

Sent: Thursday, 12 September 2002 10:40 AM
Subject: VET programs in schools

We thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the school to work program and vocational education and training in schools.

PPTC Skills is a not-for-profit Group Training Company which designs and delivers industry specific vocational training to the painting and plumbing industries in Western Australia. We provide pre-vocational, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, license and registration courses and fully accredited post trade training programs. We employ 150 apprentices completing painting and plumbing apprenticeships. As our major stakeholders, the Master Painters and Master Plumbers and Gasfitters Associations, share the general view that VET in schools is not achieving effective and efficient outcomes.

Schools currently run VET programs that provide students the opportunity to attain a Certificate I or Certificate II qualification. We strongly support the development of an effective and equitable vocational stream in schools, alongside the normal academic pathways, to provide maximum choice for students. We acknowledge the fact that school based learning provides students with an excellent opportunity to attain skills that place them in a position to gain employment; however, we are concerned that the current system actually disadvantages them in the workplace.

Our major concerns include:

- * The delivery of courses by teachers who are not trade trained and qualified;
- * Training packages not being adequately translated and ineffective quality assurance rigors as there is not workplace basis;
- * Schools do not always meet and/or replicate workplace occupational health and safety requirements; and
- * The application of competencies in artificial environments and the lack of opportunity to demonstrate individual and collective competencies and skills in the workplace.

In order to be effective, school programs need to have more focus on practical demonstration of skills in the workplace. Students cannot gain the appropriate level of skills if they do not have access to both trainers with practical, current industry experience and the full range of training materials, resources and packages.

It is also of concern that students are deemed competent when they have not had an opportunity to apply the skills they have learnt in real situations. Schools need to set up effective relationships with industry based organisations, so that they are in a position to provide relevant hands on experience and the opportunity to consistently apply skills in the workplace over a period of time. Without those applications, students will not attain a true level of competence in individual skills or their collective application. Although students achieve individual competencies as they progress, there is enormous benefit from the opportunity to demonstrate their capacity

and ability to combine these individual competencies in a work environment, which should be fundamental to achieving those competencies.

In addition, we believe the quality of the programs offered is affected by competition the Department of Training and the Department of Education over who is responsible for VET in schools. A decision needs to be made as to who is responsible for and who funds the programs available.

The poor quality outcomes achieved actively disadvantage students. Students misguidedly believe that participating in a school based VET program will enhance their employment options. Unfortunately, they often find the qualification works against them in the workplace, as their skills are not of a sufficient standard to provide them with access to positions in industry. This is further compounded by the fact that the current incentive structure renders potential employers ineligible for payments; therefore, discouraging employers from providing them with employment opportunities.

In summary we believe that, in order to be effective, schools need to strengthen their links with industry in order to provide students with opportunities to practically apply their skills. In our view, schools need to ensure that they have adequate resources available and trainers with current relevant industry based experience.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide our feedback.

Yours sincerely
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