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Regional Branches: Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Cairns, Townsville,
Mackay, Bundaberg, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast

ORDINARY MEMBERS

Industry Associations:

AG - Australian Industry Group
ALPGA (QLD) - Australian Liquefied Petroleum Gas Association - Qld Div.
AMCA - Air Conditioning and Mechanical Contractors Association of Queensland Limited
ASOFIA (Qld) - Australian Shop and Office Filters Industry Association - Qld Div.
BIGA (TRAINING) - Building Industry Group Apprentice Training
BISCOQ - Building Industry Specialist Contractors Organisation of Queensland (Inc)
CCF - Civil Contractors Federation
HIA - Housing Industry Association
IAA - Irrigation Association Australia
MBSPAQ - Master Bricklayers Segmental Pavors Association of Qld (Inc)
MPD & SA - Master Painters Decorators and Signwriters Association of Queensland
MPAQ - Master Plumbers Association of Queensland
MRIAQ - Metal Roofing Industry Association
NAWIC - National Association of Women in Construction
QBSA - Queensland Building Services Authority
QFPFA - Queensland Fire Protection Industry Association Inc
QMBA - Queensland Master Builders' Association
QMCA - Queensland Major Contractors Association
SAA - Sign Association of Australia (Qld)
SPASA - Swimming Pool and Spa Association of Queensland Inc.
WCAQ - Wall and Ceiling Association of Qld

Employee Associations:

ABCE/BLF - Australian Building Construction Employees and Builders Labourers Federation
AMWU - Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union
AWU - Australian Workers Union
CFMEU - Construction, Forestry Mining and Energy Union (C&G Division)
CFMEU - Construction, Forestry Mining and Energy Union (FEDFA Division)
CEPU - Communications Electrical, Electronic, Plumbing and Allied Workers Union of Australia (Plumbing)

Government:

DET - Department of Employment and Training (State)
DEST - Department of Education, Science and Training
EDUCATION - Department of Education (State)
MAIN ROADS
Q BUILD

Local Government:

BCC - Brisbane City Council

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

AIB - Australian Institute of Building
COMET Training Pty Ltd
CTC - Construction Training Centre
Forrester Kurts Constructions
GTA - Group Training Australia - Qld & NT
GTA Brisbane - Group Training Australia Brisbane
NTTC - National Trade Training Company
NSCA - National Safety Council of Australia - Queensland Division
QRMS - Queensland Risk Management Services
SITE-SAFE - Health, Safety & Risk Management Consultants
Tarong Learning Program Inc
TRADAC - Timber Research and Development Advisory Council of Qld

LIFE MEMBERS

Ian Barclay, CBE
Hugh R Hamilton, AM

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Original in mail

// September 2002

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Education and Training
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir

INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Enclosed is our submission for consideration by the Standing Committee.

Please call me if you require any explanation or elaboration.

Yours faithfully

G R Shannon
General Manager

Encl.

CONSTRUCTION TRAINING QUEENSLAND

SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

'INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING'

General

Construction Training Queensland (CTQ) is the State Industry Training Advisory Body (ITAB) for the building and construction industry in Queensland. CTQ's membership consists of all key industry associations and unions. CTQ has also established eight regional branches spread throughout the State.

The matter of vocational education in schools has been an item considered by CTQ for some time. While there is general support for the need for some vocational education in schools training (VET), an overriding view is that VET should be directed more towards preparing young Australians for the world of work. While students can often demonstrate theoretical knowledge at varying levels of competence, a significant number have difficulty in applying theory in a contextual workplace setting. As a single most feature, this inherent failure cannot be over stated.

There is more than just anecdotal evidence in this regard. The Government could usefully commission a review on this aspect of education alone. The problem could be addressed, even solved, if more attention was paid by the general education sector to the implementation and incorporation of the Mayer Key Competencies into curriculum at every stage of development. The VET sector itself seems to be the solitary 'champion' of the need for more than just lip service being paid to the matter of life skills as articulated through acquisition of these key competencies.

School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships

It would be fair to say that there is an air of ambivalence, even indifference, among many industry stakeholders in this industry to the overall notion of school based apprenticeships and traineeships. This view is formed because there are practical problems with the implementation of structured workplace learning to support theory delivered in schools, as part of apprenticeship and traineeship programs. This difficulty stems from the fact that contractors in this industry are mobile. In a metropolitan area such as Brisbane, a contractor might work on one side of the city during one week and another side of the city on another week. This can have a serious effect on continuity associated with workplace learning in a structured apprenticeship or traineeship plus the practical transport problems.

This is not to say that school based apprenticeships cannot be managed, or are unsuitable totally. There is strong evidence to suggest that school based apprenticeships succeed best when they are managed through group training companies who have the capacity to manage apprentices and trainees through a range of host employers.

Other School Based Programs

There has been an attempt to prepare a nationally accredited program for the delivery of VET for this industry in schools.

There have been significant difficulties in setting school based programs that produce quality outcomes. This stems from both a physical and human resource perspective. In terms of physical resources, there is a significant cost associated with the acquisition and maintenance of the physical materials necessary to deliver realistic construction training. In terms of human resources, there is a dearth of current industry experience held by many (most!) teachers in the manual arts areas. Virtually all teachers in secondary schools these days are university educated; few have any trade related skills. CTQ has attempted to develop alternative models for the professional development of teachers but has only met with mixed success when dealing with the self managing school arrangements. Further, the school transfer system can potentially work against schools attempting to develop a base of skilled teachers in this area. These issues are debilitating factors in the capacity of schools to deliver worthwhile programs that can then articulate into other programs following completion of secondary education by a student.

Promotion of Vocational Education and Training

As mentioned above, the delivery of VET in schools is also related to the fact that most, if not all secondary school teachers are university educated. There is, as a consequence, a 'comfort zone' in which teachers operate and where they, as a matter of course, direct students to university education rather than into vocational areas. Vocational education and training is still seen by many as a 'poor cousin' to a university education. There is still a view that VET programs are seen as the repository for the proverbial class nuisances or those students with academic problems. The fact is, careers in this industry should attract the highest academic achievers given the worthwhile pathways that are available to people entering the industry as an apprentice and, as is evident from many of the successful contractors in Australia today, advance through the industry to high level management positions.

Construction Training Queensland, in conjunction with Construction Training Australia (CTA) is supporting the development of a national careers website which will be used to portray the construction industry as an industry that can offer career options of first choice.

Vocational Education for Indigenous Students

Many of the problems highlighted above are exacerbated when encouraging indigenous students into vocational areas. The simple fact is, that students in remote indigenous communities will not have the opportunities that their contemporaries will have in schools in capital cities. CTQ's experience with indigenous training also relates to the willingness and/or reluctance of young indigenous Australians to leave their community to undertake vocational training. The only really successful programs have been those where the training is delivered in the communities and opportunities for on-site

experience are gained in building housing and other construction buildings in these communities.

Conclusion

In summary, VET in schools brings about significant challenges for the future. On the one hand there is the need to provide young Australians with underpinning knowledge in an environment that reflects contemporary education to a standard if not better than, at least equal to the mean for the rest of the world. On the other hand, there is a need to ensure that 'bracket creep' does not alienate or isolate those young people who struggle at the fringes academically.

More importantly, schools should prepare all students for the world of work, the ultimate destination in whatever chosen pathway. Achievement of the Mayer Key Competencies will do this.