



South Coast Industry Schools Coordinating Organisation Inc  
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14<sup>th</sup> October 2002

Dear Sir/ Madam

We are pleased to provide the attached submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training.

SCISCO congratulates the Government on its continued commitment to the development of appropriate Vocational Education and Training in Schools and the need of suitable support mechanisms.

We would value the opportunity to take part in discussions with the committee if this is felt appropriate.

Sincerely

Stewart Cooke  
Chairperson  
SCISCO

## Executive Summary

We believe that SCISCO provides a model that has significantly assisted schools to improve the quality of their vocational programs by adding value to the limited resources currently available to them. The experience of this community based approach provides a number of pointers to initiatives that could lead to further development and greater acceptance and participation by industry. It is of particular value in trying to address the issue of young people disengaging from “traditional schooling” and the consequent economic and social costs. A number of recommendations are made that are consistent with recent government reports (especially “Footprints to the Future”) and the responses already made to this inquiry by a number of significant bodies.

## Background

Over the last ten years there has been growing recognition that the nature of education would need to change in response to the changing nature of society and of work. Successful participation in the Knowledge Economy at both a personal and a national level depends not on a body of knowledge defined by a school curriculum but on the development of “Key Competencies” (Mayer – 1992) and the ability to continue learning. At the same time the loss of low skilled jobs and casualisation of the workplace has exacerbated the problems of long term and youth unemployment.

The enormous economic and social costs associated with young people who do not complete Year 12 or its vocational equivalent were researched by Dusseldorp Skills Forum and the results summarised in “Why Australia needs a National Youth Commitment”<sup>1</sup>. Since then a number of Commonwealth and State Government reports have stressed the need to improve the availability and quality of vocational education for 12 – 19 year olds and the role that schools should play.<sup>2</sup> A common theme in these reports has been the need for career education, individual career action plans, improved perceived relevance and equivalence of Vocational courses in schools, and industry and community involvement. Two successful Commonwealth initiatives have been the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (formerly ASTF) and the Jobs Pathway Programme (with its gradual evolution from a job finding service to a wider service to improve job readiness and school retention for 15 – 19 year olds).

### The South Coast Industry Schools Coordinating Organisation Inc. (SCISCO)

SCISCO was formed with support from the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation in 1996 and since that time has developed as a community based organization now linking 26 Gold Coast Secondary schools and focused on providing services to enhance the delivery of VET in schools. It was awarded the national Learning Community Award in 1998. Currently approximately 60% of its income is derived from its Jobs Pathways Programme contract, 20% from an ECEF grant and 20% from fee for service activities for its associated schools. It has an industry led and widely representative Management Committee (see attachment 1). It seeks to achieve its aims through the implementation of

- Workplace Learning
- School Based New Apprenticeships
- Career Advice

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<sup>1</sup> J.Spierings DSF, Sydney 1999

<sup>2</sup> e.g. “Footprints to the Future”(Prime Ministers Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce Report 2001), “New Framework for Vocational Education in Schools” (MCEETYA 2000), “Education and Training Reforms for the Future” (Qld Govt 2002).

- Employment Preparation
- Job Placement
- Ongoing monitoring of students after leaving school
- One-on-one mentoring of students at school (Plan-it-Youth)
- Programs to assist students "at risk" of leaving school early
- Networking and Professional Development activities for teachers.

Some Statistics to give an indication of the scope of SCISCO's activities

Over the last 3 years SCISCO has

- Coordinated over 1500 work placements. A follow-up survey of students who undertook SCISCO coordinated placements in 2001 showed that in May 2002 over 97% were engaged in work, study or a combination of both.
- Assisted 2000 students or recent leavers through the Commonwealth's Jobs Pathways Programme.
- Worked with over 500 employers
- Involved 95 students in our intensive "On Track" program for students at risk of not completing Year 12.
- Arranged 15 networking and professional development meetings for vocational coordinators.
- Provided short Literacy and Numeracy courses in 16 schools.
- Instituted the Plan-it-Youth mentoring program and a free "Joblink" matching service for school leavers not serviced through JPP.
- Arranged a joint stall with Gold Coast City Council at the local Careers Expo (featuring young employees rather than recruitment officers).
- Given presentations at numerous Careers Evenings at its associated schools together with classroom talks, activities to develop work readiness etc.
- Been actively involved in a number of industry networks and policy committees (including the Council's strategic Regional Economic Development Advisory Committee)
- Partnered with Griffith University (Gold Coast) in a research project looking at industry's requirements for literacy and numeracy achievement in school-leavers and job seekers.

Queensland has shown a lead in the implementation of School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships with the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast as key players. In 2002 there are over 500 such Traineeships running within our associated Gold Coast schools of which 90 have been sourced and facilitated by SCISCO. Whilst it is too early to give meaningful statistics in relation to completion rates and flow on into employment, current indications are that expected completion rates are at least 80% and somewhat higher for SCISCO facilitated traineeships – possibly attributable to the level of monitoring and support that SCISCO staff are able to provide and our policy of students undertaking a work placement with the employer prior to the commencement of the traineeship.

Aside from the school-based traineeships, it is also of interest to note that contrary to some reports many employers are satisfied with school-based programs. More than 25% of our students are offered employment as a direct result of their work placement.

The information above will hopefully provide the Committee with an indication that SCISCO plays a significant role in the expansion and quality of school vocational courses in this region. We believe that it is a community based model that can be further developed to address some of the needs identified in the reports cited above.

With the experience and perspective of both industry and educators SCISCO would like to put forward the following views –

1. Schools remain the best environment for young people to learn in since they provide a better monitored environment, a higher level of pastoral care and expose students to personal development and sporting and cultural opportunities not as readily accessible elsewhere. Where adequate facilities and human resources are available it is therefore appropriate that VET should occur in schools. When supported by the local industry and community, and accepted as an equally valid curriculum choice, the courses can be enriched by structured work placements and further developed by School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships. Our experience is that many employers are now finding that this gives work ready students who have made an informed choice about their career path and bring the basic skills to readily become productive employees. This acceptance should be allowed to continue developing over time, and we suggest that the almost explosive growth in School Based Traineeships in a number of regions supports the view that this will occur naturally.
2. There are many students for whom a mixture of traditional and VET subjects are very appropriate. For students moving towards professional training this exposure gives valuable insights into the workings of an industry. Vocational teachers also frequently report on the increased confidence and motivation of students undertaking VET programs which carries over into their other studies. An additional spin off is the practical skills which improves the chance of academic students gaining part time employment to support themselves whilst at university. School based provision of the lower levels of VET is also far more cost effective, with cost per student hour less than half that of provision through a TAFE.

There are currently a number of factors that mitigate against developing the full potential of VET in schools. These are addressed in Appendix 2.

3. There will be many courses for which facilities could not be economically provided in schools and are often under utilized in TAFE. Many of these are in the skilled trades where there are predictions of grave manpower shortages in the relatively short term. It would then seem logical and practicable for students to undertake these elements of their courses in the local TAFE (or other RTO) and in the 90s this was occurring in Queensland to a limited extent. However the funding available for "TAFE Cooperative Programs" seems to have been largely diverted and current charges by TAFEs are beyond the reach of most schools. A further alternative of special relevance to rural areas is the possibility of expanding the programs offered through distance education. In Queensland the work of TAFE's Open Learning Institute could provide a successful model, especially if supplemented by work placement in regional centres.
4. It appears that one of the "risk times" for student disengagement is in Year 9. This would point to a need for career education and counseling and the development of life skills and industry related activities such as visits. There are overseas models for this type of activity.
5. Greater employment related emphasis in school curricula points to the need for additional personnel based in schools with appropriate experience and skills. This is seen as supplementing the work of professional Guidance Officers. SCISCO commends the government for the current Career and Transition Support projects currently being trialled and looks forward to the wider adoption of such programs. We would suggest that this role would be a very appropriate extension of current JPP activities and that there would be many advantages of

such personnel being part of a community based organization. In Queensland school nurses and chaplains provide a model for such a position which can be recognized by students as based in the school but not "a part of the system".

6. It appears likely that changes to the certification and articulation procedures currently under consideration in Queensland would do much to improve the recognition of the value of VET in schools. However ultimately this rests in its recognition by industry and we believe that trends on the Gold Coast and elsewhere indicate that in many industries change is already underway and that positive links between schools and industry are developing.
  
7. Governments, educators and industry appear agreed that the quality of education available to students not following a traditional academic pathway (and even for many who are) can best be improved by providing support, learnings with perceived relevance, practical experience and employment skills. Furthermore that this can best be achieved by the active involvement of industry and the community in general. We would suggest that there are a number of advantages demonstrated by organizations such as SCISCO which can add value to VET in schools and are worthy of the Committee's support. These include
  - A sense of ownership and involvement by industry and the community in partnership with the school.
  - Employers can elect to use a single point of contact for all schools in the area.
  - The involvement of major employers sets an example.
  - Staff are readily available (including during school holidays) should problems arise.
  - Staff develop contact with school and industry staff on a personal level.
  - The organization can provide recruitment services to the employer.
  - A wider range of opportunities are available to students of any given school.
  - The needs of ATSI and special needs students can be better met.
  - School vocational staff have networking and professional development opportunities.
  - Schools have access to local employment and labour market information.
  - Cross school activities can be provided for.

These are amplified in Appendix 3

### Recommendations

We wholeheartedly support the general policy directions and implementation recommendations outlined in the MCEETYA document "New Framework for Vocational Education in Schools" and in particular we suggest that

1. it be recognized that schools are the preferred site for vocational education of 14 – 16 year olds working at Certificate levels 1 and 2, with the possibility of level 3 where resources are available. Work placements should be an integral part of such courses.
  
2. consideration be given to modifying the requirements of AQTF to facilitate this. Many systems already have in place well tried "Peer Review" procedures which are aligned directly to outcomes. In Queensland these form the main determinant of tertiary entrance and it would seem not unreasonable for ANTA to provide for such alternatives at the lower AQF levels.

3. funding be made available for the involvement of TAFE or other RTOs for targeted skills areas where schools do not have appropriate resources.
4. major employer bodies be encouraged to see such programs as being a little different but a cost efficient and effective way of ensuring work ready entry level recruits.
5. consideration be given to introducing Traineeship level awards in trades which currently only have full apprenticeships (e.g. some building trades). In our experience small subcontractors are reluctant to take on apprentices because of the long term commitment in an uncertain work environment and/or may not find Group Training schemes meet their needs. They are however ready to take work placements and to consider School Based Traineeships.
6. the need for additional support staff in schools be recognized (i.e. the Career and Transition Support concept).
7. such staff could be most effective if located in schools but separate from the system and that a local community based partnership would be a suitable employer. Their role could appropriately be included in a revised Jobs Pathway Programme.
8. the ECEF and JPP initiatives be continued with funding periods extended to 3 years, to allow for staffing stability and more economic resourcing.

APPENDIX !

## SCISCO'S MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 2002

SCISCO Chair ( <i>Executive</i> )	◆ Stewart Cooke	State Manager, Recreation Industry Training Company & Traineeship Development Officer for Recreation Training Queensland (ITAB).
SCISCO Deputy Chair ( <i>Executive</i> )	◆ John Lockhart	Principal – Merrimac State High School
Executive Committee Member	◆ Mark Sly	Principal - St Michael's College
Executive Committee Member	◆ Linda Callander	HR Consultant to Jupiters Limited
Committee Member	◆ Fran Jones	Principal - Keebra Park State High School
Committee Member	◆ Graeme Raymond	Accounts Manager - Q Fleet
Committee Member	◆ Dora Luxton	Principal - St Michael's College
Committee Member	◆ Kate Gibbons	Human Resources Manager, Radisson Palm Meadows Resort
Committee Member	◆ Phil Clare	Area Coordinator, BCITF
Committee Member	◆ Kent Bayley	International Sales Director, Gold Coast Institute of TAFE
Committee Member	◆ Paul Stevens	CEO, Gold Coast City Council
Committee Member	◆ Jenny Field	Director, Specialised Training Services
Committee Member	◆ Cherrill McKay	Commerce Queensland
Committee Member	◆ Marcia Fife	Parent
Committee Member	◆ Michelle Bieri	Training and Recruitment Coordinator, Wet 'n' Wild
Committee Member	◆ Ian Wade-Parker	Wade-Parker Consulting
Committee Member	◆ Sue Spence	Business Development Consultant, Spherion
Committee Member	◆ Toni Bressan	Marymount College
Committee Member	◆ Carol Baker	St Hilda's School
Committee Member	◆ Jeanette McDonald	Robina State High School
Committee Member	◆ Maureen Romanet	Elanora State High School
Ex Officio	◆ Andrea Meredith	SCISCO – Programs Manager
Ex Officio	◆ John Spence	SCISCO – Secretary, Treasurer

## **Appendix 2**

### Factors mitigating against school based VET

There are currently a number of factors that limit the development of the full potential of VET in schools

- The shortage of appropriately qualified and experienced teachers. Whilst many have the knowledge base, there is little opportunity for them to gain the valuable industry experience needed, and funding for short term release to industry has little priority.
- Current AQTF human resource requirements can mean that a school can put considerable effort into establishing an accredited course only to lose the key teacher.
- Dual accreditation systems place extra demands on both teachers and students and the very necessary attempts to monitor quality through the AQTF are onerous and do not appear to be closely enough related to quality of outcomes. A number of schools are limiting or reducing their VET involvement as a result.
- There is a reluctance by RTOs and particularly by TAFE to grant RPL for competencies gained at school. Current funding procedures would have to encourage this reluctance.
- Many local employers appear to feel that school based VET provides valid entry level training on which to build, and in particular that it encourages the development of the personal qualities and basic skills that employers list high on their priorities. The main reservations seem to be expressed by major employer organizations dominated by traditional manufacturing for which schools are not effectively resourced. We would point out that the largest manufacturing enterprise on the Gold Coast now has the policy of using School Based Traineeships as its main recruiting method for entry level staff and that several 5 star hotels are increasingly beginning to do the same. Small and medium employers who form the backbone of our economy look for basic skills, good employment attitudes and a readiness to learn on the job.
- There are obvious resource limitations on the range of opportunities available through schools and it is easy to allow this to colour perceptions of the value of what they can do very well.



## Appendix 3

### The Role of a community based organisation in the development of school based vocational programs – using SCISCO as an example.

We believe that the existence of SCISCO has assisted the rapid development of vocational education on the Gold Coast in a number of ways which could serve as a model to other regions and provide a vehicle for further improvements in both the quality and quantity of valid training available to students.

1. SCISCO is seen as widely representative of industry, schools and the local community and as such encourages a sense of ownership for the development of our young people.
2. SCISCO approaches industry on behalf of all our associated schools. Prior to its existence some individual schools established a direct link which gave good opportunities for their own students but often created a "monopoly" situation which deprived other students. Several employers had adopted the policy of refusing all requests because of the frequency and variability of the approaches. Employers can now deal with a single SCISCO coordinator whose focus is to ensure that the placement is successful for all parties. As a result of regular contact the relationship has become more personal. This is a significant benefit in encouraging placements and in dealing with any issues that may arise. A number of employers are then willing to try and assist students with special needs. SCISCO staff are also available over the school holidays when many placements occur.
3. Because of the involvement of several major employers in our Management Committee other employers are encouraged to offer opportunities.
4. SCISCO acknowledges the vital role of employers in adding reality to students' school vocational courses. We therefore offer a number of free services in return.
  - Notice of vacancies at entry level (especially for school based traineeships or jobs for Year 12 leavers) are circulated to the vocational coordinator at all schools within 24 hours. A job matching service is also available to Year 12 students after they leave (in addition to the more extensive support for JPP clients.)
  - Because of the trust and prior personal contact through industry placements we are able to explain the benefits of School Based Traineeships and guide the employer to an appropriate New Apprenticeship Centre.
  - SCISCO can screen the applications from all applicants and forward any requested number for the employer to interview. We receive many very positive comments about the effectiveness of this process and the standard of interviewees.
5. SCISCO is also able to support the schools in a number of ways-
  - Providing training in job readiness skills in class. (Students often feel this is "more real" if it comes from someone outside the school context).
  - Sourcing industry speakers for schools.
  - Facilitating regular networking meetings for vocational staff to provide up to date information and encourage discussion and interaction between schools (from all sectors).
  - Supplementing the work of Guidance Officers and vocational teachers in providing local employment information and opportunities.
6. Community organisations can also provide programs that operate across schools. A prime example of this are the intensive "On Track" programs SCISCO runs for Year 10 boys and for Year 11 girls considered by their schools to be at risk of not completing Year 12. An

important contributor to the success of these programs has been that the students are out of the school context and away from their peers.

7. SCISCO staff are seen as “outside the system” and are able to develop a relationship to students more akin to mentor than to teacher. They are assured of a higher level of confidentiality and readily recognize that SCISCO staff are there to help them. This in turn gives students a sense of taking control and accepting responsibility for their own future.

8. SCISCO’s involvement in policy committees and industry networks ensures that schools are aware of emerging industries and trends and maximizes opportunities for student involvement in those areas.