

NCVER

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Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations Inquiry into Issues Specific to Workers Over 45 Years of Age Seeking Employment, or Establishing a Business, Following Unemployment

NCVER is pleased to assist the House of representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations in its inquiry into issues specific to workers over 45 years of age seeking employment, or establishing a business, following unemployment. This submission provides background information for the inquiry on participation rates and employment outcomes in vocational education and training for workers over 45 years of age compared with other Australians. Specific information is provided, wherever possible, for those people over 45 years of age who are employed, unemployed or not in the labour force.

1. Participation of people aged 45 years and over in vocational education and training

The national collection of vocational education and training (VET) data is a source of information about VET courses conducted by providers in receipt of public funds. The collection includes TAFE and other government providers, community-based providers and private providers. The information provided in this submission relates to all publicly funded VET courses.

VET participation rates for the working age population are shown in table 1. Over 10 per cent of Australians of working age were enrolled in a VET course during 1997. About 7 per cent of people aged 45-54 years and 3 per cent of people aged 55-64 years undertook a VET course during 1997. Participation rates were marginally higher for females compared with males for both of these age groups.

The age distribution of working age Australians who were enrolled in a VET course during 1997 are presented in table 2. In 1997, the 45-54 year age cohort comprised 12 per cent of all students undertaking vocational education and training, while the 55-64 year age group accounted for an additional 4 per cent of students. Females in the age group 45-64 years accounted for 18 per cent of VET female enrolments while males in the 45-64 year age group accounted for only 14 per cent of all male enrolments.

Table 1: VET participation rates by age and gender, 15 to 64 year olds, 1997

	Male	Female	All students
Age 15-19	22.6	17.4	20.2
Age 20-24	19.1	15.1	17.2
Age 25-44	10.3	10.2	10.3
Age 45-54	6.0	7.2	6.6
Age 55-64	3.1	3.2	3.1
Ages 15-64	10.9	10.0	10.5

Source: Derived using NCVER data and ABS Estimated resident population by Sex/Age, June 1997 (Cat. No. 3101.0)

Table 2: Age distribution of students in vocational education and training, by gender, 1997

	Male	Female	All Students
	%	%	%
Age 15-19	22.2	17.9	20.2
Age 20-24	19.7	16.6	18.2
Age 25-44	43.7	47.7	45.6
Age 45-54	10.7	13.8	12.2
Age 55-64	3.6	4.1	3.8
Ages 15-64	100	100	100

Source: unpublished NCVET data from the national VET provider data collection

The employment status of those students in vocational education during 1997 who disclosed their employment status is shown in table 3. The employment status of about a quarter of enrolled students is not known. Of those students who disclosed their employment status, about 73 per cent of students aged 45-54 years old were employed, 18 per cent were unemployed and 10 per cent were not in the labour force. About the same proportion of students aged 25-44 years was either employed, unemployed or not in the labour force as those aged 45-55 years.

Notably, in the older 55-64 year age group over a quarter of students were not in the labour force compared with 13 per cent of all working age students, and 10 per cent of students aged 25-54 years. Proportionately more working age female VET students (35 per cent) over 55 were not in the labour force than male VET students (18 per cent). Further details by gender on the employment status of VET students aged 45-64 years are provided in table 4.

Table 3: Employment status of students in vocational education and training 1997

	Employed	Unemployed	Not in the	Total
	%	%	Labour Force %	%
Age 15-19	55.7	25.1	19.2	100
Age 20-24	68.4	21.1	10.4	100
Age 25-44	70.6	19.5	9.9	100
Age 45-54	72.8	17.7	9.5	100
Age 55-64	58.4	14.7	26.8	100
Ages 15-64	66.9	20.6	12.5	100

Source: unpublished NCVET data from the national VET provider data collection

Table 4: Employment status of students aged 45-64 in vocational education and training, by gender, 1997

All students	Employed	Unemployed	Not in	Total
	%	%	Labour Force %	%
Age 45-54	73	18	9	100
Age 55-64	58	15	27	100
Male students				
Age 45-54	78	16	6	100
Age 55-64	66	16	18	100
Female students				
Age 45-54	69	19	12	100
Age 55-64	51	14	35	100

Source: unpublished NCVET data from the national VET provider data collection

About 37 per cent of all working age VET students over 45 had completed year 12 prior to commencing a vocational course. The percentage of working age students aged over 45 who had completed year 12 is considerably lower than the percentage of younger students. About two-thirds of students aged 20-24 years had completed year 12 prior to commencing a VET course.

There is no notable difference in the percentage of students aged 45-64 years who completed senior secondary school who disclosed that they were employed or unemployed. However, less than a third of all students who disclosed that they were not in the labour force had completed year 12.

Table 5: Highest school level completed for 45-64 year olds in vocational education and training by employment status, 1997

Employment Categories	Year 9 or Lower	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Total
Age 45-54	19.3	32.3	11.7	36.7	100.0
Age 55-64	26.0	27.7	8.5	37.8	100.0
Employed					
Age 45-54	16.8	35.5	12.8	34.9	100.0
Age 55-64	24.0	32.7	9.8	33.4	100.0
Unemployed					
Age 45-54	22.5	31.2	11.0	35.3	100.0
Age 55-64	25.5	27.9	8.9	37.7	100.0
Not in the Labour Force					
Age 45-54	35.0	26.2	8.2	30.6	100.0
Age 55-64	36.4	24.5	6.9	32.2	100.0

Source: unpublished NCVET data from the national VET provider data collection

Information about the type of courses undertaken by working age students aged over 45 years in the vocational sector is provided in tables 5 to 11. Details are provided on enrolments and annual hours of training delivered for both 'field of study' and 'area of learning' classification categories. The field of study classification provides information about the subject matter of a course. The area of learning classification describes the primary content of a module irrespective of the context in which it may be taught.

Gender and age are both factors that influence choice of field of study. Details about the percentage of students by gender who identified as being employed, unemployed or not in the labour force aged 45-55 years and aged 55-64 years represented in each field of study are provided in tables 5 - 8.

In 1997, 40 per cent of vocational students aged 45-64 years who identified as being not in the labour force were undertaking studies in the TAFE multi-field education. This field of study classification includes courses in English as a second language, functional literacy and numeracy, general skills development, general secondary education and qualifying education. A higher percentage of women (42 per cent) were undertaking preparatory courses than men. About 30 per cent of students aged 45-64 years and 34 per cent of students aged 55-64 years who identified themselves as being unemployed were also undertaking courses in this field of study classification. Again, a higher percentage of women were undertaking preparatory courses than men. In contrast, less than 15 per cent of students aged 45-64 years who identified themselves as employed were undertaking these courses.

One in five male vocational students aged 45-54 years who identified themselves as being unemployed or employed were undertaking studies in 'business administration, economics'. A quarter of all women in this age group were studying in this area. This field of study, was not as popular for older students, although one in five women aged over 55 who identified themselves as being employed or unemployed were undertaking studies in this area.

Table 6: Percentage of annual hours in each field of study for students in vocational education and training, 1997

All Students	Age 45-54				Age 55-64			
	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labour Force	Total	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labour Force	Total
Land & Marine Resources, Animal Husbandry	5.4	2.8	3	4.8	7.4	3.3	2.7	5.4
Architecture, Building	3.6	2.2	1.9	3.3	3.3	2	1.6	2.9
Art, Humanities & Social Sciences	7.6	7.8	13.2	8.4	9.7	9	15.6	12
Business, Administration, Economics	22.9	23.8	14.3	21.5	17.6	19.4	10.8	15.3
Education	6.3	2.5	2.7	4.8	5.2	2.7	3.8	4
Engineering, Surveying	11.1	5.1	4.2	8.9	10.8	5.8	3	7.3
Health, Community Services	10.6	8.5	7	9.6	8.1	6.1	5.2	6.8
Law, Legal Studies	0.6	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4
Science	11.7	8.7	8.5	10.9	15.6	11.2	14.1	14
Veterinary Science, Animal Care	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Services, Hospitality, Transportation	7.3	7.6	4	6.9	7.1	5.6	3	5.5

TAFE Multi-Field Education	12.9	30.6	40.8	20.4	14.7	34.3	40	26.5
All Fields of Study	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: unpublished NCVER data from the national VET provider data collection

Table 7: Percentage of annual hours in each field of study for male students in vocational education and training, 1997

Male Students	Age 45-54				Age 55-64			
	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labour Force	Total	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labour Force	Total
Land & Marine Resources, Animal Husbandry	8.2	4.9	5	7.6	10.6	4.6	4.2	8.5
Architecture, Building	6.2	4.3	3.4	6	5	3.1	3.2	5
Art, Humanities & Social Sciences	4.3	5.4	8	4.8	5.6	6.4	12.4	7.4
Business, Administration, Economics	19.3	19.7	16	18.7	16.2	18.2	12.5	15.1
Education	5.3	2.3	1.7	4.3	4.6	2.4	2.8	3.5
Engineering, Surveying	19.7	11	9.3	16.3	17.2	9.8	5.8	12.9
Health, Community Services	7.1	5.3	5.8	6.7	6.5	4.2	3.7	5.6
Law, Legal Studies	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.8	0.6
Science	9	8.5	7.6	9	12.7	11.9	15.9	12.7
Veterinary Science, Animal Care	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Services, Hospitality, Transportation	9.2	10	4.5	8.7	9.2	7	3.3	7.6
TAFE Multi-Field Education	11	28.2	38.4	17.2	11.7	31.8	35.4	21.1
All Fields of Study	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: unpublished NCVER data from the national VET provider data collection

Table 8: Percentage of annual hours in each field of study for female students in vocational education and training, 1997

Female Students	Age 45-54				Age 55-64			
	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labour Force	Total	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labour Force	Total
Land & Marine Resources, Animal Husbandry	2.8	1.5	2.1	2.5	3.5	2	1.9	2.6
Architecture, Building	1.2	0.8	1.3	1.1	1.2	0.9	0.8	0.9
Art, Humanities & Social Sciences	10.5	9.5	15.6	11.3	14.7	11.7	17.2	16.2
Business, Administration, Economics	26.3	26.5	13.6	23.7	19.3	20.6	9.9	15.4
Education	7.3	2.6	3.1	5.2	6	3.1	4.2	4.3
Engineering, Surveying	3.3	1.3	1.9	2.8	3.2	1.6	1.5	2.2
Health, Community Services	13.8	10.7	7.6	12	10	8.2	5.9	7.8
Law, Legal Studies	0.5	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2
Science	14.1	8.8	8.9	12.4	19	10.5	13.2	15.1
Veterinary Science, Animal Care	0.1	0	0	0.1	0.1	0	0	0
Services, Hospitality, Transportation	5.6	6.1	3.7	5.4	4.4	4.2	2.8	3.6
TAFE Multi-Field Education	14.5	32.1	42	23.1	18.4	36.9	42.2	31.4
All Fields of Study	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: unpublished NC7-ER data from the national VET provider data collection

Details about the percentage of students by gender who identified as being employed, unemployed or not in the labour force aged 45-55 years and aged 55-64 years represented in each area of learning are provided in tables 9 - 11.

Table 9: Percentage of module enrolments in each area of learning by students in vocational education and training, 1997

All Students	Age 45-54				Age 55-64			
	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labour Force	Total	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labour Force	Total
Humanities	7.2	8	11.2	8.1	7.8	9.4	11.9	9.8
Social Studies	1.9	2.7	3.3	2.1	1.3	2.7	1.5	1.5
Education	3.6	1.4	1.8	2.7	3.8	1.9	2.8	2.9
Sciences	2.5	1.5	1.4	2.1	2.7	1.1	0.9	2
Mathematics, Computing	15.7	16.8	15.1	15.9	16.8	16.7	16.2	16.4
Visual/Performing Arts	2.1	2.2	6.9	2.8	2.8	3.1	9.4	5
Engineering, Processing	8.8	5.3	4.9	7.4	10	6.1	5.1	7.5
Health Sciences	10.7	8.4	8	10.2	9.1	6.7	5.1	8.1
Admin, Business, Economics, Law	23.4	22.7	15.5	21.8	19.1	16.8	9.6	15.3
Built Environment	2.5	1.6	1.3	2.1	2.3	1.7	1.4	2.1
Agriculture, Renewable Resources	5.5	2.6	2.8	4.5	8.2	3.7	3.3	5.9
Hospitality, Tourism & Personal Services	4.5	6.4	3.2	5	3.9	5.7	2	4.1
Social, Educational & Employment Skills	11.6	20.3	24.7	15.3	12.2	24.4	30.9	19.5
All Areas of Learning	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: unpublished NCVET data from the national VET provider data collection

Table 10: Percentage of module enrolments in each area of learning by male students in vocational education and training 1997

Male Students	Age 45-54				Age 55-64			
	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labour Force	Total	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labour Force	Total
Humanities	6.1	7.8	9.6	7	6.2	9.3	10.4	8.2
Social Studies	0.7	1.2	1.6	0.9	0.4	1.5	0.9	0.7
Education	3.1	1.4	1.3	2.4	3.5	1.6	1.8	2.6
Sciences	3.3	1.9	1.5	2.8	3.6	1.2	1.1	2.7
Mathematics, Computing	13.5	16.9	16.8	14.6	14.5	17.9	19.6	15.9
Visual/Performing Arts	1	1.7	4.3	1.6	1.5	1.5	5.8	2.6
Engineering, Processing	16	10.1	8.5	13.7	15.7	9.1	7.6	11.9
Health Sciences	7.2	5.8	7.2	7.4	7.1	4.8	4.8	6.8
Admin, Business, Economics, Law	21.7	19.1	15.3	20.3	18.5	16.2	11	15.9
Built Environment	4.7	3.3	2.4	4	3.7	2.7	2.1	3.3
Agriculture, Renewable Resources	8.4	4.4	4.4	7	11.3	4.9	4.4	8.6
Hospitality, Tourism & Personal Services	3.8	6.9	3.8	4.5	3.5	6.3	2.5	4.2
Social, Educational & Employment Skills	10.5	19.6	23.3	13.9	10.6	23.1	28	16.7
All Areas of Learning	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: unpublished NCVET data from the national VET provider data collection

Table 11: Percentage of module enrolments in each area of learning by female students in vocational education and training sector, 1997

Female Students	Age 45-54				Age 55-64			
	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labour Force	Total	Employed	Unemployed	Not in Labour Force	Total
Humanities	8.2	8.2	11.9	9	9.9	9.6	12.7	11.4
Social Studies	2.9	3.7	4	3.1	2.5	4.1	1.9	2.3
Education	3.9	1.4	2	2.9	4.1	2.2	3.3	3.4
Sciences	1.8	1.3	1.3	1.6	1.7	1.1	0.7	1.3
Mathematics, Computing	17.5	16.7	14.3	16.9	19.6	15.2	14.3	17
Visual/Performing Arts	3	2.6	8.1	3.8	4.5	5	11.3	7.4
Engineering, Processing	2.8	2.1	3.3	2.7	2.8	2.7	3.8	3.2
Health Sciences	13.7	10.1	8.5	12.1	11.6	9	5.2	9.1

Admin, Business, Economics, Law	24.8	25.1	15.6	22.9	19.8	17.5	8.8	14.7
Built Environment	0.6	0.5	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.6	1	0.8
Agriculture, Renewable Resources	3.1	1.4	2	2.6	4.2	2.3	2.7	3.1
Hospitality, Tourism & Personal Services	5.1	6	2.9	5.2	4.4	4.9	1.7	4
Social, Educational & Employment Skills	12.6	20.7	25.3	16.5	14.2	25.8	32.5	22.4
All Areas of Learning	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: unpublished NCVET data from the national VET provider data collection

About a quarter of module enrolments for men and women aged 45-54 years who identified themselves as being not in the labour force were studying in the 'social, educational and employment skills' area of learning. About 30 per cent of vocational students aged over 55 years who identified themselves as being not in the labour force were studying in this area of learning.

For both men and women aged over 45 the predominant areas of learning were 'mathematics, computing' and 'administration, business, economics, law'. The area of learning, 'Engineering, processing' was also a popular area of learning for men in this age group.

2. TAFE graduate outcomes of people aged 45 years and over

Tables 12 to 16 report the results of the 1998 graduate destination survey. The results of the TAFE graduate destination surveys provide information on the income sources of students during their study and the employment and occupation profiles of graduates in the year after the completion of their course. The information provided by the surveys is only collected from TAFE graduates and therefore may not be indicative of all VET students. Many people in the VET system enrol to gain specific skills that they can obtain from a set of modules and never aim to complete a qualification.

Details of forms of income support received by 1997 TAFE graduates are provided in table 12. The primary sources of income support for their TAFE study for 1997 TAFE graduates aged 45-64 years was paid work, government pensions and benefits.

Table 12 Source of income during course for 1997 TAFE graduates

	Age groups				
	15 - 19 years	20 - 24 years	25 - 44 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years
Austudy	28.8	23.6	20.5	13	9.5
Abstudy	0.7	0.4	1.1	0.9	2.6
Government pensions or benefits	6.1	8.1	18	18.4	30.2
Apprenticeship	13.5	28.7	2.5	0.3	*
Traineeship	5.5	3.5	1.2	0.6	0.6
Scholarship or Cadetship	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.1	*
Paid work	34.1	38.9	50.6	50.8	37.9
Own business	0.4	0.7	5.1	8.8	10.6
Parents or spouse/partner	25	12	16	15.4	9.1
Other	¹ 4.1	2.6	4.5	6.6	11.8

*Cells based on less than 5 respondents are suppressed.

Source: Unpublished data from the 1998 TAFE Graduate Destination Survey

The distribution of qualifications received by 1998 TAFE graduate survey respondents is shown in table 13. The distribution of qualifications of graduates aged 45-54 years is similar to the distribution of qualifications for graduates aged 25-44 years, with few graduates having completed a trade certificate. The predominant qualifications completed by graduates aged 45-54 years were AQF Certificates III and IV, and Certificate - not elsewhere classified. For 1997 graduates aged over 55 years the predominant qualifications gained were Certificate - not elsewhere classified and AQF Certificate II.

Table 13: Distribution of qualifications, received by 1997 TAFE graduates

	Age groups				
	15-19 years	20-24 years	25-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years *
Diploma	0.1	1.2	0.5	0.4	
Associate Diploma	0.8	10.9	8.2	5.9	4.5
Advanced Certificate - Post Trade	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.5
Advanced Certificate - Other	3.2	5	8	8.2	9.4
Certificate - Trade	10.8	24.3	3.8	1.6	2.4
Certificate - Not elsewhere classified	17.7	9.6	17.8	19.3	22.5
AQ1F Certificate 1	14.5	2.6	3.2	3.8	6.2
AQ1F Certificate 11	20.7	7.9	14.5	14.5	17.7
AW Certificate III	20.8	16.2	18.6	18.8	13.8
AW Certificate W	7	7.3	14.4	18.2	15.4
AW Diploma	4	11.3	7.7	6.9	5.8
AW Advanced Diploma	0.5	3.2	2.8	2	1.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100

*Cells based on less than 5 respondents are suppressed

Source: Unpublished data from the 1998 TAFE Graduate Destination Survey

The occupation of graduates in 1998, in the first year of employment after completion of TAFE studies in 1997 differs according to age group. A high proportion of workers aged over 45 years are employed in the occupations classified as 'intermediate clerical, sales and service workers', 'associate professionals' and 'professionals' compared with younger graduates.

Table 14: Occupation of 1997 TAFE graduates

	Age groups				
	15-19 years	20 - 24 years	25 - 44 years	45 - 54 years	55 - 64 years
Managers and Administrators	0.6	1.3	5.3	7.2	8.2
Professionals	1.2	4.8	14.5	21.1	29.2
Associate Professionals	3.9	9.8	17.9	18.3	16.5
Tradespersons and Related Workers	37.3	38.7	14.5	9.2	8.6
Advanced Clerical and Service Workers	3.2	3.3	5.6	5.7	5.2
Intermediate Clerical, Sales and Service Workers	22.2	24.1	26.6	25.5	20.6
Intermediate Production and Transport Workers	3.1	3	4.4	3.6	2.7
Elementary Clerical, Sales and Service Workers	19.4	9.6	5.1	4.6	3.8
Labourers and Related Workers	9	5.4	6.2	4.9	5.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Unpublished data from the 1998 TAFE Graduate Destination Survey

Table 15: Labour force status and employment characteristics of 1997 TAFE graduates

	Labour force status at 29 May 1998 (B)				
	Employed		Looking for work		Not in labour force
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	
15 - 19 years	48.7	23.4	11.1	5	11.8
20 - 24 years	60.4	17.7	8.9	3.4	9.5
25 - 44 years	48.3	20.7	10.2	5.2	15.6
45 - 54 years	44.1	23.9	11	5.6	15.3
55 - 64 years	31.3	20.9	11.1	7	29.6

	Already had a job	Less than 1 month	1-3 months	More than 3 months	Total
15 - 19 years	52.2	19.5	16.5	11.8	100
20 - 24 years	70.3	11.2	9.6	8.8	100
25 - 44 years	74.4	8.8	8.2	8.6	100
45 - 54 years	81.1	6.9	5.3	6.7	100
55 - 64 years	82.9	4.9	6.1	6.1	100

Source: Unpublished data from the 1998 TAFE Graduate Destination Survey

Details about the labour force status and employment characteristics at 29 May 1998 of an 1997 TAFE graduates who responded to the survey are presented in table 16. Comparable information is presented in table 17 for those students who identified themselves as being unemployed before they commenced their TAFE course,

Notably, 30 per cent of TAFE graduates who responded to the survey aged over 55 years were not in the labour force in the year after the completion of their course. About 17 per cent of graduates aged 45 and over were looking for either full-time or part-time work in May following the completion of their course. Over 80 per cent of employed graduates aged 45-64 years already had a job prior to the completion of their course.

Of those graduates who were unemployed prior to commencing their studies, about 40 per cent of graduates aged over 45 were looking for full work in May after completing their course. A further 15 per cent of graduates aged 45-54 years and 18 per cent of graduates aged 55-64 years were looking for part-time work. At this time about 12 per cent of graduates aged 45-54 years were employed full time and another 18 per cent were employed part time. For graduates aged 55-64 years 8 per cent were employed full-time and 15 per cent were employed part time. About 27 per cent of employed graduates aged 45-54 years and 35 per cent of employed graduates aged 55-64 years already had a job before completing their studies.

Table 16: Labour force status and employment characteristics of 1997 TAFE graduates - Graduates unemployed before course and aged 25-64

	Labour force status at 29 May 1998 (B)					Total
	Employed		Looking for work		Not in labour force	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time		
25 - 44 years	17.8	17.4	33.2	13.5	18.1	100
45 - 54 years	11.5	17.6	39	14.6	17.4	100
55 - 64 years	7.8	14.9	40.1	18.2	19	100
	Time to find job					
	Already had a job	Less than 1 month	1-3 months	More than 3 months	Total	
25 - 44 years	28.9	19.7	22.7	28.7	100	
45 - 54 years	27.4	17.6	21.6	33.4	100	
55 - 64 years	34.9	11.1	19	34.9	100	

Source: Unpublished data from the 1998 TAFE Graduate Destination Survey