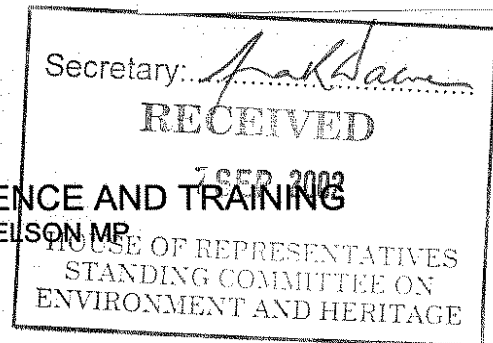




MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING
 THE HON DR BRENDAN NELSON MP



11 SEP 2002

The Hon Bruce Billson MP
 Committee Chair
 Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage
 Parliament House
 CANBERRA ACT 2600

Bruce
 Dear Mr Billson

I refer to your letter of 27 June 2002 concerning the establishment of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage and the invitation to provide a submission to the Committee.

Attached please find a Submission from my Department with information relating to higher education, vocational education and training and support for the transition from school to further education and training and work.

The contribution was coordinated through the Vocational Education and Training Group and if further information is required please do not hesitate to contact Ms Joanne Major on 02 6240 8890 or by mail through GPO Box 9880, Canberra ACT 2601.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Standing Committee's deliberations.

Yours sincerely

BRENDAN NELSON

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SUBMISSION TO

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE
ON
ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE**

INQUIRY INTO EMPLOYMENT IN THE ENVIRONMENT SECTOR

August 2002

Introduction

The Department of Education, Science and Training provides national leadership and works in collaboration with the States and Territories, industry, other agencies and the community in support of the Government's objectives. We develop and implement policies to ensure the continuing relevance of education, science and training to contemporary needs and the growing requirement for lifelong learning. We also ensure high quality and value for money in delivering Government funded programmes.

The Department has a number of key areas against which it seeks to deliver to achieve its outcomes. These include:

Post-school education and training - Enhancing the quality and flexibility of the post-school education and training systems to respond to the needs of individuals, the community and industry; and

Effective Transitions - Assisting all people to make effective transitions and well informed career choices throughout life.¹

These particular areas of higher education, vocational education and training and transition provide significant support through funding, departmental programmes and targeted initiatives to a range of post school options of which further training and or employment in the environment sector is one.

The Inquiry Terms of Reference list five areas for consideration. Of these the issues that most relates to education, science and training is that of the "*Current status and future requirements for an appropriately skilled workforce*".

The information in this submission is provided to give an overview of the level of participation in environment related courses of study at higher education institutions, background on available resources to assist with some aspects of employment in the environment sector, namely New Apprenticeships and policy initiatives that assist with the transition from school to work and further education and training.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Background

The Commonwealth through the Department of Education, Science and Training provides a block grant to universities for a specified number of student places consistent with each institution's teaching and research activities. In 2002-03, \$6 billion was allocated for higher education funding from the Commonwealth government. Many Australian universities offer courses in environmental studies with 7,957 students enrolled in such courses in 2001 as *Attachment A* demonstrates. *Attachment B* gives information on students who completed environmental studies degrees in 2001.

As universities are autonomous institutions generally established under State legislation, the actual allocation of funding between various faculties and centres is an internal matter for the university to determine on the basis of its own assessment of needs and priorities and in line with its agreed education profile.

Graduate Diploma in Environment and Planning

A recent initiative in the field of environmental studies is the new Graduate Diploma in Environment and Planning at the University of Tasmania. The course will build on the

¹ DEST Corporate Plan 2002

University of Tasmania's reputation in integrated social, economic and environmental planning, and assist in meeting the growing demand for professionals in this field, particularly in Tasmania. Funding for this course has yet to be approved under the *Higher Education Funding Amendment Bill 2002* (HEFAB) which was introduced into the House of Representatives on 5 June 2002.

Participation

The following data, *Attachment A*, identifies the number of students, by university enrolled in Environmental Studies in 2001, *Attachment B* identifies Award Course completions for 2000.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Background

In 2002 the Commonwealth is providing substantial funding (over \$1.03 billion) to States and Territories to support their efforts towards the development of a national vocational education and training (VET) system.

The funds are allocated through the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and supplement those provided by State and Territory Governments which are responsible for all aspects of their training systems.

The national co-operation, stability and commitment to growth provided by the ANTA Agreement has facilitated reform initiatives aimed at making the vocational education and training system more flexible and responsive to the needs of industry. These initiatives are embodied in the National Training Framework and New Apprenticeships.

National Training Packages

Training Packages, part of the suite of resources and quality assurances under the National Training Framework, are integrated training resources comprising nationally endorsed competency standards, assessment guidelines, and Australian Qualifications Framework qualifications.

Training Packages are developed by National Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs), other designated industry-based bodies or enterprises to meet the identified training needs of specific industries, industry sectors or enterprises. Funding for Training Package development is provided by ANTA under the Training Package National Programme.

Some Training Packages are funded by industry themselves, such as specific enterprise based Training Packages. An organisation interested in expanding the coverage of an existing Training Package or in developing a new Training Package needs to contact the ITAB and ANTA. An average time for the development of a new Training Package is two years.

The development of a new Training Package involves extensive industry consultation and validation to give a range of stakeholders the opportunity to have input into the Training Package and ensuring that the final product will meet the industry or the enterprise training needs. Consultation is a primary requirement for the national endorsement process and must be fully documented.

Training Packages are typically endorsed for three years and formal review of a Training Package occurs within the three-year cycle. The canvassing of industry and training organisation experience and satisfaction with a Training Package is the first step of a review. The redevelopment of the Training Package, based on agreed enhancements, is then subject to the normal validation and endorsement processes.

Existing Packages with Environment competency units

Details of all endorsed Training Packages, including units of competency, qualifications, packaging rules and courses are available from the National Training Information Service (NTIS) (<http://www.ntis.gov.au>).

The Conservation and Land Management Package was endorsed on 30 April 2002 and must be reviewed by 31 May 2005. The Training Package was developed by the National ITAB (Rural Training Council of Australia). Units of competency may be packaged into six qualifications:

RTD10102 Certificate I in Conservation and Land Management
RTD20102 Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management
RTD30102 Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management
RTD40102 Certificate IV in Conservation and Land Management
RTD50102 Diploma in Conservation and Land Management
RTD60102 Advanced Diploma in Conservation and Land Management

The Package contains a large number of units of competency directly relating to management of the Environment, such as

RTD1501A Support natural area conservation;
RTD5203A Plan erosion and sediment control measures;
RTD5402A Develop a strategy for the management of target pests; and
RTD5522A Plan river restoration works.

More examples of the Conservation and Land Management Training Package units of competency are provided at *Attachment C*.

The Local Government Training Package was endorsed on 6 March 2000 and must be reviewed by 31 March 2003. The Package was developed by the National ITAB - Australian Local Government Training Ltd (known as National Training Advisory Ltd). Competency units may be packaged into the following qualifications that relate to environmental issues:

LGA60300 Advanced Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Regulation)
LGA60200 Advanced Diploma of Local Government (Planning and Management of the Physical Environment)
LGA20200 Certificate II in Local Government (Environmental Health and Regulation)
LGA30200 Certificate III in Local Government (Environmental Health and Regulation)
LGA40200 Certificate IV in Local Government (Planning and Management of the Physical Environment)
LGA50300 Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and regulation)
LGA50200 Diploma of Local Government (Planning and Management of the Physical Environment)

The Drilling Training Package was endorsed on 12 November 1998 and is currently under review. Both the initial development and the review were carried out by Australian Drilling Industry Training Committee Ltd. The Package also contain competencies concerning the protection of the environment which may be packaged into the following qualifications:

DRT20198 Certificate II in Drilling (Environmental)
DRT30198 Certificate III in Drilling (Environmental)
DRT40198 Certificate IV in Drilling (Environmental)

Accredited courses and programmes

Course based qualifications and training programmes can also be accredited by State/Territory Training Authorities when no suitable Training Package qualifications are available. Details can be obtained from the NTIS web site by, for example, conducting a search for 'environment'.

New Apprenticeships

New Apprenticeships combine practical work with structured training to give Australians a nationally recognised qualification and the experience they need to get the job they want. Training in a New Apprenticeship is delivered through Training Packages. The Commonwealth provides financial incentives to employers of New Apprentices with the timing and amount of incentive available dependant on a number of factors including the level of training being provided, the industry and geographical location of the employer and the current skill level of the New Apprentice.

The Commonwealth also supports New Apprenticeships through New Apprenticeships Centres (NACs). NACs are contracted to provide information on New Apprenticeships options to employers and prospective New Apprentices, market and promote New Apprenticeships in the local area, administer Commonwealth incentive payments to employers and work with State/Territory Training Authorities to provide an integrated service to employers and New Apprentices. There are some 300 NAC sites across Australia.

Since the introduction of NACs on 1 May 1998 there have been 963 commencements in environment and heritage related industries. Commencements are recorded against the periods during which NACs were contracted to deliver support services for New Apprenticeships. Contract 1(1 May 1998 to 30 November 1999) saw 308 commencements, while in Contract 2 (1 December 1999 to 30 June 2003) there has been more than double that number with 655 commencements to date². These commencements are in two qualifications, Land Conservation and Restoration and Landcare, with most New Apprentices located in Western Australia and Queensland. *Attachment D* refers.

Over this period, 158 employers have received a total of over \$1.17 million in employer incentives from the Commonwealth in respect of these New Apprentices. There is also potential for further growth in environment and heritage related New Apprenticeships, with the Conservation and Land Management National Training Package being endorsed and published in April 2002. A qualification specific to the environment and heritage (Certificate IV in Tourism (Natural and Cultural Heritage)) has also been implemented as part of the new Tourism National Training Package.

TRANSITION

School based New Apprenticeships and Vocational Education and Training in schools

School-based New Apprenticeships also offer opportunities for students to start their skills training while still at school and form a relationship with an industry and an employer. In recognition of the growing importance of School-based New Apprenticeships, the Government announced in the last budget additional employer incentives for School-based New Apprenticeships.

Employers will receive an extra \$750 incentive to take on New Apprentices while they are still at school. Employers will also be eligible for an additional \$750 retention bonus if they continue to employ a young person as a New Apprentice within six months of them completing Year 12. This additional financial commitment equates to up to \$31.7 million over the next four years.

² These figures are based on Departmental data and may not include all commencements in this field.

In January 2001 the Commonwealth set up the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEF) to promote the expansion of school to work links to enable young Australians to acquire vocational, enterprise and career education, knowledge and experience before they leave school. It gives students the opportunity to take the first steps towards successful education to work transition at the same time as completing their Year 11 and 12 academic requirements.

The programme also serves to establish and maintain important linkages between school programmes, industry and the community. This includes support for the expansion in the number and variety of New Apprenticeship opportunities for secondary school students and the better integration of New Apprenticeship opportunities with VET in Schools programmes.

The ECEF is being provided with over \$100 million for the period 2000/01 to 2003/04 to facilitate these activities.

SUMMARY

While not directly involved in the management of the employment market or job creation policies the Department will continue through its policies and initiatives to facilitate the acquisition of education and training that support the environment industry and related employment sectors.