

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Today's training. Tomorrow's skills.

Report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Employment, Education and Training

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training is asked to inquire into and report on:

- the appropriate roles of institutes of technical and further education; and
- the extent to which those roles should overlap with universities.

*Received from Senator the Hon Amanda Vanstone
Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
1 September 1997*

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PREFACE

Debate about the appropriate role of higher education and its relationship to the vocational education and training sector, is in some ways no less polarised now than it was in nineteenth century Britain from which Australia's universities derive their origins.

This inquiry has sought to examine the role of TAFE in contemporary Australia and its sometimes uneasy relationship with universities.

On the one hand education is increasingly seen as having a utilitarian purpose — training which leads to employment. Others however, see post secondary and higher education as being about knowledge, research, cognitive thinking and the inculcation of values deeply rooted in an understanding of the past.

Can we sustain a healthy balance between necessary training for work and education for life? What is the future for understanding of history, language, fine arts and knowledge for its own sake? Is education and training to have a role other than the sole objective of preparation for work?

This inquiry, whilst focusing on the role of TAFE and its relationship to universities, found an equally important interface in need of further examination — that between secondary education and TAFE. Can VET provided by TAFE to secondary schools improve school retention rates, enhance the interest of students in learning and provide them with skills they see as relevant and necessary to modern life?

Closer but appropriate articulation between the higher education and VET sectors provides an opportunity for Australia to produce a generation that is not only highly trained for specific technical tasks but also educated for leadership, problem-solving and an understanding of one another.

BRENDAN NELSON

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Adult and Community Education
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ARF	Australian Recognition Framework
AVCC	Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
DEETYA	Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
EPE	Employment Placement Enterprise
ESL	English as a Second Language
ITAB	Industry Training Advisory Board
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NTF	National Training Framework
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training

