

29Th April 2002

The Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing committee on
Education and Training
Suite R1 106
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Selth

INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF BOYS

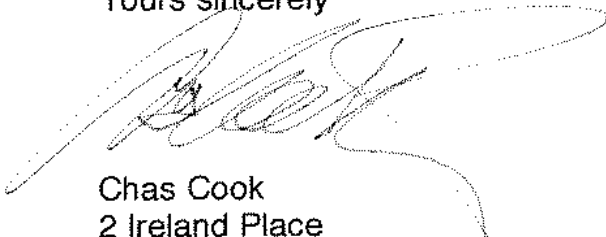
Please find attached a supplementary submission that complements my earlier submission.

Trusting the committee finds something useful in my submissions and look forward to receiving a copy of their findings in due course.

I have also included my personal master copies of the Domestic and Industrial modules for the committee's evaluation. These are the modules I spoke about in my submission, naturally there are other modules available that cover the different metal industry trades that can be utilised in the VET program.

I would appreciate the return of both documents when you are finished with them as they were a gift from Email Training Services

Yours sincerely



Chas Cook
2 Ireland Place
Wanniassa
ACT 2903

THE LACK OF COMPETITION IN EDUCATION AND IT'S EFFECT ON BOY'S EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Part A. The social , cultural and education factors effecting the education of boys in Australian schools, particularly in relation to their literacy needs and socialisation skills in the early and middle years of schooling.

The problems that have confronted boys over the last twenty years or so through the abandonment of the literacy and numerary content in the school curriculum I believe has now been attended to by the Federal Government and State Education systems. This has been warmly welcomed by the community. I have provided below a few thoughts that I believe are contributing factors which have effected the entry of boys from education into employment.

Much has been said and written about the effects of drugs, alcohol, lack of job opportunities, youth suicides and many other similar problems effecting the youth of today. Each one in itself is a tragic waste in terms of youth human resources, however, little or nothing has been put forward about the disabling effect the lack healthy competition in schools has had on a young persons early life.

Confirmation of this and its effects were readily observed by myself as I carried out my duties of Australia's Technical Observer for the Work Skill Australia Foundation at the 1992 International Youth Skill Olympics held in Amsterdam. This is all about healthy skill competition between friendly nations, but more importantly it is used as a **measuring medium** to gauge each countries youth training facilities in education, training providers and industry.

Each one of the participating countries, knew the importance of the *competitive factor* in it's education and youth training programs. So why aren't we, in Australia, doing the same thing. Our own contestants after completing their projects, would remark, " if only we worked harder our results would have been better". I knew different, because for three days, I watched them work their butts off.

Their lack of training in how to handle the **competition factor** in their early school years had been one of their major problems. However it should also be said of our Australian Skill Olympians, many of them bought home Olympic medals or certificates of achievement. This in itself, tells us, its not all doom and gloom in youth training, however it was readily accepted that restructuring of the Australian youth training system was long overdue.

The previous Labour and the present Federal Liberal Government were, and still are, aware that there is a major problem in our education and youth training and have poured many millions of dollars into restructuring the Australian youth training system. As well as this, the remedial requirements of a questionable education system regarding literacy and numerary plus the pressing need to prepare our children for employment or work after school has been implemented.

There has been a range of Government committees formed over the years to look into all aspects of the problems facing our youth in the community especially so in the education sector such as, the lack of men teachers, why girls out perform boys and the resulting compounding factors attached there to. As well as this, quite considerable funds have been invested in youth unemployment.

You and I know that something must have gone wrong with our education and training system when all this remedial work has to be undertaken to overcome past discrepancies in those areas. We all know, that same education system has for years steadfastly refused to acknowledge where the **competition factor** fitted into the education and training process. At the same time we as a community are painfully aware of the abhorrence the education system and it's union have for the need to have the **competition factor** debated, implemented or rejected in our school system.

Competition is life, this is not my interpretation, but was summed up by a former teacher. I agree whole heartily with that summation, as I am sure you would agree also, if all the facts were placed before you in order to make a valid judgment. Sadly, and to our bitter sorrow, **there isn't a stated education policy on competition applying to any of our Australian schools.**

Yet, how often have we heard people complain, that there is too much competition in our schools, that students should not have additional pressure placed upon them, by making them compete with one another in the classroom.

One wonders how those people saying that, survive life, because competition is an integral part of everyday life.

In the sporting arena Australians have always shone through competition, even those who do not win, gain by taking part and doing their best. Why then should not this natural competitive nature of young people be further developed in their school life?

It would be remiss of me if I didn't say there are teachers that know of the importance of competition in the school environment, we can list school sports, debates, maths and similar competitions that support the views of those teachers, however many are team events.

It is understood the majority of teachers, and I must include their teacher's union, believe competition is not warranted and has no place in the Australian education system. This leads us to believe that competition between students, between teachers and yes between schools is taboo.

likewise in 1992, it was the Australian Education Union (AEU) which brought pressure to bear on the ACTU to influence the then Federal Labour Government to withdraw the **competition factor** and it's implications, that could apply to our schools if it remained in the Hilmer Report on the National Competition Policy. **This was a travesty of justice.**

Surely for our children's sake, the time has come when all of us must say enough is enough, and work together in solving a way in which the **competition factor** can be introduced into the Australian education system, no matter if it is public or private.

We as a community have every right to ask our new Federal Minister for Education and Training to intercede on our behalf and demand that the **competition factor** in our education system be listed on the training agenda for discussion, debate and implementation or rejection, as a competition policy that would apply to all schools.

You may well ask what has competition got to do with a five year old child and his or her journey through the school system. That is a good question. It can be answered by saying " competition is life and so I believe the many ills of our youth today are tied up in how we as a society embrace the **competition factor** in the school situation and it is here that it must be said the natural instinct of a boy's **competitive spirit** has been excluded from the class room environment , consequently this has had a disastrous consequence on the ability of a boy or boys seeking to become a teacher".

As a former employer and trainer of Australia's youth, I can assure you, your son or daughter coming to me or any other employer for employment, is faced with the **competition factor** as soon as they put foot in our door and instead of being able to treat it as an every day occurrence, it turns out to be a major stumbling block for advancement in their adolescent years.

The pressure we put on our youth is enormous due to the lack of training for competition in their early years. Why then shouldn't we as a community have the opportunity and the right, to send our children to an education system that embraces the **competition factor**.

We are yet to understand this insidious lack of competition in our school system that continues to grow and fester like a **deadly cancer**. It has already eaten away the will of small and larger businesses to employ and train your child. So now it is more important then ever to understand the new training system that is trying to encourage the employer to revisit his former desires in the training and employment of Australia's youth.

Firstly let me acknowledge all the hard work, dedication and the many millions of dollars poured into getting the new training system to where it is today. Also, we must not forget the Vocational Education and Training (VET) in School program which gives the student a pathway from school to employment. This however, needs to be reviewed and expanded in line with industries requirements.

Secondly, when the then Federal Minister for Education and Training, announced on national TV that the VET pilot program was taking place, he said that he could see nothing but good being the outcome from this program.

The President of the Teachers Federation and now head of the ACTU came on the very same program and advised all the listeners, her Union would have nothing to do with it., one can only ask, why not ?

From those remarks by the former head of the Australian Teacher's Federation, would lead the listeners to question the unions commitment to the new youth training process which includes award restructuring and retraining of it's teachers to cater for the new youth training system.

Is it any wonder then that the employers of our youth are turning their backs on training the young person for employment and now believe that role belongs to someone else. Not for one minute is the employer asking that someone else train the young person in the hands on skills or competencies required by the employer's particular business.

In 1988 Australia came third out of some eighteen competing nations at the Sydney International Skill Olympics whilst in 2002, Australia has slipped to approximately 16th in the skill Olympic ratings. This proves that the cancer of which I have spoken is slowly but surely eating its way through our education and our youth skills training program.

For many years I have supported the introduction of skill centres as a means of overcoming the skill shortage of the young people, have written about them, helped set them up and even for a short while taught a specific module. We now know the skill centres as we have come to know them are fast disappearing and a suitable substitute in the skill training area of a young person is essential.

Sadly, the demise of one of Australia's' largest private providers of skills, Email Training Services which had skill centres in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide bears this out.

I believe the training role that has been vacated by small and large businesses should now be the function of Education and Training in years eleven and twelve. No matter what our political interests are. We were waiting to hear about the education reforms that are so badly needed and had to be implemented. This was never spelt out. Consequently the community voted accordingly, giving the existing Federal Government the mandate to carry out it's education reforms and to push on with the new youth training agenda.

I now believe all the necessary changes and reforms bar the one I have mentioned above, has been done. These have been warmly received by most employers, however those same employers are also the ones that used to employ and train the youth of this country under the old training system and knew for the new one to succeed they would have to change their training methods and work together with their other training partners namely, education and the TAFE.

For many years the employer looked after the hands on skill competencies of their apprentice while TAFE or the CIT as it is now known attended to the technical requirements of the apprentice, plus the additional hands on skill competencies that were required in the curriculum of that particular trade.

This apprenticeship was commonly known as a time served apprenticeship. While The New Australian Apprenticeship system is designed to do away with the time served concept, allowing for self progression by the apprentice or trainee at work or at TAFE through the acquisition of competencies. We have come to understand the trouble the TAFE had in coming to terms with new competency based training system, however to it's great credit it has found a way in which to satisfy all requirements but a time served period remains never the less.

We are now talking about reforming our Public Education and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) systems to carry out the necessary preliminary hands on skill training as well as the technical skill training that is required by a particular skill trade.

It is well known that a student's compulsory education finishes at year ten, whilst years eleven and twelve are used for not only **higher education pathways** but is increasingly used for **retention** because of the lack of **job opportunities**.

It is also a well known fact that years eleven and twelve for a great number of students is a wasted two years because it hasn't prepared them for entry into the work force. The school syllabuses needs to be altered and linked with industry requirements, especially so in the trade areas because it is now painfully obvious, Australia has a critical shortage of tradesmen and trades women.

After reading the Canberra Times editorial of the 28th January 2002.

Re' **Message on education shortsighted** '.I believe, what the Editor and the Federal Minister for Education were both getting at, was the lack of options, pathways or skill streams in our education systems (I know it is crazy, that Australia has a separate education system for each State and Territory that makes changes and the necessary remedial work much harder) that inhibit the student from making a self determination of what they want to do or where they wish to go in order to further their careers.

When speaking of the advantages of leaving school at year 10 or 12 we must reflect on the relevance of how those considered options have or have not been presented by Education in the past.

For the last fifteen years or so, students having finished year 12 and coming to industry seeking employment, have presented themselves in an near unemployable state, bought about by the State Education Systems **neglect of the Competition Factor**, the abandonment of the Literacy and Numerary content of the school curriculum over a long period of time, plus a break down in the Assessment Curriculum causing a whole class to fail in a section of their HSC.

The required assessment criteria for an apprentice is usually based on year tens work, with a required pass mark of 75%, in 1991/92, saw 77 out of 81 year 12 students fail, that represents a 95% failure rate. If your son or daughter was one of those, wouldn't you be concerned? and wouldn't you be like me, and want to do something about it?

This paper is not about looking back but going forward in showing a way in which Education and it's Union plus TAFE and Industry could embrace the New Australian Apprenticeship System and at the same time addresses the Editor's concerns .

Part B .The strategies which schools have adopted to help address these factors, those strategies which have been successful and scope for their broader implementation or increased effectiveness.

I spoke previously of having taught a module in the new Competency Based Training System as it applied to the Electrical Commercial Wiring section of the Broad Based Skills For The Metal Industry Certificate. Until I carried out that task I had little knowledge of the new competency based training system and how it worked. Little did I realise just how good it was or the ramifications it could have on our education and TAFE systems.

There were twelve modules applying to that part of the certificate, eleven had been previously completed by another electrical teacher who was unable to complete the last module which I completed. During the class room theory content and out in the skill centres "hands on" skill training I was able to ascertain that the thirteen trainees were competent in most of the modules but wasn't of the opinion I could sign off their certificate.

I was able to design a test that included all the modules they had covered and then set them the task of carrying out those competency based requirements. Some needed extra help but in the end each one carried out the necessary electrical testing and were then allowed to apply power and see it working, I signed off their certificates and said to myself, "**this preliminary work for employment can be all done at school in years eleven and twelve long before they get to the employer**"

Each one of those young people had employment with Email, and covered the trades of electrical, fitting and machining, plumbing and refrigeration, however if this was applied in a school training situation and came to an employer with those preliminary employment options under their belt, a whole new ball game would open up when talking about youth employment and youth unemployment.

Young people coming to an employer seeking a chance to better themselves would be devastated to learn that they hadn't been properly prepared for employment in their school years. If you were an employer, don't you think it would be your duty to check a young person's qualifications ? and wouldn't you be concerned if you discovered **the bulk of them failed your entrance test and that same test was based on year tens work?**

It is now the State Education and Youth Affairs plus their associated unions responsibility to take over from the employer in presenting those preliminary employment options to the student (or prospective employee.) **that complements the existing VET program.**

Let us see what those preliminary employment options are,

A) Each preliminary employment option would have a theory content.

This theory content could be readily carried out by a retrained high school teacher, their industrial award would reflect their retraining commitment by payment of extra salary, naturally this would be determined by the employer and the union.

As the TAFE teacher is already versed in the theory content of a particular option it would be possible for them to be seconded.

B) Each preliminary option would have a hands on skill content.

We know each college would be lacking in equipment and the necessary facilities to support a specific skill option, however we also know our TAFE Colleges are under utilised, in which case the student could have use of those facilities, under the guidance of the retrained teacher or seconded TAFE teacher.

During the ensuing 11 and 12 years the student could work their way through the complete theory content and be conversant with the preliminary hands on skill training at their own pace . Self paced learning. Recognition of prior learning. User choice. These are three skill enhancement options and being part of the new competency based training system would slot in here very nicely. Unfortunately, there are some secondary colleges which are carrying out training that is not being recognised by other authorities (ie; TAFE)

After finishing school the prospective employee would be employed by the various Group Traineeship Schemes and sent out to the employer as and when they required an apprentice, naturally the young trainee coming to the employer with that preliminary employment option under their belt would be paid accordingly. The relevant award should reflect the amount to be received and also the credit to be given for participating in the RPL program.

The Group Traineeship people are the ideal ones to control the young person in their employment as it is their present responsibility to ensure the apprentice or trainee goes to the employer best suited to satisfy the additional hands on skill requirement or competencies of their training.

Until now I have been talking about a partnership between Education and the TAFE , however Industry or the Employer must also be a partner, making it a three way partnership.

It is now so very important that the New Australian Apprenticeship system is dealt with as I see it working, thus allowing it to be favourably accepted by the community as was the old apprenticeship system.

Many reports have been commissioned by the Federal Government through it's agencies, State and Territory bodies to come up with a new youth training system that would take it into this, the next century. It would be fair to say it hasn't been all smooth sailing as the input by the various employer bodies as well as the unions, tended to see and expect what they wanted to be included at the exclusion of others. It is pleasing to see that in the end there is a working model now in existence.

I don't for one minute believe that the working model is the one that the community will ultimately embrace because of the lack of input by the state education and it's union through their unwillingness to enter into a partnership with industry. However we now see Education through the VET pilot program is happy to get on board, that leaves the Teachers Federation to make up it's mind of just where they see themselves fitting into the New Australian Apprenticeship scheme of things.

In fairness to Education and it's Union, the Industry training bodies failed to see or even acknowledge or for that matter understand, their input when they designed and implemented "Technology- a curriculum profile for Australian schools" 1994. This has a major bearing on the new youth training scheme and it is here I believe the Australian National Training Authority has failed to see it's significance.

The members of the Costac Mission were sent overseas and came back and advised the Federal Government that the German System of skill training was the best one that suited Australia's youth skill needs. Those of us who had first hand information of that training system knew that the young person was selected to go into a particular skill training stream.

The mission members vigorously opposed any mention of the word streaming as it was presented to the relevant state bodies, little did they realise a joint project of the States, Territories and the Commonwealth of Australia, initiated by the Australian Education Council, had already set the wheels in motion to allow self streaming in Australian schools by :-

Firstly by calling a meeting of all interested people here in the ACT being round three in the consultation process, who had input into youth training, to view, comment, alter and add anything the meeting might come up with on The National Technology Education Project Draft. That was dated April-May 1991.

Secondly in 1994 the Technology - A Curriculum Profile for Australian Schools and The Statement on Technology for Australian Schools were issued. We have come to understand there have been various schools whose teachers can't come to terms with this new part of the curriculum, however it is now some ten years down the track and one can only speculate if self streaming by a student is a reality.

I had the pleasure of playing a round of pitch and put with two high school students recently, both were a credit to their family and to their schools, when I asked them what they wanted to do when they leave school, one replied he didn't know and the other wanted to become a carpenter. This told me self streaming was working but had a long way to go.

Why not run a test for yourself. Ask the next ten high school students you talk too, this question, "What would you like to do when you leave school ?" If more then 75% of them answer "I don't know" I suspect the self streaming concept in education is not working as it should.

We can now see how important it is for the States Education Systems and their Union to be part of the new youth training process, as the student pass through the Technology Curriculum Profiles,(which includes all those employment options) **they will arrive at high school being able to choose for themselves which skill stream they wish to take.**

Let us now see, what I believe those two skill streams are, that is best suited to complete the New Australian Apprenticeship System that all Australians could relate too.

The first skill stream is to the Academic and Arts area of learning while the second or alternative skill stream is to Industry and Commerce. Provision could be made for a student to hop on and off the skill streams as and when required.

Before concluding let us return to the VET program and I can think of no better way of supporting it, then use the two electrical modules that I am familiar with and have to hand.

As Email Training Services Pty Ltd no longer exists, the Competency Based,Self Paced Training Program that was designed by that previous company, is now owned by a former employee and is covered by copy right and is available for purchase.I have no hesitation in recommending it for use in a college situation to enhance it's VET training program.

The two module descriptors I speak of, are the Introductory Electrical Wiring (Domestic) and the Introductory Electrical Wiring (Industrial).

The Aim of Both Modules (or Units of Competence)

The aim of these modules are to provide participants with adequate skills and necessary underpinning knowledge to enable them to be able to "assist in the installation or replacement of Domestic or Industrial wiring and associated fittings"

ELIGIBILITY.

Open to any person required to aid an appropriately licensed person in carrying out domestic and industrial wiring

DELIVERY AND DURATION

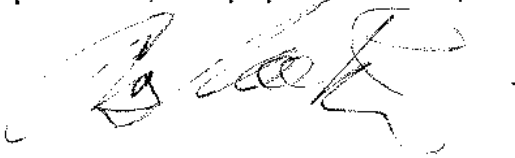
Approximately 60 hours for Domestic and 90 hours for Industrial. These modules are delivered with a maximum practical content, however this can be altered to cater for an increased theory content

ASSESSMENT.

Assessment of these modules are conducted primary via observation of performance of tasks, inspection of product and oral questioning. Short answer and multiple choice questions may be used to check underpinning knowledge.

THE SUMMARY OF CONTENTS with reference numbers of each section, job description and sectionalised time allocated hours are available if required.

In conclusion I believe the Australian community, has for many years, been looking to the various State Education Bodies as well as the Federal Government to jointly come up with a satisfactory solution to overcome our education and youth training problems, this paper shows a practical way for that to happen.



Charles Cook,

Canberra Citizen of the Year 2000

Former Managing Director of his Electrical Contracting Company.

Author of "Where's That Bloody Rabbit" a book on the Training and Employment of Australia's Youth.

Former Australian Regional, National and International Judge and Designer Expert in Commercial Electrical Wiring.

Former Australian Technical Observer to the 1991/92 Amsterdam Skill Olympics.