

**National Council of
Independent Schools' Associations
(NCISA)**

Submission

to the

**House of Representatives
Standing Committee
on
Education and Training**

Inquiry into

**Vocational Education
in Schools**

**12 Thesiger Court
Deakin ACT 2600**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Council of Independent Schools' Associations (NCISA) is the peak national body for the Independent school sector. This submission has been prepared in consultation with the eight State/Territory member associations.

The growth of VET in Schools Programs across government and non-government schools is welcomed by the Independent sector. In relation to Independent schools there has been a significant growth (211.7%) in student enrolments in industry recognized VET programs and in the number of schools involved in these programs between 1997 and 2002. This outcome provides greater choice and diversity in post-compulsory pathways for young people across government and non-government schools. The traditional and outmoded perception of Independent schools as elitist and academic in their approach to curriculum is not supported by participation data of VET in Schools in the Independent sector across Australia. The profile of the Independent sector has changed markedly in recent years and schools now cater for a diverse range of student needs and aspirations.

VET programs implemented by Independent schools cover a wide range of industry areas such as retail, hospitality, business studies, information technology, aquaculture, electronics and food processing.

Recent national policy initiatives and the availability of Commonwealth funds through various agencies such as the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEP) have facilitated this positive outcome. NCISA considers access to an appropriate share of public funds to support such significant initiatives as an entitlement, regardless of the school sector attended by students.

The growth in VET programs has occurred at a time when the implementation of other major policy initiatives has also placed additional demands on schools. VET has contributed to the significant shift in the organization and culture of many schools.

NCISA acknowledges the significant role of the MCEETYA Transition from Schools Taskforce in coordinating the national policy directions and bringing together the major stakeholders from industry, schools and other relevant agencies to discuss and formulate agreements about the future directions of these programs. NCISA is represented on this Taskforce.

NCISA supports the development of a new framework that incorporates VET in Schools Programs into a broader youth transition framework. However it raises some significant organizational and resource issues for schools and will require much greater collaboration between both government and non-government agencies across a range of portfolios (education and training, health, welfare, community services, etc) that provide services to young people. NCISA considers that access to these support services should be considered an entitlement for students requiring these services, regardless of the school sector attended. It also demonstrates that VET in Schools programs can make a contribution to youth transition but it will not

resolve all the social and economic problems of youth transition, in particular, for those young people at risk. Greater effort will need to be made to improve access to VET in Schools Programs and related support services for a range of disadvantaged students, including Indigenous, students with disabilities and students from rural and remote areas.

A greater number of recognized pathways are now available to young people in both government and non-government schools. This diversity also brings complexity; hence the

need for a comprehensive information dissemination strategy on these pathways for students, parents, other education institutions and industry.

The ANTA funding has provided the stimulus to the growth of VET in Schools Programs along with the development of national policy. It remains the major source of public funds for Independent schools for these programs and their associated school authorities which receive little or no financial support from State/Territory governments for VET programs or access to government support services. NCISA contends that Commonwealth and State governments should contribute public funds to VET in Schools Programs for all school sectors. Further, any move to a more performance/outcomes based model of funding of VET in Schools Programs should only occur after there is a nationally consistent database available. There is currently little confidence in the consistency of available data collected by the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce.

Industry reaction to the recent policy initiatives associated with VET in Schools has been mixed, particularly in relation to School-Based New Apprenticeships. A more comprehensive awareness campaign is required to increase the level of understanding about the new initiatives. Some of the barriers associated with the implementation of the New Apprenticeship scheme relate to industrial issues and are beyond the control of schools.

NCISA considers that the core purpose of post compulsory schooling should be to provide young people with a general education and in the case of vocational education and training, a range of generic vocational skills that provide the base for further education and training. This approach appears to be consistent with the recent support from key industry bodies for the assessment and reporting of generic Employability Skills and establishes a sound foundation for new and emerging industries.

Some schools have the capability to provide their students with more specific vocational skills in partnership with industry as a means of enhancing options available in post compulsory schooling. As in other areas of the curriculum there should also be opportunities for some students to complete higher level qualifications, (eg Certificate levels 3 & 4) whilst attending school.

NCISA considers the uneven acceptance of VET in Schools Programs by the Higher education sector for entry purposes remains a significant barrier to greater acceptance of VET by students and their families. This issue should remain a high priority for the MCEETYA Transition from Schools Taskforce.

The MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce and school authorities have achieved a number of significant outcomes in relation to VET in Schools Programs; however there is little comprehensive information available about how effective these achievements have been for students. NCISA supports the implementation of more research into the destinations of students beyond school and the role of VET in providing a different context for learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THE RANGE, STRUCTURE, RESOURCING AND DELIVERY OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS

I. NCISA recommends that

schools and school authorities continue to receive a proportional share of Commonwealth funding, through various agencies to support the necessary organizational and cultural changes required to improve the effectiveness of the role of schools in VET and associated support services.

II. NCISA recommends that

there be more extensive consultation between the various stakeholders about the potential expanded role of schools in the more comprehensive approach to youth transition and the resource implications for schools be examined by the MCEETYA Schools Resourcing Taskforce.

III. NCISA recommends that

the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce facilitate consultation between the key stakeholders to support the implementation of the School-Based New apprenticeship scheme.

IV. NCISA recommends that

the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce proceed with a comprehensive professional development program for Principals and other key leaders within schools to enhance their understanding of the more integrated approach to youth transition and to provide them with the strategies to initiate organisational change within their schools.

V. NCISA recommends that

ANTA funds continue to be available to support teacher training as an integral part of the expansion of the VET in Schools Program and the move towards sustainable VET Programs in schools.

VI. NCISA recommends that

schools should have greater flexibility in employing staff with industry experience but without tertiary teacher education qualifications for VET programs especially where specialized skills are required. Schools will still need to make judgments that those persons are considered to be *fit and proper* persons.

VII. NCISA recommends that

- the debate about the resourcing of VET in Schools should recognize the role of ANTA, and the Commonwealth and State governments in contributing to the expansion and sustainability of VET in Schools
- MCEETYA acknowledge that ANTA funds are critical to the ongoing growth of VET in Schools programs across Independent schools and that the sector is predominantly reliant on ANTA funds to facilitate and implement sector-wide projects and initiatives as well as school-based VET programs
- ANTA should continue to allocate the VET in Schools funds by State/Territory and then by school sectors and the funds should be directed to the recognized school authorities in each sector, (regardless of the allocation model chosen)
- ANTA develop a funding allocation model that
 - continues to recognize the significance of ANTA funds in promoting and implementing change that facilitates the expansion of VET in Schools Programs and hence any new funding model must include a base allocation for this role
 - recognizes the need for ANTA funds to continue the expansion of VET in Schools Programs and hence includes in the formula the proportion of enrolments in each State/Territory and across school sectors
 - contains an element of valid and consistent performance/ outcomes based data that recognizes the achievements of school sectors but does not establish a mechanism that will lead to the larger States increasingly being allocated a greater proportion of the public funds.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SCHOOL-BASED AND OTHER VET PROGRAMS

No recommendation.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NEW AND EMERGING INDUSTRIES

VIII. NCISA recommends that

- the core role of schools in relation to new and emerging industries should be to provide students with a high standard general education together with a range of generic vocational skills and competencies that can be applied across different

contexts and support the emergence of a flexible workforce in the future

- government policy and funding should support schools which have the resources to provide a more significant contribution to the skills development requirements of new and emerging industries through the development of specialist facilities and expertise within the school. This could involve some schools delivering AQF Certificates beyond level 2.

THE ACCESSIBILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

IX. NCISA recommends that

the outcomes of the ANTA project established to identify barriers to Indigenous students undertaking VET in Schools be given high priority in the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce's work plan.

EFFECTIVENESS OF VET IN SCHOOLS PROGRAMS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

X. NCISA recommends that

- the core purposes of VET in Schools Programs be clarified and disseminated to all key stakeholders and
- more comprehensive research be undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of VET in Schools Programs. This research should include comprehensive destinations studies.

1. ABOUT NCISA

The National Council of Independent Schools' Associations (NCISA) is the peak national body covering the Independent school sector. It comprises the eight State and Territory Associations of Independent schools. Through these Associations it represents a sector with 957 schools and some 371,000 students accounting for 11.4 per cent of Australian full-time school enrolments.

Independent schools are a diverse group of non-government schools serving a range of different communities. Many Independent schools provide a religious or values-based education. Others promote a particular educational philosophy or interpretation of mainstream education. Independent schools include:

- *Schools affiliated with larger and smaller Christian denominations, for example, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, non-systemic Catholic schools*
- *Non-denominational Christian schools*
- *Islamic schools*
- *Jewish schools*
- *Montessori schools*
- *Rudolf Steiner schools*
- *Grammar schools*
- *Community schools*
- *Indigenous community schools*
- *Schools that specialise in meeting the needs of students with disabilities.*

Students are from families covering the full spectrum of socio-economic backgrounds.

Independent schools are not-for-profit institutions founded by religious or other groups in the community and are registered with the relevant state or territory education authority. Most independent schools are set up and governed independently on an individual school basis. However, some Independent schools with common aims and educational philosophies are governed and administered as systems, for example the Lutheran system.

2 PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE NCISA SUBMISSION

The points made in this submission are based on the following principles:

- Every child has an entitlement to receive a high quality education, including access to a diversity of study pathways, irrespective of their background
- Every child is entitled to a basic level of public funds and to support services that enhance their access to school education and choice of school, regardless of the school they attend
- Every child is entitled to an adequate level of resources from governments so that achievement of the National Goals for Schooling is a realistic objective for all students, notwithstanding the school or school sector they attend

- Any government driven policy initiative should be supported by the allocation of public funds to school authorities across the three school sectors
- Vocational education and training programs in schools provide a valuable vehicle in providing choice and diversity in the pathways available to young people and in contributing to efforts to improve the retention rate in education and training.

NCISA supports the recognition of vocational education and training and vocational learning in the *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* through the preamble and goals statements.

In particular, NCISA considers the following extracts from the above statement as particularly relevant to VET in Schools Programs

- *further strengthening schools as learning communities where teachers, students and their families work in partnership with business, industry and the wider community and*
- *when leaving school students should have employment related skills and an understanding of the work environment, career options and pathways as a foundation for and positive attitudes towards vocational education and training, further education, employment and life-long learning.*

NCISA also supports the Commonwealth's vision outlined in *Backing Australia's Ability* to develop and retain Australia's skill base by encouraging life long learning and helping Australians upgrade and acquire new skills.

3 THE RANGE, STRUCTURE, RESOURCING AND DELIVERY OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS

3.1 Introduction

Vocational education programs that have been delivered in the school sector have received a mixed reaction from education experts, the community and industry (employer and unions). In the past these programs have been entangled in a debate about the relative merits of general and vocational (technical) education and have been perceived as courses for the less able students who were "better with their hands" or more able to cope with applied learning.

Technical and vocation education has until recently been administered by separate government departments, with separate policy development and recognition of qualifications. The growth of comprehensive general secondary education paralleled the development of technical and further education across Australia. This trend has strengthened institutional barriers between vocational education and training and general education.

Over recent years there has been considerable pressure on schools to respond to changing skill needs of the labour market, in particular to resolve major problems in the youth labour market and to prepare young people more effectively for employment and further education and training.

This focus represents only one of the many demands upon schools to change and contribute in different ways to social and economic issues within the Australian community and to apply new teaching and learning methodologies.

In the 1980's vocational education preparation programs delivered in TAFE and schools formed a major component of transition education programs predominantly catering for students at risk. Despite attempts by the advocates of these programs they received little recognition by technical and vocational education, industry, higher education or secondary school certification authorities.

Pre-vocational programs and traineeships were implemented in the 90's to provide broad-based training that led to more occupational specific training. These programs were conducted in TAFE institutions and workplaces under a contract of training, rather than in schools, although the later institutions offered some generic elements of the overall programs in a school setting (eg, communications, business studies, OHS&W, generic trade skills).

3.2 ANTA VET In Schools Programs

In 1996 the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) allocated \$80 million for VET in Schools Programs for the 1997-2000 quadrennium. This represented an enhanced policy position to deliver industry recognized vocational education to students still attending school and represents perhaps the most concerted effort to elevate VET programs as a legitimate and valued vocational pathway for young people still attending school. A national structured workplace program, administered by the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) supported the VET programs.

The MCEETYA VET in Schools Taskforce also provided a focus for the national coordination of policy and brought together representatives from the Commonwealth, ANTA, ASTF, government and non-government school sectors, employer and employee organizations, senior secondary curriculum and assessment authorities and other relevant agencies to set directions for VET in Schools programs. It enabled a number of policy and implementation issues to be resolved among the key interest groups.

These significant initiatives provided a favourable context for the growth of recognized VET in Schools Programs across the three school sectors. Schools became an integral part of the Commonwealth's decision to deregulate the training market (User Choice) and provide consumers (industry) with a wide choice of training providers.

The ANTA funds and the enhanced policy context stimulated considerable growth in the number of Year 11 and 12 students participating in VET programs. (See section 3.4).

Key features of the VET in Schools Program include:

- A nationally agreed set of principles to guide the development of VET in Schools and part-time Apprenticeships for school students
- The establishment of VET programs based on industry recognized competencies through National Training Packages. This brought schools and school authorities into close links with the world of industry and industrial relations
- The introduction of arrangements to recognize VET qualifications within senior secondary certificates
- Some limited progress in recognition of recognized VET programs for entry into higher education and VET programs beyond school
- Stronger links between structured workplace learning and school curriculum
- The introduction of schools as brokers of student programs, partly delivered by industry and schools and/or by other training providers.

The above changes represent a significant cultural and organizational challenge for schools at a time when their traditional roles are being challenged on a number of fronts to ensure young people are prepared for a rapidly changing society and economy. This has also brought demands for reform in other areas of the curriculum in terms of content, structure, standards and teaching and learning methods.

Some of the other changes impacting on schools include:

- enhanced links between school and the wider community
- schools as co-coordinators of student learning that may occur in different locations or via several sources
- schools providing a focus for the development of social capital and acting as change agents in the local community
- increased demand for standards and educational accountability from governments and the community, particularly in literacy and numeracy
- the delivery of educational programs to enable young people to handle anti-social behaviour such as involvement with illicit drugs, mental health issues and gambling
- the implementation of new teaching/learning methodologies including on-line curriculum through such projects as The Le@rning Federation
- meeting the needs of a diverse range of students, in particular, students with disabilities, ESL and Indigenous students
- increasing retention rates through a range of initiatives such a recognized vocational pathways, including the New Apprenticeship Scheme
- providing support services to young people beyond year twelve such as career and further education advice

- increasing national perspective on education policy, particularly in the reform of the curriculum.

I RECOMMENDATION

NCISA recommends that

schools and school authorities continue to receive a proportional share of Commonwealth funding, through various agencies to support the necessary organizational and cultural changes required to improve the effectiveness of the role of schools in VET and associated support services.

3.3 Vocational Education in Schools and Youth Transition

Over the past two years the MCEETYA Taskforce (now the Transition from School Taskforce) has been developing a new framework for vocational education in schools. This now encompasses VET in Schools Programs in a wider framework that acknowledges that **all** young people require support in making the transition from school.

The framework is based on the work of the Prime Minister's Youth Pathway Taskforce that is outlined in the publication *footprints to the future*. The key elements of the framework are

- a) **Vocational education and training** recognized by the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
- b) **Enterprise and vocational learning** incorporated into general education that is appropriate for all years of schooling
- c) **Student support services** that guide and support young people in their transition from compulsory schooling to post compulsory schooling options and post school options. especially the provision of career education programs and information services
- d) **Business and community partnerships** that foster cooperation between all levels of government, business, community organizations, education and labour market authorities
- e) **Effective institutional funding arrangements** which provide a more effective approach to policy, funding and service delivery across various agencies
- f) **Effective monitoring and evaluation** through collection and analysis of data that can inform future use of resources and the development of appropriate support programs.

The July 2002 report from the MCEETYA Taskforce on Transition from School to MCEETYA outlines a comprehensive Integrated Action Plan that outlines a number of objectives to establish an effective national approach to

youth transition. This plan includes vocational education and training in schools, the development of a national career and transition support framework, advancing the New Apprenticeship scheme for school students and improving transition support for young people.

Most significantly a Ministerial Declaration (*Stepping Forward*) has been prepared which records the commitment of Federal and State Ministers across various Ministerial portfolios to a vision in which all stakeholders work with young people to assist them to attain their goals and aspirations.

This more integrated approach to youth transition (including vocational education and training) will place significant demands on schools and other government service agencies such as health, community services, employment and welfare services. It will also challenge the current institutional structures that have maintained sharp divisions between school education, technical and further education and higher education.

NCISA supports the recognition by the Commonwealth and State Government Ministers of the more comprehensive approach to assisting all young people (and their families) as they negotiate transitions from school to independence. In particular, NCISA notes that governments recognize this is a challenge for all young people; however some young people face additional barriers generated by a wide range of circumstances (eg Indigenous young people, students with disabilities and those young people who have become disconnected from their families and communities. They warrant additional support and resources. These resources should be available to young people regardless of the school sector they are attending or have attended.

NCISA also considers that young peoples' transition from school cannot be resolved solely through the promotion of VET in Schools Programs and that a range of support services, including health, housing, education and training will be required to reduce the difficulties associated with their transition.

II RECOMMENDATION

NCISA recommends that

there be more extensive consultation between the various stakeholders about the potential expanded role of schools in the more comprehensive approach to youth transition and the resource implications for schools be examined by the MCEETYA Schools Resourcing Taskforce.

3.4 Growth and Range of Vocational Education in Schools within the Independent School Sector

The ANTA funding associated with VET in Schools Programs has stimulated a rapid and substantial increase of VET programs across the three school sectors. Recent figures presented by the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce indicate that student enrolments in accredited VET in Schools Programs have

grown nationally from 60,000 in 1996 to 169,809 in 2001. 1,976 secondary schools (including 361 of 443 Independent secondary schools) across Australia were involved in providing industry recognised VET programs in 2001.

VET in Schools Programs continue to grow in the Independent sector across Australia. Student participation in VET in Schools Programs has increased from a base of 5043 students in 1997 to 15,721 students in 2001. **(See Table 1 in attachments).**

Data collected by the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce demonstrates that the growth rate for the Independent sector between 1997 and 2001 is significantly higher than the other two school sectors. Enrolments in VET programs within the Independent sector across Australia increased by 211.7%; for the same period, the growth rate in the government sector was 106% and in the Catholic sector 134.8%.

The Independent sector's share of the VET enrolments has increased from 5.4% in 1997 to 9.3% in 2001.

In 1997, 8.5% of Year 11 and 12 enrolments in Independent schools across Australia were enrolled in a VET program. In 2001 this had increased to 23.2% of Year 11 and 12 enrolments at Independent schools.

The number of Independent schools offering VET programs across Australia has also expanded significantly from 145 in 1997 to 361 in 2001. **(See Table 2 in attachments).** This reflects the capability of the sector to adjust to the changing profile of students enrolled in the sector and to government policy initiatives.

There has also been a significant increase in the VET curriculum hours undertaken by students, which is an indication of an increase in the breadth and depth of the programs. **(See Table 3 in the attachments).**

The most popular VET programs in Independent schools correlate with those identified in the 2001 MCEETYA report to Ministers for all schools across Australia; ie, programs in Hospitality, Information Technology, Business Services and General Education (This category includes generic skills and knowledge such as job seeking skills, personal development, workplace communication and occupational health and safety) have the highest participation rates, and together comprised 60% of all VET in schools delivered across Australia in 2001. Students generally participate in these VET programs because they complement their senior secondary certificate courses as well as preparing them for the world of work. The programs also provide skills for part-time employment and expand students' general knowledge of the industry. These industry areas also deliver a range of generic, readily transferable skills and knowledge, which complement the often quoted statement that students of today will have many job changes in their working lives.

A sample of specific VET programs associated with Independent schools across Australia is briefly described below.

- Students are involved in a pilot Nursing and Aged Care Project in partnership with Uniting Healthcare and Blue Care. Students will firstly undertake a first aid course and will then be engaged in on-the-job training and will be enrolled in the Certificate in Aged Care that will be delivered by an RTO.
- In Western Australia, twenty three Independent schools together with twenty-four Catholic schools have formed six regional partnerships. These clusters of schools share resources, the expertise of a cluster coordinator and access to training programs delivered by RTOs. The model provides students with access to a wider range of training than would be possible if each school worked alone. Off-the-job training is offered in a range of industry areas including automotive, information technology, hospitality and tourism, business, community services, retail, aquaculture and engineering. All students also undertake structured workplace training in their chosen industry area.
- An Independent school has developed a Languages/VET program with a focus on Tourism. Students studying Japanese and German languages at the school developed a range of interpretive signs and brochures that have been used to promote certain tourist attractions. For the past three years the College has won an industry education and training award.
- In 2001 an Independent school established an Open Learning Centre as a specialist post-compulsory vocational education and training centre to provide a range of pathways to students ranging in age from post compulsory age (15 years) to adults. School based New Apprenticeships, offering paid part time employment are supported and encouraged where appropriate. The Centre delivers Certificates I to IV in Information Technology and the Certificates in Employment Skills Training, Work Readiness and Work Education under partnership arrangements with RTOs. Other VET programs are outsourced to external Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) such as TAFE Institutes and private training.
- An Independent school has developed a Year 11 aquaculture program that is embedded in Year 11 Biology. The school has an aquaculture center with fish tanks holding over 600 barramundi. Students complete the Certificate 1 in Seafood (Aquaculture Stream) as well as Year 11 Biology. This program reflects a State Government's priority (as stated in the *State Strategic Plan 2002-2004*) to focus on the aquaculture and post harvest sector of the Fishing and Seafood Industry as a State training priority.
- A cluster of schools has been involved in developing a new VET program in Enrolled Nursing. The Year 12 introduction to Enrolled Nursing has been developed in partnership with a TAFE College. Students combine 145 hours of off-the-job training at TAFE and 12 hours of supervised visits to hospitals and nursing home/hostel complexes along with 15 to 20 days of on-the-job training in hospitals or nursing homes. An alternative

university entry proposal for Nursing has been negotiated with Curtin University. The program will establish a transition program for students completing Year 11 and 12 studies and who intend to enter the Registered Nursing program at Curtin University by establishing an alternate selection process, involvement in industry based and university based training and through changes to entrance procedures for participants. The program will be implemented as a trial in 2003 with 25 students, across the three education sectors.

- Four Independent schools have developed multimedia industry and further education pathways, linking schools to VET, higher education and industry providers. The schools initially offered the Certificate II in Arts (Interactive Multimedia) and in 2003 will deliver Certificates from recently endorsed Film, TV, Radio and Multimedia Training Package.
- A new multi-purpose theatre complex at an independent school has been the catalyst for the development of VET training focussed on the Entertainment Industry Training Package. The school has developed a partnership with a Centre for the Performing Arts and has developed a training program which provides students with training in such technical areas as lighting and sound operations, audiovisual operations and staging mechanics.
- An Independent school is a Registered Training Provider of VET and first offered recognised programs in 1995. Vocational programs are offered in Electronics, Building Studies, Music, Retail, Office Administration, Automotive Small Business, Horse Studies, Information Technology, Multimedia and Sports and Recreation. A manager of careers and vocational education counsels students about the VET program opportunities.
- An Information Technology Microsoft vendor program is currently being delivered in two independent schools in NSW. Year 12 students receive recognition in Information technology in the HSC and a Certificate III AQF credential. Some may also receive an internationally recognised Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) Certificate, which can lead to well paid employment opportunities.
- 164 Independent school students are participating in school-based arrangements for their contracted New Apprenticeships across a wide range of industry sectors. Independent schools have cooperative arrangements with 42 registered training organisations (RTOs) for off-the-job training.

3.5 Approaches to the Delivery of Vocational Education and Training in Independent Schools

The introduction of VET in Schools Programs in 1997 and the School Based New Apprenticeships Scheme in 1999 more than any previous significant

policy initiatives has challenged the foundation of the traditional notion of a school and the type of curriculum that should be offered to young people.

Vocational education and training programs in schools are now delivered through a complex set of arrangements involving multiple agencies and delivery sites. There are five major modes of delivery of VET in Schools Programs across the jurisdictions. These are:

Schools as registered training organisations (RTO) that enable the program to be delivered by the school. The school is responsible for the maintenance of standards.

Purchased delivery which involves schools purchasing the program from an RTO and it is delivered off-campus and as a stand-alone unit of work.

Partnership arrangements with an RTO where the program is delivered at school as a standalone unit of work or embedded in senior secondary accredited curriculum. The RTO is responsible for maintenance of standards

Administrative RTO unit where a school authority meets the RTO standards and is responsible for the maintenance of standards across a number of schools that deliver the VET programs

School-based New Apprenticeships where the students attends school but also participates in an apprenticeship under a contract of training.

The Independent sector in each of the States and Territories reflect the predominant mode of delivery for its State/Territory. For example, in NSW the predominant mode of delivery is “Administrative RTO unit”, where the AISNSW is the RTO on behalf of all of its schools. However, in South Australia, the “Partnership” mode accounts for more than 90% of VET in schools delivery in the independent sector. Only one Independent school in South Australia is registered as a training organisation, whereas in Victoria, the majority of Independent schools are RTOs in their own right.

School-Based New Apprenticeships were introduced in 1998 to provide opportunities for young people to commence a contract of training whilst still at school. These part-time arrangements allow students in the post-compulsory years to do paid work, undergo training both on and off-the-job and to complete their senior secondary certificates.

New Apprenticeships undertaken by students who are still at school have grown from just over 100 in 1995 to over 6000 in 2000. This represented 2.2% of all New Apprenticeships. Over half of all School-Based New Apprenticeships in Australia are in Queensland. With the introduction of School-Based New Apprenticeships young people have the opportunity to undertake traineeships and apprenticeships involving contracts of training and paid employment while completing senior secondary schooling. However apart from Queensland this form of post compulsory pathway has not seen the same level of participation growth rate as VET in Schools.

Programs that are components of other AQF qualifications. There are a number of reasons (industrial relations, problems in integrating part-time study with part-time employment, the decline of apprenticeships in traditional trades etc).

NCISA believes that School-Based New Apprenticeships provide another valid pathway for some young people and will enhance their post compulsory education and training options. However, School-Based New Apprenticeships represent the most significant reform for schools in relation to VET and will require significant organisational and cultural change within schools and greater acceptance by industry.

ANTA has undertaken a national evaluation of School-Based New Apprenticeships. This is as a result of considerable criticism from industry, employers and unions about the effectiveness of these arrangements. The evaluation has addressed structural issues, funding arrangements, national consistency, student outcomes and the impact of School-based New Apprenticeships on the cultural and organisational changes required at the school level.

NCISA supports the key findings of the above evaluation, in particular, that School-Based New Apprenticeships are more structurally complex than initially anticipated and that it will be necessary to engage in extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders, including national enterprises, employer bodies and unions to clarify the respective roles and responsibilities and efficient use of resources to deliver this initiative.

III RECOMMENDATION

NCISA recommends that

the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce initiate consultation between the key stakeholders to support the implementation of the School-Based New apprenticeship scheme.

3.6 Challenges for Schools

The introduction of the ANTA VET in Schools and School-Based New Apprenticeships has challenged the role and responsibilities of schools in post-compulsory education. Some of the changes that have arisen from the introduction of these initiatives are outlined below.

- Schools are no longer the sole providers of accredited curriculum to secondary students or the sole site for the delivery of the curriculum. They have developed partnerships with enterprise, community service organisations, regional development boards, training companies and other registered training organisations.
- The competency based approach to curriculum and assessment has provided significant challenges in the way schools and Boards of Studies organise knowledge and skills and approach assessment and reporting.

- Direct links between the labour market and schools have been strengthened.
- Some progress has been made in resolving the broader industrial relations and legal issues (e.g. duty of care responsibilities), although these areas still require further work.
- The traditional approach to timetabling has been challenged with schools increasingly examining current practices and adopting innovative and flexible structures and organisational practices.
- The well-established structural division between education and training institutions into schools, VET and Universities has also been challenged with some TAFE Institutes now delivering degree courses, and some schools now delivering VET qualifications that were previously only available in the VET sector.

The new youth transition framework brings further pressure on schools to provide wider range of support services to young people (career guidance, transition information on the changing nature of work and the youth labour market) and undertaking destination studies.

NCISA endorses the decisions of the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce to support the development of career education quality framework and standards and the National Career Information (on-line) service.

IV RECOMMENDATION

NCISA recommends that

the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce proceed with a comprehensive professional development program for Principals and other key leaders within schools to enhance their understanding of the more integrated approach to youth transition and to provide them with the strategies to initiate organisational change within their schools.

3.7 Teacher Training and Impact of VET on other Programs

The introduction of VET in Schools Programs has required significant resourcing in the area of teacher training and professional development of existing teacher to meet the quality assurance and registration requirements of the various State Accreditation and Registration Councils, as well as the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) of the VET sector. The introduction of Training Packages has increased the accountability of schools to ensure that VET teachers possess the competencies to deliver and assess the programs according to the required levels.

The Australian Quality Training Framework (hereinafter 'the AQTF') was endorsed by ANTA in June 2001. Its key objective is to provide the basis for a nationally consistent, high quality vocational education and training system. It applies to all Registered Training Organisations (RTO) in Australia and to

any other organisations (including schools) delivering VET programs in partnership with the RTO.

The AQTF consists of 12 Standards covering areas such as Quality systems, legislation and regulations, financial and administrative management, staffing requirements, assessment and learning strategies, issuing qualifications and marketing.

Under AQTF Standard 7 “*The competence of RTO Staff*” all trainers/teachers delivering and/or assessing VET competencies must comply with new minimum standards. Persons assessing competencies must have a minimum of three competencies from the *Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training* (or demonstrated equivalence) and relevant vocational competencies at least to the level being assessed. Persons delivering training must have all the competencies in the Certificate IV from the *Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training* (or have demonstrated the equivalent competencies) or be working under the direct supervision of a person with these competencies, and is able to demonstrate vocational competencies at least to the level of those being delivered. Additional requirements may also be outlined in Training Packages.

The requirement that VET teachers in schools meet this Standard has placed considerable demands on teachers to undergo intensive professional development as well as industry placements to ensure that they comply. This is an additional cost to schools if delivery takes place within the school. There is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that this requirement has led to an increase in schools outsourcing the VET delivery of their programs. In the longer term, this will result in increased costs of VET delivery and limit the long-term sustainability of school-based programs.

V RECOMMENDATION

NCISA recommends that

ANTA funds continue to be available to support teacher training as an integral part of the expansion of the VET in Schools Program and the move towards sustainable VET programs in schools.

3.8 Implications of the AQTF

The requirements of the AQTF have affected many secondary schools, whether they are delivering VET as an RTO or in partnership with an RTO.

Where the school is an RTO it must comply with all the AQTF Standards. This includes training and assessment processes, professional development of staff, record keeping, and consultation with industry regarding assessment competence, and providing written agreements where another organisation is delivering training on behalf of the RTO.

RTOs are also now subject to periodic audits that will include any organisation delivering VET programs on behalf of the RTO (i.e. schools in

partnership arrangements). Where an RTO fails to comply with the AQTF Standards, sanctions may be applied to the RTO and its other partners (including schools).

With the increasing number of vocational education programs being offered in schools, flexibility is needed in assessing the suitability of people to deliver all or part of these courses particularly where specialised skills are required. For example, a qualified chef who has already acquired the competencies required by AQTF Standard 7 could be employed by a school to deliver VET programs in Commercial Cookery and Hospitality. However, in many States this is not currently possible under existing teacher registration guidelines that require formal teaching qualifications as well as a degree.

In NSW the three schooling sectors have a common approach to VET teacher training with all teachers across the sectors undertaking the same training programs and receiving the same recognition. The training programs provide skills in competency based teaching and assessment procedures. All teachers are required to gain a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training before they can assess student competencies.

In South Australian and Western Australia, Independent schools, VET teachers have been funded under the Quality Teacher Programme to complete the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training so that they comply with the AQTF requirements. Recent industry experience has been obtained through industry placements for teachers. This has also been funded through the Quality Teacher Programme.

VI RECOMMENDATION

NCISA recommends that

schools should have greater flexibility in employing staff with industry experience but without tertiary teacher education qualifications for VET programs especially where specialized skills are required. Schools will still need to make judgements that those persons are considered to be *fit and proper* persons.

3.9 Resourcing of Vocational Education and Training in Schools

In June 2000 ANTA agreed to extend the \$20m allocation per annum for VET in Schools until the end of 2004 subject to a move to an outcomes based approach to funding in 2003 and 2004.

Within the Independent sector these funds have been used to assist schools in the development and delivery of VET, sector wide professional development activities and the administration of the program on behalf of the sector. This includes meeting the accountability requirements of ANTA and the MCEETYA Taskforce.

The funds are distributed across States/Territories on the basis of:

- a small base grant to each school authority across States/Territories
- the proportion of year 11 and 12 students enrolled in each State/Territory and
- the proportion of students enrolled in each sector within each State/Territory.

Other Commonwealth funded initiatives for the period 1997-2002 include:

- The DETYA (now DEST) funded School to Work Programme that provided funds for teacher and industry personnel training and development associated with VET in Schools. This program ceased in June 2000.
- The Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEP and formerly ASTF) continues to provide funds for the coordination of structured workplace learning.
- The Jobs Pathways Program (DEST funded) provided assistance to young people and also attempted to link students and schools more strongly to labour market requirements.
- Full Service Schools (DETYA funded) program aimed to encourage young people less than 18 years of age to return to, or remain at school to the end of Year 12. This program ceased in 1999.

State and Territory governments have also provided additional public funds to government schools to supplement the ANTA funds and to introduce other aspects of the national Vocational Education in Schools Framework. This includes programs of vocational learning, enterprise education; transition and learning support for students and community based learning.

In most cases, Independent schools do not have direct access to the State/Territory budget funds for VET in Schools. An analysis of available data on the level of ANTA **and** State/Territory government funds indicates that there is substantial inconsistency in the per capita allocation across State/Territories and across school sectors. For instance, in Victoria the per capita allocation in 2001 was \$501 per government school student and \$281 per Independent school student; in South Australia the figures were \$345 per government school student and \$86 per Independent school student.

There has been considerable debate by the MCEETYA Taskforce about the funding of VET in Schools programs. The key issues emerging from these discussions are outlined below.

The on-going sustainability of the program. School authorities have indicated the need for continuation of ANTA funding over the long term to continue the expansion of VET in Schools Programs. The review of the ANTA VET in Schools Program conducted by The Allen Consulting Group (June 2000) concluded that "...Essentially sustainability will have been achieved

when VET in Schools “... *has become a routine part of resourcing, operations and culture at the school level and has become independent of any funding supplement from ANTA to recurrent school funding.*” School authorities across the three school sectors contest this objective can be achieved in the short term within existing recurrent budgets and given other demands on schools to provide a number of flexible study pathways for young people.

The Association of Independent Schools in Victoria undertook some research into the critical factors affecting the long-term sustainability of VET in Schools Programs within Independent schools. The research was conducted by Deakin University. The report indicated there had been a positive response by Independent schools to the new opportunities that ANTA funds provided to deliver VET programs. The long-term sustainability of the programs depended very much on the student demand, the cost of delivering the programs, particularly when delivered by another provider. Schools that delivered VET programs within existing VCE accredited studies were more confident in their ability to sustain the programs. Schools with relatively high student demand in specific vocational areas were also confident they could sustain the programs in the long term

The cost of VET relative to general education. School authorities have indicated to ANTA and the Commonwealth that it costs substantially more to develop and deliver a VET in Schools program than other elements of the curriculum. This appears to be supported by the Ernst and Young investigation into the costs of VET in schools conducted on behalf of the MCEETYA Taskforce. This investigation concluded that the additional cost per student hour of VET in schools compared to general education was reported as \$2.63/hr for off-the-job delivery and \$2.65/hr for on-the-job delivery.

The national cost differential between the delivery of VET education (both on and off the job) and equivalent general education was calculated at \$64.5m in 1998 and forecast to rise to \$101.3m by 2004.

The report attributed the cost differences to:

- smaller VET class sizes either due to OHS&W requirements or student demand
- the absence of any offsetting reduction in general education costs when VET is delivered on-the-job
- additional costs associated with the non-integration of VET programs with general education, estimated nationally at \$30m in 1998.

VET in School Programs also have additional costs items not normally included in general education programs such as significant establishment costs, organisation of structured work placements; compliance and quality assurance requirements to meet registered training conditions; substantial on-going professional development of staff. The Deakin University research referred to above clearly indicated that the administration and co ordination costs of VET in Schools Programs was a significant concern for school

management. The overall support of senior management to the introduction of VET in Schools programs was also mentioned.

Evidence collected within the Independent sector in South Australia indicates that in 2001 it delivered 343,000 Annual Curriculum Hours through VET in Schools Programs. ANTA funds (\$298,743) allocated to the sector contributed \$0.87 per Annual Curriculum Hour; this is about one-third the minimum cost per curriculum hour required to deliver off the job training for VET in Schools. This demonstrates that Independent schools are already using substantial element of their recurrent funds to support VET in Schools Programs.

The Commonwealth has sought further verification of the Ernst and Young findings by commissioning another project (*An Analysis of the costs of delivery of Vocational Education and Training Programmes in Schools-including analysis of cost efficiencies*). This project will also seek to explore actual and potential options for developing cost efficiencies for the delivery of VET in Schools.

The relatively high cost of some VET programs, particularly those requiring substantial investment in equipment and high cost consumables, is likely to limit the range of VET in Schools Programs (either delivered by the school or other providers) that can be made available to school students.

The Development of a Performance/Outcomes based funding model for State/Territories and School Sectors. The current ANTA funding allocation model is based on actual student enrolments at State/Territory level and then across each school sector. The debate about an outcomes based model is being driven by three factors; the development of key performance indicators by the Performance Monitoring Taskforce as part of the Commonwealth government's policy to enhance educational accountability, the view by some State/Territories that they have been more successful than others in achieving the objectives of the ANTA VET in Schools Program and should be given a larger share of the ANTA funds based on the proportion of Year 11&12 students undertaking VET rather than simply Year 11 &12 enrolments and the belief by some government school representatives on the MCEETYA Taskforce that a disproportionate level of the ANTA funds is being allocated to the non-government school sectors because of their relatively higher retention rates at Year 11 &12.

ANTA is currently undertaking a review of the funding allocations for the VET in Schools Program and the possible impact of moving to a performance based system using the existing outcomes based data. However there is little confidence in the existing data base to move towards an outcomes based approach despite a strategy to achieve national compliance to an agreed VET data base system (AVETMIS) The work on this task is continuing.

ANTA has also recognized that any significant change to an allocation model based solely on a performance based approach will cause significant changes to allocation at both State/Territory and school sector levels will have significant impact on the capability of school sector authorities (in particular

non-government school sectors) to effectively support sector wide changes that would in turn give rise to increased levels of participation and completion within VET in Schools Programs. Smaller States/Territories could also be faced with similar effects. Independent sector school authorities, particularly in the smaller and medium size states would have to significantly curtail their sector wide services that support VET in Schools. School authorities (WA and NT) with significant numbers of Indigenous students participating in VET programs could also be significantly affected.

VII RECOMMENDATION

NCISA recommends that

- **the debate about the resourcing of VET in Schools should recognize the role of ANTA, and the Commonwealth and State governments in contributing to the expansion and sustainability of VET in Schools**
- **MCEETYA acknowledge that ANTA funds are critical to the ongoing growth of VET in Schools programs across Independent schools and that the sector is predominantly reliant on ANTA funds to facilitate and implement sector-wide projects and initiatives as well as school-based VET programs**
- **ANTA should continue to allocate the VET in Schools funds by State/Territory and then by school sectors and the funds should be directed to the recognized school authorities in each sector, (regardless of the allocation model chosen)**
- **ANTA develop a funding allocation model that**
 - ❖ **continues to recognize the significance of ANTA funds in promoting and implementing change that facilitates the expansion of VET in Schools programs and hence any new funding model must include a base allocation for this role**
 - ❖ **recognizes the need for ANTA funds to continue the expansion of VET in Schools Programs and hence includes in the formula the proportion of enrolments in each State/Territory and across school sectors**
 - ❖ **contains an element of valid and consistent performance/outcomes based data that recognizes the achievements of school sectors but does not establish a mechanism that will lead to the larger States increasingly being allocated a greater proportion of the public funds.**

4 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SCHOOL-BASED AND OTHER VET PROGRAMS AND QUALIFICATIONS AND THE PATTTERN OF INDUSTRY ACCEPTANCE OF SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS

4.1 Acceptance of VET in Schools Programs by Industry

There is no doubt that VET In Schools Programs, initiated via Commonwealth and ANTA funds, have enhanced communication and partnerships between employer and employee groups at the national, state and regional levels and with individual schools. This is beneficial at the policy, planning and delivery levels.

There has however been a mixed reaction and messages from industry (employer and employee) groups about the enhanced involvement of schools and secondary students in recognized industry VET programs. The mixed messages may be due to variations in the awareness about the new initiatives and the enhanced role of schools in providing vocational education and training.

The key messages from industry range from support for students exiting from schools with generic skills, (eg key competencies or employability skills) or at the other end of the spectrum suggesting that students be “employment ready” by acquiring specific occupational skills whilst at school.

Some employers and employee organizations do not consider schools are appropriately resourced or have the expertise to deliver industry recognized training. Other are fully supportive of the involvement of secondary students in VET programs. For instance a recent survey conducted in Tasmania indicated a high level of satisfaction with VET programs conducted by schools.

Some unions, particularly those in the manufacturing and building industry areas seem to be less enthusiastic about involvement of secondary students in VET programs. This approach seems to be related to industrial relations issues (eg, displacement of existing workers, lack of employment contract and relationship to an occupation or job) and the concern about extensive on-the-job training that is traditionally associated with vocational education and training.

For these reasons the growth of part-time School-Based New Apprenticeships is limited in scope in terms of industry coverage. **NCISA supports the recommendations of the *National Evaluation of School-Based New Apprenticeships*, in particular finding three:**

While the pattern of industry participation is highly skewed to retail and tourism and hospitality the consultants do not conclude that this represents a significant problem at this stage in the establishment of School-Based new Apprenticeships. Nevertheless the opportunity should be taken at this point in time to engage in dialogue with relevant stakeholders including national enterprises, employer bodies and unions to highlight the current skewed

pattern of industry participation so as to facilitate a wider spread of industry involvement.

This strategy is also supported by the recommendation to develop a coordinated national marketing campaign. This will need to be further supported by a major professional development program for principals and other school staff.

The latter program should among other things clarify the roles of various partners in the implementation of the School-Based New Apprenticeships.

5 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NEW AND EMERGING INDUSTRIES

5.1 The Role of Schools

The July 2002 MCEETYA Report to Ministers provided data indicating a pattern of industry provision showing that 62.3% of all VET in School Programs on a national basis were as follows:

Tourism & Hospitality	18.4%
Computing	16.0%
Business & Clerical	14.8%
General Education & Training	13.1%

This pattern is mirrored within the Independent sector across Australia. A study by the Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training demonstrated that over the four-year period between 1996 and 1999 the most popular areas of study for Independent school students were Hospitality (27%) closely followed by Information Technology (26%).

Independent schools across Australia are also involved with a number of VET programs associated with new and emerging industries within their States/Territories, such as food processing, viticulture, wine-making, aquaculture, multi media, electronics and community services (aged care).

It should be noted that General Education & Training as identified above includes accredited (by school certification authorities) courses that are not based on industry Training Packages. These include programs that focus on generic skills that prepare students for work and/or study, and include basic literacy and numeracy, job seeking skills, personal development, work place communication, and occupational health and safety.

The competencies included in Certificates 1 and 2 of the Hospitality, Computing and Business Services industries deliver a wide range of generic competencies that can be transferred to other contexts. In other words, it can be asserted that the current demand from organizations such as the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry that industry requires a broader range of employability skills than the Mayer Key Competencies framework is already being met and that a new set of nationally agreed employability skills are not required.

A recent study by the Business Council of Australia in collaboration with the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (funded by ANTA and DEST) has identified eight employment related skills (Employability Skills) Communication, Teamwork, Problem Solving, Initiative and Enterprise, Planning and organizing, Self management, Learning and Technology) and a set of personal attributes (loyalty, commitment, honesty, integrity, adaptability). NCISA considers that these skills and attributes are already essential elements of a general education and the above generic vocational education and training programs. The key issues appear to be how these skills and attributes will be assessed and reported. An audit of existing State/Territory curriculum frameworks should be undertaken to determine the extent of the coverage of these skills and attributes before a major project is undertaken to establish an entirely separate approach to assessment and reporting.

VIII RECOMMENDATION

NCISA recommends that

- **the core role of schools in relation to new and emerging industries should be to provide students with a high standard general education together with a range of generic vocational skills and competencies that can be applied across different contexts and support the emergence of a flexible workforce in the future**
- **government policy and funding should support schools which have the resources to provide a more significant contribution to the skills development requirements of new and emerging industries through the development of specialist facilities and expertise within the school. This could involve some schools delivering AQF Certificates beyond level 2.**

6 THE ACCESSIBILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

6.1 Indigenous Students

The national policy agenda for education and training includes the achievement of educational equality for Indigenous Australians as an urgent national priority. The implementation of a more coherent approach to youth transition is more likely to achieve significant outcomes for disadvantaged students. VET in Schools Programs could play a significant role in improving the retention rate of young Indigenous students to senior secondary school or equivalent.

Independent school authorities have incorporated into their annual work plans projects aimed at increasing the participation by and outcomes for Indigenous people in vocational education and training. Several case studies of VET programs are outlined below.

Two independent Aboriginal Colleges (CAPS Wongutha and Aboriginal Community College) in WA received funding for the implementation of VET programs during 2001. Other Aboriginal Schools in the Independent sector do not have post compulsory students but discussions are being held with schools in the remote areas of WA to establish future programs.

In South Australia, some ANTA funds have been integrated with the VEGAS funds to provide a program for Indigenous students that focuses on transition planning of post-school pathways. The project was known as the “Futures” project and focused on exploration of pathways and transition from school issues for post-compulsory indigenous students, particularly pathways into the vocational education and training sector. The program established key links between the Indigenous Focus Teacher and the VET and Careers Counsellors in each school to work with indigenous students. This program has been highly successful in assisting indigenous student to explore the range of options available to them in both TAFE and university sectors.

A project by the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of SA (SSABSA) on the development of VET pathways for Indigenous students in the area of music demonstrated that VET has the capacity to engage students in areas of the curriculum that have perhaps traditionally alienated them. Other research conducted by SSABSA indicates that for many Indigenous students who complete the senior secondary certificate, VET plays an important part in their completion.

In Queensland the number of Indigenous students participating in VET in Schools programs and also School-Based New Apprenticeships is steadily increasing. Five percent of School-Based New Apprenticeships in Queensland’s Independent schools are students with Indigenous backgrounds. VET programs are considered an integral strategy to improve retention rates and other positive outcomes for Indigenous students.

NCISA acknowledges that more needs to be undertaken to significantly increase the successful participation of young Indigenous students in Vet in Schools Programs.

NCISA therefore supports ANTA’s project to identify the barriers to Indigenous students taking part in VET in Schools Programs and strategies, (including support mechanisms that will encourage Indigenous students to participate in VET in Schools programs) which will overcome these barriers.

IX RECOMMENDATION

NCISA recommends that

the outcomes of the ANTA project established to identify barriers to Indigenous students undertaking VET in Schools be given high priority in the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce’s work plan.

7 EFFECTIVENESS OF VET IN SCHOOLS PROGRAMS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

7.1 Effectiveness of VET in Schools

A review of existing VET in Schools programs in relation to the objectives of the implementation strategy of the VET in Schools Framework provides some indication of the effectiveness of the above programs.

- a) A national policy framework has been developed for VET in Schools. This has now been encompassed into a wider framework incorporating youth transition. Independent school authorities have been an integral part of this cooperative approach
- b) Communication and partnerships between schools, school authorities, industry, and training providers have been enhanced both at policy and local levels. However, there are still mixed messages from industry bodies and employers about the value of VET in Schools programs
- c) There has been a significant expansion of VET in Schools across the Independent school sector in each State in terms of student enrolments and participation by school. The diversity of school curriculum has been enhanced, although it is not clear how the new options have influenced the decisions of young people about involvement in further study or employment.
- d) VET programs have challenged traditional approaches to teaching and learning in schools and provided a different context and a range experiences for students to learn
- e) VET programs have challenged traditional school organizational structures and enhanced links between schools and their communities
- f) Structured workplace learning is more strongly linked to school based VET programs
- g) The rigid barriers between different levels of education and training are breaking down; however progress in the acceptance of VET in Schools programs for recognition into further education and training (in particular higher education) is uneven and limited. The Allen Consulting Review of the ANTA VET in Schools Program recognizes this as a significant impediment to the acceptance and sustainability of VET in Schools Programs
- h) School clusters have been formed to enable a critical mass of students to participate in a VET program

- i) Some Independent schools have embraced VET in Schools Programs to the extent they are providing extensive programs incorporating both generic and specific vocational skills
- j) There continues to be considerable concern about the ability of most independent schools to sustain VET in Schools Programs if ANTA funding ceases. Only a few schools have achieved a point where they can sustain these programs via their recurrent budgets
- k) There has been a slow growth in School-Based New Apprenticeships in most States and Territories, with the exception of Queensland
- l) There is a lack of research to indicate whether VET programs have contributed towards improving retention rates

Do we really know how effective VET in Schools Programs have been in terms of outcomes for young people? There is not a substantial amount of literature available on post school destinations of young people involved on VET in Schools programs. Nor has there been sufficient analysis on whether VET programs do assist many students with high or low levels of academic achievement.

The Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) program at ACER report that VET in Schools Program participants are much more likely than their non-VET peers to be in the workforce in the first year after completing school. Correspondingly students who had not participated in VET were more likely to be in tertiary education. The studies also indicate that students from the lowest achievement level were the most likely to participate in VET in Schools.

A pilot destinations study (2001 cohort) conducted by the Association of Independent Schools in South Australia demonstrated that the significant majority of students attending Independent schools progressed on to further studies either at University (60%) or at a TAFE provider (17%) with a small number in full-time work (8%). This study was inconclusive in drawing any link between VET in Schools studies and either further studies or employment, with only a small number of respondents considering that their VET studies had either influenced or helped them in getting a job or in their tertiary studies. A small percentage of students (17%) obtained credit for their VET studies into their post school courses.

Whilst this pilot study was essentially undertaken to test a destinations study methodology it does highlight the need for a more comprehensive destination study to determine the influences of VET in Schools programs on post school outcomes for young people. This could be linked to a study of the impact of VET in Schools Programs on retention rates.

7.2 Future Directions

NCISA considers that VET in Schools Programs can make a contribution to the wider national agenda to significantly improve youth transition and in many cases provide young people with a legitimate option to successfully complete 12 years of education or equivalent. Some State/Territory governments have already moved to implement a more coherent approach to the delivery of support services to young people with a particular focus on those at risk. Both Commonwealth and State/Territory resources should be available to these young people, regardless of the school sector they attend.

The ACER Longitudinal Survey Of Australian Youth project indicates that about one-third of young people experience a difficult transition from school. The survey findings also indicate that achieving well in school and completing Year 12 have significant employment and earnings outcomes for young people a decade or more after leaving school. However there needs to be greater clarification for young people, employers and the wider community about the core purposes of VET in Schools.

NCISA considers that these programs can add value to post-compulsory schooling in a number of ways:

- Understanding of the workplace environment-(vocational learning)
- Broad vocational orientation based on generic skills and knowledge
- Skill formation acceptable to industry standards
- Introduction to experiential learning in a workplace setting and hence valuing work and work places as contributing to learning
- Improved retention in education and training, in particular for at risk students that are also linked to social justice policies of governments
- New approaches to teaching and learning.

Schools will vary in their contribution to the above purposes; however in the interest of generating diversity of pathways for young people all the above purposes should be accepted. Schools and their communities need to determine what elements of the above purposes they consider should form part of the educational services they provide to their students.

The more complex range of options that have emerged with VET in Schools and School Base New Apprenticeships requires a significant awareness campaign within the community and among employer and employee organizations.

The more integrated approach to youth transition as outlined by the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce is still focused on support services directly related to employment and further education and training (eg, career education information system, vocational learning. It must be acknowledged that for at risk students and other young people a more comprehensive range of services (health, welfare, community services transport, information technology) will need to be coordinated to enhance the

transition process. These services should be available to students from the three school sectors.

The ANTA VET in Schools Program and related initiatives have made a significant contribution in moving VET from a marginal post compulsory school option to one that is being considered by a wider range of students. However NCISA considers a high priority should be given at a national and state level to significantly improving the status of VET in School Programs in terms of higher education entry so that a more consistent and equitable outcome is achieved across the nation.

VET should also not compromise the essential function of schools to provide a general education as the foundation for the wide range of recognized pathways available to young people. Nor should it be seen as compensating for other deficiencies in the school education system.

A more comprehensive set of destination studies should be undertaken at individual school, regional and state and national levels to obtain a valid picture of the effectiveness of the various pathways now available to young people. We need to identify what correlation there is between the pathways policy makers are generating and what young people are doing and to examine whether VET in Schools is contributing to the needs of young people, industry and the community.

VET in Schools Programs should be seen as **part** of a wider agenda to explore and bring about institutional change that will improve the quality of outcomes for young people and the community.

X RECOMMENDATION

NCISA recommends that

- **the core purposes of VET in Schools Programs be clarified and disseminated to all key stakeholders and**
- **more comprehensive research be undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of VET in Schools Programs. This research should include comprehensive destinations studies.**

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