you

Mr BROADLEY: Thank you. Well, thanks for the opportunity to present to you here today. We will take a sort of casual approach to each of us contributing, but I did want to say on behalf of BCYF, thank you very much. I also want to mention that we are a member of ELAA, Early Learning Association Australia, and they have provided a submission to your Inquiry with eight recommendations, I believe, and we are supportive of those recommendations also. So we will not go over the ground of those recommendations, but we thought we would talk about some other opportunities beyond that.

In the ELAA submission there was some startling and compelling data around that children who are not speaking English at home have a rate of about 90 per cent of being vulnerable in developmental domains, whereas we know that in the non-CALD community that is somewhere between 10 and 20. So we think that that is an incredibly compelling statistic, and we know that unless we start moving those children into settings where those developmental needs are addressed they will fall behind their peers and we should expect that those kids would start to move into the child protection and justice systems. So we think that this is a really critical issue.

The theme of what we want to talk about today is really three things. The first thing is around transitions, the second thing is around interpreters and the third is around governance. In terms of transitions, our thoughts are that what we tend to see is these families falling out of visibility. That might be through settlement services, where there is visibility, or maternal and child health services, where there is visibility, and then they fall out of visibility. Where do we find them again to be able to support them back into the sector? It is the case that they need additional supports to move back into the early childhood sector because of language barriers or cultural barriers or trauma barriers, and we think that there is an opportunity to patch together the system a little bit more cohesively so they do not fall out of visibility—a little bit in the way that we have done with the Aboriginal community, where there are specific funded resources that have a specific interest. We look at the data: are there specific resources to be able to support the community and engage the community and ensure that they have a place to be that is culturally appropriate to their needs? Do you want to talk about that a little bit, Barb?

Ms HAYES: Yes. I think that in the State Government offices there are KESOs, specific positions that are dedicated for the Aboriginal community. We think that would be of benefit to this community, the CALD community, if a similar position were created or resources were put across the state to help the professionals out there but also to be able to engage and to drive the work and to equal that resource along with the Aboriginal community, and then to also support the staff out in the services and people like us that manage kindergartens and early childhood services to help with the transition of those families and identify the gaps for them—just really help along the way, I guess.

Mr BROADLEY: They could also create some specific and bespoke supported playgroup environments, where that would be this graduated step, so from a supported playgroup you could work with the community to be able to increase their capacity to understand the rules and regulations around childcare eligibility, or just filling out forms or understanding their local environment—so to have a sort of graduated support model so that we could have resources inside DET to assist the community to do that. You could have funded service provision resources to be able to do that too. Otherwise these families are sort of invisible. We only really sort of start to pick them up again in child protection or those settings. What we do know from being a kindergarten provider is that without some community building, capacity building, English language skills and understanding of Australian regulations and systems, when these families are hitting the kindergarten system it is difficult for them to engage, it is difficult for them to understand how to get their kids in and how to fill out the forms. Do you want to talk about that?

Ms DASIC: I can talk as a counsellor advocate working with refugees and asylum seekers through the torture and trauma counselling program. Usually we hear about the issues from our clients. Our refugee and CALD clients fall into that poorer visibility not just because of their status but because they settle here bringing a lot of trauma, really, and experiences related to torture. Even if everything is clear, it is very difficult for them to understand the process. So that is something that we can acknowledge. But we should definitely help them to actually overcome that barrier and nicely and smoothly organise services that could support them throughout the processes.

Another thing that we did not mention that I will just tackle a little bit is actually that they are also vulnerable financially. They are usually low-income clients, but the problem is accessing kindergarten or other services. If one parent is doing his best—usually the father—to work, it is not enough to cover the gap that they need to pay when the mum is staying home with younger children or a baby. So that is bringing us to another issue. That is that the mum and younger children are staying isolated and it could ultimately bring us to the point that we actually assess that the child has delayed development because of that social isolation and not being exposed to English-language circumstances.

Mr BROADLEY: One of the other pieces of evidence that is really compelling to us around transitions is that the evidence suggests that if a parent is engaged in the education setting then that has a direct relationship to the child's retention in that education setting. So it is not just about getting the kids into the education setting; it is about the community feeling that that is their asset and the parents are engaged in that environment. Their parents have lots and lots of barriers to be able to do that if we are just waiting for them to turn up and hoping that they have the skills to be able to engage with the staff, speak with the staff, fill out the forms, understand the model, do the fee payment, understand the government subsidies and payments et cetera. We think that there is a really great service system in Australia and in Victoria for people. We think that this community needs a particular focus to make sure that they can take advantage of that. The social return on that investment would be, we think, quite considerable.

The second point we want to talk to is using interpreters. We deliver seven kindergarten services and a childcare centre, three in Colac and four in Geelong. Do you want to talk about the barriers?

Ms HAYES: The barriers for us as providers are things like the expectations we have from families to fill out forms, provide birth certificates, identification, visa eligibility and a whole lot of things. Yes, we do need those, but it is a real barrier for families to understand that. If we cannot access interpreters, sometimes we are using a friend, and then there are some privacy issues around that and we are not sure whether the information that is getting translated is actually accurate. Sometimes the children are used. You would know all of that. But the requirements for us to enrol children into the services are a barrier, even though we understand that we need those. For staff, sometimes in the local communities like Colac we are actually going to the wood mills to speak to the workers there because we know that they have got families with children, so they are doing the work for us. So we are doing it sort of third-hand to try and get the children into the services—and I think with a lack of translation and also the understanding around the value of early childhood to families, the importance of that, and the benefits of the children being able to participate in the services.

Mr BROADLEY: Did you want to talk about the translation issue?

Ms DASIC: It is a huge barrier for all CALD people, refugees and asylum seekers, particularly with the general funding cuts. So it happens that we as counsellors and advocates help our clients as much as we can, because we have some funding for interpreters. That is our job; we cannot really work without them. I have to acknowledge that this part is not easily settled and fixed. It could be quite costly. But on the other side that is the only way that they are really informed well and they understand the process and everything we are talking about here: transitioning in order to actually collaborate and in order to be willing—and not just be willing but to get easier access to the services.

Just filling out the forms for kindergarten, preschool, school or any other aspect in their life is something that they really cannot deal with independently. So I think the language barrier is probably the most relevant, and we could make some kind of structure to support all these families, particularly with the communication afterwards, when the child is enrolled—so with all the daily communication that they cannot receive. They usually receive a letter in English, and then whoever comes—any support worker, any counsellor—they would actually ask them for some help as they do not understand. I think that would be really quite beneficial.

Mr BROADLEY: We at BCY deliver counselling services to refugees and asylum seekers who have experienced trauma and torture after their settlement program—that is the program Zorica works in. We spent tens of thousands of dollars over and above the State-funded translator and interpreter system, and it is the case that a lot of those interpreters need to travel from Melbourne to Geelong, which is where we deliver most of those services. So there is a structural barrier in terms of a marketplace of available interpreters and translators and very little chance that we will be able to extend one down to Colac. We could purchase the services, but it would be extremely expensive. So they are the structural barriers for us to work on.

Some of that translation issue would be diminished if there were these graduated steps. So if you were in a playgroup setting before a kinder setting and part of the playgroup model was actually about preparation for transition—this is what people should expect—and we can start coaching people, some of those costs would be offset by that earlier application of a different model pre-childcare or pre-kinder.

The third point that we wanted to mention was governance, really, and a community development model. So it is the case with all new arrivals that come to new countries that they slowly integrate and adapt their environment to their needs. So how do we accelerate people into the governance of early childhood education settings so that through the governance model they can adapt the setting to best meet the community's needs. ELAA has not mentioned that, but we think that that is probably worthwhile and there could be some community development activity to support people into those functions. ELAA does talk about a workforce development strategy, and we agree with that, but we also have to extend power to new arrivals to be able to adapt their community to their best needs. How we do that is a question mark, but we do have a community development system in Victoria. How could we make the most of that for these particular cohorts?

Do you want to talk about that at all, Zorica, about the community taking control?

Ms DASIC: Well, community capacity building is important and community control, of course; you said that well. We certainly face some barriers, and we should actually view that as a systematic ground that we should work on. Some changes there would really assist. I have just one example with the families from our practice. Families who have just arrived with young children that could be included in different playgroups, for example, cannot be because of lack of interpreters, for example. So it is just one simple example where they stay excluded, but on many other levels of their daily life they would stay excluded. So that community—building our community capacity and leaning on that sphere of our service delivery would definitely bring some changes which are systematic, I think, and from there we could actually grow and expect other aspects to improve.

Ms HAYES: I think also by having someone involved in the governance it would then have that ripple effect back to the community and their understanding of what the early childhood services are about and would perhaps encourage others to participate in the programs as well—and for us to learn from those communities more as well.

Ms DASIC: And we talk about maybe some program that would enhance or support the idea for young people to continue their education in this area, then we would get a culturally competent and same-language-speaking workforce which would be great, in addition to the model.

Ms HAYES: We also talked a little bit when we were preparing around offering scholarships to the CALD community and encouraging students to go into that workforce. We do not have that diverse workforce, particularly down here, and I think when you get further and further down towards Colac it is pretty much non-existent. And Colac is an area where refugees settle, so there is a real gap there for us.

Mr BROADLEY: So they are our three major points. It is around transitions and graduation; around interpreters, the marketplace and the desperate need for them; and really around governance and how to build the community up.

Ms COUZENS: Thank you for your presentation today. Of course I am very aware of the work that you do, and it is some amazing work, I might add, so I am glad you are here talking about your experiences and what you think will make a difference.

I was going to ask before you mentioned it about the workforce issues. I think that we do not have those skilled workers or, sorry, CALD people given the opportunity to become skilled workers, and you talked about scholarships and that sort of thing, which is great. Do you have a view on how else that could be—I suppose encouraging the CALD community? We have met lots of CALD people who are highly skilled but cannot find work, so how do we manage that? How do we ensure that those people are given the opportunities to get into, particularly, early learning and get skilled up to our standards so that they can actually be employed? Have you got a view on how that might happen or could happen?

Mr BROADLEY: I guess my view is it should be place based and localised, so how do you build a coalition around TAFE providers, the industry and the sector to synthesise all of that? There are some great opportunities with early childhood education being one of the free TAFE courses, but actually are we really linking that with the settlement service providers who have probably the most contact with the community? And how do we build a governance structure over that strategy? I would say that my sense is that you do that locally and that that could be a particular strategy that the TAFE sector could lead, or DET regional office could lead. There are already opportunities and assets there; it is about how to make the most of them necessarily, without spending any additional money.

Ms COUZENS: I think also focusing on the current languages, rather than sort of sticking to the older CALD communities, the Greek and Italian and even Turkish, to some degree. It is the more recent arrivals that are finding it really difficult in terms of language and getting access to those language classes—English classes.

Ms DASIC: English classes, but we also have clients who arrive here with relatively good English and proficiency in the language spheres, so the settlement services would actually play a crucial role to inform them about their future pathways. What we have seen so far is that particularly young women would actually choose a course—hairdressing or whatever they have in the mind—they would exhaust their federal education funding, and after a year or two they would realise that there is a shortage in this area. They realise that after taking probably their kids to a childcare centre, getting more information around that. Their heart would be there. Unfortunately they cannot really do that course, again because it is the same level of education. So I think timely information about the value of that profession and the possibilities and opportunities for them would be much appreciated.

Mr BROADLEY: One of the things we also talked about is who is the peak body—who is the community leader for this community? In the Aboriginal community it is much clearer. At a place level there is often a co-op, and at a state level there is VACCA, who takes a big space. Who is that actually for this community? It is difficult to talk about the CALD community because it is not one homogenous community. There are lots of communities in there. But who is leading and advocating on behalf of this community to government and that community as well? We thought that there might be an opportunity to build something in the middle there between government and the community to help bridge the gap, to do some of this sort of workforce development work.

Ms COUZENS: You talked about the fact that you operate four kinders—

Mr BROADLEY: Seven.

Ms COUZENS: Seven, sorry. Are you doing playgroups as well?

Ms HAYES: Yes. In Colac we do the supported playgroups.

Ms COUZENS: So just in Colac, not Geelong?

Ms HAYES: Colac, Corangamite. No, the City of Greater Geelong have the contract up here.

Ms COUZENS: Do you see that there is a benefit of having CALD-specific playgroups, for example?

Mr BROADLEY: Yes.

Ms COUZENS: That answered that question. Maybe you could expand on what the benefits of that might be.

Ms HAYES: We talked about this, but just the benefits for the families connecting with other people in their community and the social interaction and being able to, I suppose, support each other, encourage the language. But I think there are also benefits from an integrated model as well. The children have that opportunity to model off other children—the English-speaking families as well—so I think there is a bit of a mix for both and there are benefits on both sides.

Mr BROADLEY: If it is the case that these are the developmental deficits for this community, which are significant, then the dose of treatment required to redress any developmental delay has to be commensurately stronger. So there is no cap on the benefit of exposing children to early learning environments, and the reality is that this community comes with barriers, comes with deficits. The data tells us that. So we actually have to increase the dose of care and education that we provide to these kids before they hit the primary school system. They have to catch up to their peers or we have a hard time beyond that. Also, that supported playgroup model allows for that graduation. So, yes, it is education based, yes, there is a social cohesion element to it, but you can actually then start to prepare and link to the next step.

Ms COUZENS: And knowing your organisation so well, do you have any innovative ideas around how some of these things could be rolled out?

Mr BROADLEY: Yes, of course. I think it is about taking advantage of the broader reform priorities that are happening with funders, so DET, DOJ, DHS are all in significant reform. All of those reforms have some stuff in common and that is to create integrated governance over place, so place-based service delivery and stuff, to be able to get really good data. One of the things which was interesting in preparing for this presentation is: how much data is available actually for the CALD community? I can find heaps on the general population and for the Aboriginal community, but I actually could not easily get data for the CALD community. So place-based governance would help; that is part of the reform. The child and family services system reform and the roadmap reform give us the opportunity to put pathways down using the significant family services system, which is massive. It allows us to be flexible and to put that in front of particular cohorts, and it asks us to do that as early as we possibly can. So we can use the family services asset to actually deliver things like a playgroup or a parent education group that has some playgroup components to it. We could do that without actually asking for any further funding from the Government, for example. So I would say that that would be my gut feeling as to how to use the existing reforms. There is also the whole Education State and ‘breaking the link’ reform context as well, which gives us some imperative.

Ms COUZENS: Thank you.

The CHAIR: We have heard a lot about the administration side and how difficult and challenging it is to navigate the system. I did suggest to the previous presenter the notion of a one-stop hub where one can walk in and get, I suppose, the face-to-face support rather than being reliant upon IT, where there are so many challenges for people who do not have access to the internet or do not have email addresses and it is just too

difficult. So that first step of how to access the service and the information continues to be, from what we have heard so far, an absolute challenge. What is your view of having a centralised, smooth-running and basic one-stop hub or area where one would get all the information and assistance in one go?

Mr BROADLEY: So at a neighbourhood level to have an integrated child and family piece of infrastructure that has interpreters, playgroups, childcare settings and kindergartens—is that the kind of thing you are talking about?

The CHAIR: That is right, and I suppose the information—the admin side of that—being in one centralised place rather than being, ‘Go here’, and now you have to go there. We heard previously about 500 hours being free and then suddenly—you can only imagine if someone of a non-English-speaking background receives a bill, and it would be a pretty excessive bill, for one, because of the challenges they are facing starting in a community, the anxiety of that. So I am just talking about getting all of the information. And I suppose when you are face-to-face you have a sense of trust as well, when you are dealing with a human rather than IT or your computer, which is just so difficult. My question is: would that make it smoother for people of culturally and linguistically diverse communities to be able to understand, access and get that service at the beginning?

Ms DASIC: I am pretty sure that would be a solution. A one-stop shop for new arrivals really, for all parents with young children eligible and entitled to the early childhood services. So that would be helpful. Also because of the mentality and psychology they feel a bit lost here. But they could feel way more comfortable if they know there is a place created actually for them, to support them and to help them. That would be a solution.

Mr BROADLEY: It also has all of those secondary benefits as it becomes part of their local infrastructure where they meet people and create social cohesion. Our job becomes less then, because the community is communicating among itself and sharing information. There is also an opportunity for them to join a committee of management if need be.

The CHAIR: It creates an opportunity.

Mr BROADLEY: It is predictable in terms of settlement services. You know, part of settlement services is just helping people with bus routes and getting to predictable transport locations

Ms DASIC: Local orientation.

Mr BROADLEY: Yes, local orientation.

The CHAIR: But sometimes it is that basic information at the beginning of your settlement that makes that big difference in your journey. This is what I am sort of understanding. Stage one is already a barrier. If I am struggling, as someone that can speak English, to navigate the system—and I have attempted to do this with my sister; it was extremely difficult and it became quite anxious—at one point you sort of have a sense of, ‘Well, this is just too difficult. Let’s just not worry about this’.

Mr BROADLEY: Actually it would be easier just to leave your child with a neighbour or something like that.

The CHAIR: Especially the role of grandparents as well.

Mr BROADLEY: That is right, but then you are missing out on education.

The CHAIR: It is an overall issue, not just for the CALD communities, having I think that real centralised one-stop hub where you actually get that information in that first approach.

Ms DASIC: Particularly I think it would affect in a good way the transition if that service could support them throughout the transitioning process from one stage to another, so it is not just for their immediate needs upon their arrival. That would be really helpful. They would rely on that service. We would delete any room for misunderstanding or for missing out on some services.

The CHAIR: It may also, as you just noted, give an opportunity actually for other services and other connection points as well, not just childhood enrolments. You might have an issue with your healthcare card, so all that sort of—

Mr BROADLEY: Correct. One of the things that we should expect of this cohort is there are probably multiple and complex needs in any given family, and therefore we would expect them to have those needs met: to go to this provider over this side of town, this provider, this provider, this provider, the doctor. There are a lot of needs. All of the evidence tells us that that is it the least effective way to move someone to wellbeing, and the best, most effective, is to meet them earlier and cluster the services around them. That is destined to work better.

The CHAIR: My final question will be there seems to be not just here in this region but overall a real gap when it comes to encouraging people of diverse backgrounds into your workforce. Do you think that that continues to be a gap in your organisation, or is it something that you are ahead of?

Mr BROADLEY: I do not think we are ahead of that, no. We recently published a diversity and inclusion strategy where we talk about trying to redress that problem, so we are sort of at the beginning of that journey. It has been very casual up until now with all sorts of different groups, certainly the CALD community, but we would benefit from them. We have Zorica's team all coming from culturally different backgrounds and we have had Aboriginal programs also from culturally different backgrounds. The organisation becomes richer as a result of it.

The CHAIR: Absolutely.

Mr BROADLEY: But you actually have to step into an assertive space to make sure that happens because it does not happen automatically.

Ms HAYES: One of the programs where it has worked for us is the HIPPI program in Colac. We have Sudanese workers who actually were HIPPI parents and then they became HIPPI mentors, and now they have been employed for us in the supported playgroup area. The HIPPI program is designed for the child but also the parent—it is an introduction into the workforce—so that model worked well. The children are four, though. That is the downside on that, I guess. Being able to get people in earlier into that model as a parent and then offer work without any formal qualifications, and they get offered training along the way—it is a good model.

The CHAIR: What would be the advice to government? As you know, government offers scholarships and programs to encourage. What would be I suppose your suggestion to government and even councils as well because all three levels play a role? What would be your advice?

Ms HAYES: I think sometimes the soft entries, like the HIPPI program, and then you can go on to do the more formal qualifications if you need. But if you are new to the country, that is a really good way to slide into the workforce and build up your confidence. You are teaching your own child at the same time as you are getting mentored to then go out and into the homes and show the program to other parents. So that model, if we could bring that down to look at how we could do that in a playgroup model, then those people could actually then become a playgroup leader and we could offer some training, certificate III, along the way. But I do not think you can just say, 'Go to TAFE and do it'. I think it is the life and hands-on experience and the role modelling that people gain a lot from rather than sitting here and studying and trying to understand all of what we put in front of them.

Mr BROADLEY: We often have this conversation as an organisation that we have a duty of care to clients, so how do these models fit in with a merit-based selection interview model? It is our job to maintain really high standards of service delivery and workforce performance and professionalism, so what that kind of suggests to me, if you want to accelerate people into the workforce, is that if they have English language skills barriers or have grown up in a different schooling system, then you actually have to apply some additional resources to be able to accelerate it safely, I suppose. What are the other learning opportunities that you can provide people so that they meet their Australian peers? Does that make sense?

Ms DASIC: Gradually build on their confidence. They come here without any confidence.

Ms COUZENS: Because if we do not do it, we will not have them in the workforce.

Ms DASIC: That is right.

Mr BROADLEY: Yes, that is right.

The CHAIR: That is lovely; that is great.

Mr TAK: This is not a question, but what we heard through other hearings is that potentially there are very highly trained or skilled or educated migrants, but I could not work out what the difference is between this group of migrants and those who are overseas trained and are being sponsored and come to work here. Are there any differences? I know it may not be part of this.

Mr BROADLEY: So are you talking about the skilled migration program and then the refugee and asylum seeker program?

Mr TAK: That is right, and then the refugees we already have here.

Ms DASIC: It is a huge difference because we are talking mostly and referring to CALD communities or clients that we work with who come here through a humanitarian program. So their qualification is not necessarily validated. It was not important. Also when they come here, very often having them come from different countries like Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, their qualifications would not be recognised. They are keen on adjusting, they are keen on starting their lives and getting on their feet, not relying on Centrelink income. So what they usually do, because it is a dead end and they know they cannot work as engineers, although they have great experience from overseas and good qualifications—some of them completed their studies in Iraq in English, like medicine and engineering courses, for example—is they actually take the first opportunity to work, which is painting or any other jobs that they do not really need any qualifications for. That is a major difference. When we import people sponsored by Australian businesses their qualifications are probably—it is a different pathway—acknowledged here and recognised. With the CALD communities we are talking about today, mostly refugees and asylum seekers, they do not have that luxury. They usually are engaged in part of the workforce of course but in a way lower level.

Mr TAK: Thank you. Can you take me to the next stage, then, through my ignorance, I would say. Because this sort of skilled migrant through the humanitarian program settles here, wouldn't it be for their long-term benefit that there is some way to upskill in terms of recognition? They are going to stay here.

Ms DASIC: Sorry, I did not understand. Were you referring to refugees and asylum seekers?

Mr TAK: That is right. Yes, humanitarian migrants.

Mr BROADLEY: To have to translate their qualification from their country of origin to an Australian standard.

Mr TAK: Or transition upskill so that their qualification can be recognised.

Ms DASIC: I absolutely agree, but that is not working at the moment. From my practice, I have so many clients—engineers—who are highly educated back in their countries. It is part of our role to advocate and help them, particularly when you see them helpless in all areas of their life, to get recognition through the relevant bodies. Unfortunately they have failed. They do not yearn to get their qualification recognised at an equal level, but as long as we recognise their expertise, if we could get some processes in place to help them upskill, to lean on their existing skills, that would be really beneficial for our country, for them, for their families, for their confidence and for their general satisfaction and fulfilment. We all need to actualise through different segments of our life, and profession is one of them. Unfortunately they were unfortunate enough to lose that opportunity to work.

Ms HAYES: In the early childhood setting we have a category called 'Working towards'. You could have a cert III certificate and be working towards a diploma and then get employed as a diploma. Something like that

might actually work—that you are still acknowledged for your qualification and you are working towards getting the Australian recognition.

Ms COUZENS: Through RPLs and things.

Ms SETTLE: This is actually going back a bit to the transition concept. At the moment, what are the relationships like between kindergartens and schools in Geelong? Is there already an integrated pathway for that sort of transition?

Mr BROADLEY: There are relationships, and that is brokered by the DET regional office. There is a bit of work in those pathways. I would say though that that pathway is too late. If we are doing the work to make sure there is a transition between kinder and primary school, that is too late. We do not want kids entering into the primary school system behind. The real gap is really the transition from maternal and child health nursing to a playgroup setting into a childcare or kinder setting. That is probably the place to do the most work, is what I would say. Would you agree with that?

Ms HAYES: Yes, I would, and there is a formal process for transitioning to school. The early childhood teachers actually have to complete transition statements online, and it goes to the school. So those informal networks happen, but, yes, absolutely it is too late for this client group. It needs to happen way back there.

The CHAIR: That concludes our questions. Thank you very much for presenting and taking the time out to do this for us. We have got a couple more public hearings, and then the Committee will deliberate on all the submissions. Next year we will hand down the report to Parliament with some strong recommendations, and your submission will take part in that. Thank you again for presenting, and all the very best.

Mr BROADLEY: Thank you very much, and congratulations on your early years reform activities.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Witnesses withdrew.