



Tasmania

PREMIER

26 NOV 2002

Mr K Bartlett MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Education and Training  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Bartlett

I have pleasure in forwarding you the Tasmanian Government submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to the continuing development of vocational education in schools, a situation which has occurred since the implementation of initial piloting and research efforts in 1993. Currently, the Tasmanian Government is undertaking implementation and development activity with regard to the National Framework for Vocational Education in Schools, known in this State as the Vocational Education and Learning (VEL) Framework. The Framework has been agreed as a common platform across the Government and Non-Government schools sectors.

The State Government has put considerable effort, including financial support, into the development and maintenance of a Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools approach recognised for its quality and wide support. It is to be hoped that this current inquiry will reflect the Commonwealth Government advocacy of vocational education reform in schools by supporting the need for financial resources necessary to spread the gains made under VET in Schools to the broader arena of vocational education and learning in schools.

I commend the submission to you.

Yours sincerely

Jim Bacon MHA  
*Premier*

**Tasmanian Government Submission to the  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on  
Education and Training  
Inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools**

## **Introduction**

The Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the report of the House of Representatives Inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools.

Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VIS) commenced in Tasmania in 1992 with the formation of four pilot programs as part of a series of responses to the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports. The pilots launched in 1993 included a student traineeship in process engineering and three others following the principles of the Training in Retail and Commerce (TRaC) program developed by the Dusseldorp Skills Forum. These pilots in retail, office administration and metals introduced a number of elements which have remained as core principles for the Tasmanian programs including:

- substantial amounts of training in the workplace, 240 hours wherever possible;
- direct industry involvement in the development and management of programs; and
- an educational model which defined the workplace as part of the school with curriculum, assessment and teacher management of programs and learning.

## **Section One: The Range, Structure, Resourcing and Delivery of Vocational Education Programs In Schools**

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### **1. Background**

To support the expanding range of programs and student enrolments across the State, the Government and non-Government schools sectors formed a cooperative and unified approach to the principles and operation of VIS. The Department of Education (DoE) acted in 1995 to create and resource a team of VIS Development Officers to ensure the consistent and innovative implementation of VIS, particularly the fostering and expression of quality principles and the active engagement and support of industry and other non school stakeholders. Following demand for VIS programs in areas not serviced by the State's Senior Secondary Colleges, in 1997 the Development Officer team was expanded to include the Rural Retention Development Officers. This allowed the extension of VIS to rural and district high schools which were previously unable to operate programs for Year 11 and 12 students.

By 1997 the VIS program had significantly changed community perceptions about vocational education and training by demonstrating that secondary colleges and schools can:

- prepare students for working life;
- provide opportunities for students not intending to proceed directly to tertiary education;

- equip students with marketable entry levels skills for specific industries;
- broaden students' understanding of the career and training pathways and opportunities that exist in industry; and
- initiate and coordinate partnerships and programs with organisations outside the school education system.

Since then, the school sectors (Government, Catholic and Independent) have undertaken a range of initiatives to develop community understanding of the importance of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in schools and the availability of programs for senior secondary students. The Tasmanian Government has taken the view that it is the collaboration and partnerships between the school, other VET providers, students, parents and employers in the local community which form the basis of success of these innovative programs and the key to their sustainability.

Most recently the Department of Education has sought to reintroduce and develop vocational education in line with the MCEETYA implementation of the national Framework for Vocational Education in Schools (FVES). In October 2002 the Framework was launched as the commonly agreed framework between the schools sectors in Tasmania. In this State it is to be known as the Vocational Education and Learning (VEL) Framework and cover students in Years 7-12.

## **2. Expansion of VET in Schools**

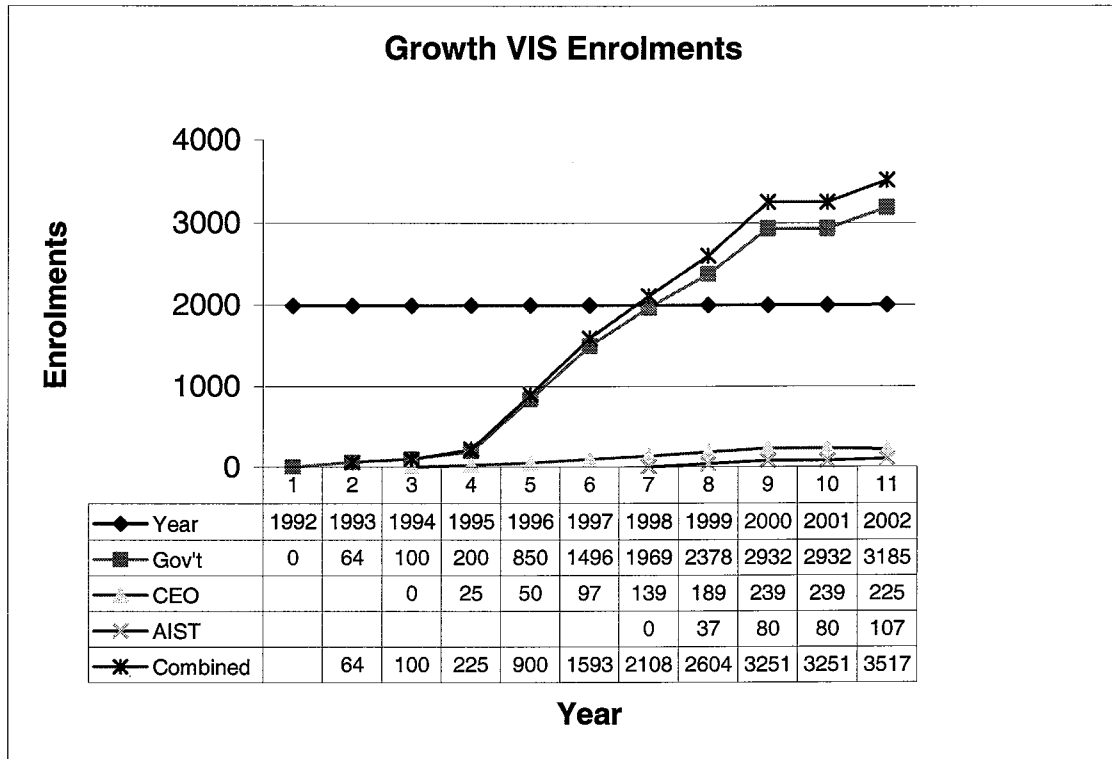
Expansion of VET in Schools has been rapid in Tasmania as the following indicators attest.

From an initial enrolment of 64 students in 1993, by April 2000 3251 students were enrolled in VET programs in government schools and colleges. Since then the increase has slowed with 3517 students enrolled in July 2002. The majority of these enrolments were for courses which provide an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Certificate I or II qualification for successful completion. The growth in enrolments in schools and colleges is shown below in Chart I.

Currently a range of 85 VET accredited courses covering 20 different industries is being offered by registered government and non-government school and college providers. VET in schools programs for year 11 students now involve 18 rural high schools and district high schools.

Since 1993 several pilot VET in schools based traineeships have been trialled. A new *Guide to Tasmanian School Based Traineeships* was endorsed by the Tasmanian State Training Authority (TASTA) in 2001 and a number of traineeships are being investigated or developed, including a traineeship in Business. The Tasmanian Government has adopted new measures to encourage the availability of School Based Traineeships. However, for a variety of reasons to do with the nature of employment in this State and the strong uptake of VIS programs based upon industry need, it is anticipated that New Apprentice numbers will increase only slowly in Tasmania.

**Chart 1 Accredited VET Enrolments by Sector: (Government, Catholic Education Office [CEO], Association of Independent Schools of Tasmania [AIST])**



*Notes: DoE schools and colleges data for 2001 were under reported (and appear as an apparent decline from 2000) as statistical collection procedures and reporting are being redeveloped to meet MCEETYA AVETMISS compliant reporting requirements for 2003. Difficulties for 2001 data include, significantly:*

- *incomplete collection of data; and*
- *enrolment data being collected 6 months later in the calendar year.*

*Data being compiled for 2002 enrolments show continuing growth despite a more conservative growth regime.*

### **3. Framework for the development of VET in Schools**

Future benchmarking to progress expansion of VET in Schools in Tasmania will be against the six principles outlined to the *Principles and Guidelines for Improving the Outcomes for Vocational Education and Training in Schools* (DEETYA, December 1996) and informed by *Principles and Framework for the consistent application of the National Training Framework within Secondary Schools* (1998).

#### **3.1 Principle I - Programs will be based on national industry skills/competency standards**

Vocational education and training (VET) in Tasmanian schools has been consistent in adhering to the national system for VET. This includes adoption of policies aligned with the Australian Quality Training Framework as it operates in Tasmania.

This commitment has continued and is demonstrated through the use of funding to initiate early consultation with industry and training bodies to ensure that schools and colleges are familiar with training packages and adopt them as soon as they become available. Tasmania is committed to ensuring that the competencies contained in training packages are those that are achieved by students.

Incorporation of extended workplace learning, where required by industry, will ensure that assessments recognise workplace competence and, where appropriate, lead to the awarding of VET qualifications.

#### **3.2 Principle 2 - Programs will relate to, or provide VET certificates within the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) and senior secondary certificates endorsed by State and Territory Boards of Studies**

The Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training (OPCET), within the Department of Education, and the schools sectors have worked closely with the Tasmanian Secondary Assessment Board (TASSAB) to jointly plan approaches to the inclusion of VET achievements as an integral part of the recognised assessments on the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE).

TASSAB recognises assessment of VET delivered by a registered training organisation under the Australian Recognition Framework for inclusion in the TCE, for students enrolled in schools.

TASSAB is pursuing avenues that seek to include VET achievement as part of tertiary entrance scores, including work being undertaken nationally as a consequence of the March 2000 MCEETYA agreement which advanced the development of national guidelines to facilitate this work.

#### **3.3 Principle 3 - Responses to industry needs**

The schools sector will work closely with its industry partners to assess and meet industry needs through VET in Schools programs. This will be addressed by:

- participation in State VET planning, development and work with industry peak organisations;
- creation and development of local and regional industry-education management and coordination structures; and
- the provision of extended industry placements for students as an indication of the availability and demand for VET programs at local, regional and state level.

### **3.4 Principle 4 - Articulation with traineeships and apprenticeships**

A significant number of students undertake training at Certificate I level. Tasmanian schools and OPCET have begun investigation of opportunities to explore participation in traineeship and apprenticeship arrangements at Certificate levels II and III in appropriate industry areas. This process will be undertaken in parallel with the introduction of training packages.

Students have been involved in pilot traineeship arrangements, a consequence of which has been the redevelopment of Tasmanian guidelines for operation. Concurrently there has been development work undertaken to enable the creation of arrangements in several industry areas, including Business. Tasmania will continue to emphasise the development of effective pathways from general education to VET as a part of post compulsory schooling as well as pathways to employment based VET.

### **3.5 Principle 5 - Registered providers, national recognition**

All schools and colleges involved in the delivery of VET programs are registered training providers, or are delivering training through auspicing and/or delivery arrangements with a registered training provider.

With their commitment to the implementation of training packages, schools will extend their registration to those areas in which they have the capacity to offer qualifications within the training packages.

### **3.6 Principle 6 - Equity target groups**

Tasmania is committed to the development of an articulated approach to the delivery of VET through school based programs and training partnerships. In the period 1993 to 2000 the availability of Certificate of Work Education programs expanded to increase the provision of basic skills training which greatly assists students' transition to extended structured workplace learning. The widespread uptake of this Certificate led to redevelopment during 2000 and 2001 to match closely the needs of Tasmanian students and industry. This new Certificate of Workplace Skills has been accredited and has been aligned with appropriate training packages. A professional development program has been delivered across the three schools sectors to support delivery of the new Certificate.

These programs are reporting success with a wide range of the target equity groups in terms of providing transition from general education programs to VET. A key indicator has been a strong decline in attrition from these transition programs as compared to more general education programs.

## **4. Increasing participation in VET in Schools**

With the major expansion of VET in Schools (VIS) concluded, and the implementation of alternative programs under the Vocational Education and Training (VEL) Framework in future, VIS growth is expected to continue tapering off in 2003 and 2004.

Following the release of the VET in Schools Policy Framework in 2001 it is expected that there may be some limited participation by Year 10 students through the new Certificate of Workplace Skills. It is probable that high school students will be principally involved in vocational learning activity that prepares them for VET programs in senior secondary years. This development will be in line with the State

implementation of the nationally agreed Framework for Vocational Education in Schools. This implementation will see the integration of vocational education and learning with the curriculum in Years 7-12 and is intended to provide outcomes for all students in areas such as enterprise, vocational learning, career education and community based learning.

#### 4.1 ANTA funds for the expansion of VET in Schools

The ANTA Ministerial Council (MINCO) agreed in 1996 that \$20 million of VET funding would be provided to State training authorities for each of the four years 1997-2000, for allocation to school authorities. Funding has continued since and is the principal form of direct additional funding for VIS programs in the State. Tasmanian allocations by sector for 2001 are listed below:

**Table 1 Indicative Tasmanian allocations by sector for 2002**

Allocation to Tasmania	Allocations to Sectors within State		
	Government	Catholic	Independent
\$771,608	\$590,753	\$101,416	\$79,438

The Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training signed four-year agreements with each of the school sector authorities (Catholic, Independent and public schools) for the period 1997-2000. Schedules of activities for each year are prepared by each of the school sectors together with reports on activity for the previous year. Schedules of activity identify the proposed expansion of VET in Schools for the new funding year benchmarked against the previous year's activity and the *Principles and Guidelines For Improving Outcomes For Vocational Education and Training In Schools*. New agreements are to be developed with each of the school sector authorities for future years in line with the revised ANTA funding guidelines. An issue for consideration within the State is the relationship of the cross-sectors approach in ongoing support of VET in Schools, including School Based traineeships, as an element within the encompassing VEL Framework.

Activity reports are confirmed by the reporting system through the TASSAB data collection and reporting system.

#### **4.2 Conditions for funding, accountability and required reporting arrangements**

Distribution of specific ANTA funds for VET in schools to schools sectors (Catholic, Independent and public) occurs following endorsement by TASTA and approval by ANTA of a schedule of activity for the forthcoming academic year. This occurs annually during the period for which the funds are available. Activity that is eligible for funding is activity which relates to a VET outcome leading towards a New Apprenticeship or further vocational education and training.

Following endorsement by the TASTA, planned activity is forwarded to ANTA and on acceptance, payment of funds is triggered. A report is also required by ANTA against the previous year's schedule, including the number of certificates issued, and commencements and completions in respect of recognised VET activity.

Activity funded by ANTA VET in Schools funds is not counted in the ANTA Agreement activity collected from all States/Territories by the National Centre of Vocational Education Research (NCVER) and reported in the ANTA Annual Report as total government funded VET activity for Australia. Only that activity funded through the ANTA Agreement is counted in the national VET collection from which VET participation rates are calculated.

Schools report VET in Schools activities in a particular area of the National Schools Report. Schools have to "count" students in their August census returns and for this purpose VET students count in the same way as other students. Schools have to account for moneys received specifically for VET. These funds are included in the Schools Educational Resource Package as an item both of income and expenditure.

A cross-schools sectors agreement has been negotiated for funding allocation, which is intended to create and reflect a higher level of integration between Government and non-Government sectors in the utilisation of this funding, including increasing recognition of the role of regional partnerships in the development and delivery of VET in Schools.

#### **5. The Role of the Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training**

The Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training in the Department of Education has assumed responsibility for the development and implementation of VET in Schools (VIS) and for implementation of the Vocational Education and Learning Framework.

The VET in Schools policy supports the major policy commitments of the Tasmanian Government, particularly Tasmania *Together* and the education policy *Learning Together*, as well as the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling and input from stakeholders. The policy will form the basis for ongoing development through 2002 and beyond.



## VET in Schools Activity Tables

**Table 2 – Strategies for Increasing Participation**

National Key Result Area	Strategy	Performance Indicator
Expansion of VET in Schools	Program for development and implementation of accredited courses from Training Packages	Number of Training Package based credentials issued by schools
	Schools assisted in registering as RTOs or through auspicing.	Number of schools registering as RTOs or through auspicing.
	Scope and mix of VET accredited training delivered in schools expanded	Industry coverage by VET in schools measured and monitored
	Number of VET pathways available in school expanded	Number of New Apprentices as enrolled school students. Number of school students enrolled in accredited VET programs. Number of industries that have a school based pathway to further VET.
	Status of VET increased.	Increased participation of industry in vocational learning. Better defined pathways in VET pathways. Increased participation in VET by post compulsory education students. Increased participation by post year 11 and 12 students continuing in VET.
	Equity target groups needs addressed.	Schools register to provide Certificate of Workplace Skills.

## **6. Teacher Training**

The expansion of VIS programs has been strongly underpinned by ongoing professional development and teacher training programs to ensure that the models of provision in Tasmania can be supported and sustained. As VIS is considered to be part of the general education provision of schools and colleges, teachers have been provided with the training and professional development to enable their participation in the VET system and to work with students and workplace employees, supervisors and trainers.

With the mainstream provision of VIS and the broadening of vocational education and learning under the VEL Framework across Years 7-12 attention to pre-service training will become an issue requiring attention.

### **Section Two: Differences Between School-Based and Other Vocational Education Programs and Patterns of Industry Acceptance**

#### **1. Quality of VET in Schools Programs**

VET delivered to school students as part of their general education should not differ in quality or compliance standards from VET delivered elsewhere. Consequently students attain VET qualifications which are recorded as part of their Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE). Schools and Colleges delivering nationally accredited VET qualifications in Tasmania are full Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in their own right. There are no separate registration arrangements and no parallel or hybrid infrastructure with respect to complying with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF).

Historically, a key reason for full RTO status for schools was to address issues such as mutual recognition between institutions in the State and to develop industry confidence in the quality of the system VET invested heavily in the development of quality assurance processes to support compliance and to ensure this quality.

While quality is difficult to measure, one indicator is that schools and colleges had fewer observations and non-compliances recorded as compared with all non-school RTOs against all Australian Recognition Framework (ARF) standards except 10 (Assessment) during the period 1998 to 2001. There have been rare complaints about perceptions of the quality of VIS programs coming from other RTOs, which have usually indicated a lack of understanding of the mutual recognition principles.

#### **2. Patterns of Industry Acceptance**

From the outset Tasmanian VIS was premised upon the need to have industry and business participate directly in the formation of curriculum and industry, as well as educational outcomes. Subsequently, Tasmanian programs were developed from first principles reflecting these concerns rather than to adapt current school syllabuses as a matter of convenience or simple student popularity of choice.

Utilising a central development team and the Development Officer team in association with industry and training sector partners, programs were, and continue to be, developed to meet industry, schools and students training needs and capabilities. Allied with an approach which enables the use of 240 hours of structured work placement in a manner best suited to the production processes and business operations of specific industries and enterprises, industry acceptance is strong as indicated by the number of workplaces utilised and the hours of structured work placement.

Not only are the hours of structured work placement per student in Tasmania high in comparison to national averages, programs match more closely the industry profile of the State compared with other States and Territories. Partly this is due to the early inclusion of Vet in Schools (VIS) as part of State training plans and of (Industry Training and Advisory Board (ITAB) research and advice. It is also a reflection that in order to provide a substantial element of work placement for students there needs to be a strong correlation with industry patterns across the State.

Another feature of the Tasmanian approach has been strong and responsive relationships between education and industry at systems level and in school-business partnerships locally and regionally. As a result major and minor expressions of industry concern tend to be dealt with directly and sympathetically and solutions negotiated quickly. As an example, structured work placement and work experience are centrally managed through a consensus process (the Work Experience Advisory Committee) which comprises schools sectors, employee organisation and employer representatives. This system, developed over two decades, is a powerful aid in maintaining industry support for flexibility in response to the expansion and evolution of vocational education programs.

The major difficulties experienced by industry appear to be a mismatch between the particular forms of vocational education programs being undertaken by students and expectations about the preparedness and capacity of students undertaking placements. Among response strategies has been the development of identification cards for students and workplaces indicating the type of program being undertaken by the student and reasonable expectations of employers and supervisors working with students.

A more problematic issue currently emerging is the perception of employers that the amount of paperwork and formal demands imposed through regulatory and quality assurance frameworks are becoming too much. This is especially so as employers view their participation as a community service and altruistic in nature.

The third concern is in the rapid expansion of demand for placements. To this point the fostering of new employer participation has largely kept pace with the increase in demand for structured work placement except in a small number of industries such as information and communications technology where demand for placements is very difficult to meet due to the nature and size of the industry in the State. With the coming implementation of the VEL Framework, attention is being drawn to the likely further demand for industry participation as well as the need to expand community capacity to provide vocational skills and enterprise skills developmental opportunities for students. While the regulatory, quality assurance and insurance arrangements for work experience and vocational placement are arguably the best in Australia, it is anticipated that work will need to be undertaken to provide more systematic coverage for community based learning, enterprise education and project based learning taking place outside schools.

### **Section Three: Vocational Education in New and Emerging Industries**

Through the full incorporation of VIS into the VET system within the State, particular effort has been made to ensure that VIS programs are developed across the breadth of industry operating in Tasmania. While VIS program offered by schools and colleges tend to cluster around those industries where there is strong demand and where program arrangements and resource requirements can be more easily accommodated within school and industry organisation, the shared responsibility for development across participating schools and school sectors has meant that most industry areas have been prospected for possible development.

Through the encouragement of State training and industry development agencies there has been an emphasis upon encouraging schools and colleges into new and emerging industry areas. This has been supported through a variety of arrangements and partnership participation which enable ongoing consultation with industry and checking to see if previously inaccessible areas have become less so.

Due to limitations on resources, the limited capacity for access to small scale industry and businesses or difficulties stemming from traditional patterns of school organisation, penetration into new areas can be problematic. In a number of cases support of Government agencies, particularly the Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training, has been able to assist in the identification and ongoing development targeted at new and emerging industries such as electrotechnology.

### **Section Four: The Accessibility and Effectiveness of Vocational Education for Indigenous Students**

#### **1. Background**

The accessibility and effectiveness of vocational education for indigenous students has been addressed from a broader framework of identification of the needs from equity groups specifically Aboriginal students, girls, students with a disability, rural and remote and students at risk and Non-English Speaking Background. Prior to, and since, the implementation of VIS there has been a range of vocational education programs supported by the Aboriginal community and the Department of Education (DoE) intended to directly assist in meeting need in this area.

The DoE is currently undertaking a VET in Schools Equity Project, initiated by the DoE VET in Schools Policy Committee. As part of this project DoE conducted a forum with teachers, VIS Rural Retention Development Officers and the Aboriginal community to identify barriers to participation in VET in schools for these students. As a result of this DoE identified six main areas where significant barriers are encountered:

- Access
  - prerequisite skills
  - availability of course;
- Lack of learning supports
  - flexible provision;
- Perception and awareness;
- Costs to families and individuals of undertaking VET programs;
- Discrimination/gender stereotyping and workplace culture; and
- Lack of coordinated pathway planning and work place opportunities

The on-going project is now looking to address these barriers and propose possible solutions. Consultations with the Aboriginal community have also been held during the development of the State's implementation plan for *Partners in a Learning Culture*. These consultations reinforced the existence of these same barriers.

## **2. Relationship to ANTA Equity Blueprints:**

There are strategies in both *Bridging Pathways and Partners in a Learning Culture* that address the issue of accessibility of VET in Schools for students with a disability and Aboriginal students. Both State Plans include actions to implement these strategies. Included in the effort here is the Destination Survey currently being undertaken to trace longitudinally the entire 2001 Year 10 cohort for the three years 2002-2004.

## **3. Current participation status:**

### **3.1 Data on Participation in Vocational Education Programs Incorporating Work Placements**

The most recent data available is collected by DoE Workplace Learning Support Unit and is included as Appendix A to this Submission.

### **3.2 Aboriginal students**

Current data indicate that the number of Aboriginal students accessing VET in Schools is increasing. In 2001 there was a 25% increase in Aboriginal students gaining either a VET Certificate or Statement over the previous year. However, many of these qualifications were gained in generic work skills programs and the numbers of students in specific industry courses was very low.

There is currently no mechanism for measuring the effectiveness of these courses in terms of pathways into the workplace or to further training. The low retention rates of Aboriginal students from Grade 10 to 11 is an additional factor which impacts on the accessibility of VET in School programs for these students.

### **3.3 Students with Disabilities**

It is difficult to gain accurate data on the numbers of students with disabilities participating in VET in Schools, but it is acknowledged that for students with medium to high level needs, access is very difficult. It is also widely recognised throughout the disability sector that participation in meaningful VET programs can, in most cases, have an extremely positive outcome from either a work related or personal perspective.

The Tasmanian policy of including students with disabilities in mainstream schooling for the last eight years is resulting in an expectation from students and their families that they will be able to participate in vocational education and training opportunities. A number of successful pilot programs and programs associated with individual schools and colleges supports have been developed since the inception of VIS.

### 3.4 Future developments

For students from all equity groups it is important that there is ongoing work in the development of partnerships and innovative programs which will address the barriers listed above. These should ultimately result in increased participation and outcomes, including greater employability. Increased access to vocational education programs has been supported through work with students at risk and will be enforced through the integrated approach to be developed through the VEL Framework.

As noted earlier the development of the Certificate of Workplace Skills has proved to be a very successful program in the development of access for a much broader range of students to VIS programs. It is anticipated that a broadening of the range of preparatory programs intended to address specific areas of need and an emphasis on employability skills will enable students to meet the suitability criteria that individual VIS programs have set through their management committees.

Schools sectors are engaged in ongoing work in this area of addressing access and equity needs. A range of these programs have been reported upon nationally including those currently included as best practice examples on the *Stepping Forward: Sharing What Works* “Snapshots” website: <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya/stepping/casestudies/casestudy.htm>

Under its *Guaranteeing Futures* policy the State Government is currently implementing a program to appoint five Youth Learning Officers (YLOs) and a team leader to work through the Office of Post Compulsory Education and Training. They will work on an out-reach basis with young people in schools and existing services in colleges, the Institute of TAFE Tasmania, VIS Rural Retention Development Officers, government agencies and most importantly, local enterprises and community groups. The YLOs will work with young people in schools and their community networks in rural and isolated locations to:

- engage with teachers, parents and students to identify students at risk of abandoning education and training, especially in Year 10;
- develop individual action plans for each potential early school leaver to identify their long-term goals and aspirations;
- broker relevant programs that are flexible and embrace college, part-time work in apprenticeships, TAFE training or other training providers to meet the individual choices of students; and
- work with existing student support services to monitor and provide practical help to young learners as they pursue their action plans.

### Department of Education Workplace Learning Support Unit

#### Background:

The Department of Education delivers a range of programs that provide students with experience in the work place. These programs vary in their goals and format, providing:

- Structured workplace learning (supporting VET programs);
- Mentoring (inspiring students who might otherwise discontinue their education);
- Industry and workplace cultural awareness (to assist with career choice);
- Knowledge and skills needed to make the transition from school to work; and
- Community and industry involvement with influencing the next generation of employees/community volunteers.

The Department provides guidelines, risk management advice, insurance and policy advice to assist school-based co-ordinators of workplace learning programs. The Department also receives feedback and input from industry and other parties that have an interest in these programs. The focus of the Department is program delivery of a high quality, consistent standard that informs all parties of their rights, responsibilities and expectations while at the same time limiting the risk to all parties.

#### Current Participation Status

VET programs continue to achieve a steady growth in participation without causing a decrease in other programs. However, placements are not available for all industry areas such as multimedia.

Mentoring programs such as the Department's MARSSS program, which seeks the retention of at risk students within the educational system, are growing rapidly in popularity due to their success.

There has been a decline in the number of schools reporting involvement in work experience programs, but the numbers of students overall remains steady. Some schools are now preferring to offer work experience only where a student or parent makes a specific request for this activity: it is demand driven.

There has been an increase in specialised programs, particularly in rural and remote areas where schools feel a need to adapt a program to the particular industry needs in their area and their own timetable/resourcing constraints.

### Gender Equity

Evidence suggests that gender preference still exists for traditional industries with almost negligible male participation in childcare at 3.1% and female participation in engineering 0% and automotive 8%.

### Percentage of students identifying as aboriginal

Work Experience Yrs 9/10	3.4%
Work Experience Yrs 11/12	1.7%
MARSSS	9.2%
Alternative Education	21.0%
Tutor Support	3.4%
Other	0.8%
VET programs	3.0%

### Percentage of students identifying as having disabilities

Work Experience Yrs 9/10	0.4%
Work Experience Yrs 11/12	8.7%
MARSSS	0.3%
Alternative Education	3.5%
Tutor Support	2.6%
Other	0.4%
VET programs	3.3%

### Conclusion

Despite continuing anecdotal reports of declining employer interest and participation in workplace learning the evidence suggests that opportunities for students to obtain experience in the workplace continue to grow.