

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

A submission by the Department of Education, Western Australia

TERM OF REFERENCE

The range, structure, resourcing and delivery of vocational education programs in schools, including teacher training and the impact of vocational education on other programs.

Vocational Education and Training in Schools commenced in 1997 and operates under the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) *Principles and Guidelines for Improving Outcomes for Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools*. These *Principles and Guidelines* cover conditions of program delivery and the distribution of the ANTA current allocation of \$20 million per annum for Vocational Education and Training in Schools across Australia.

The *Principles and Guidelines* state that:

“Funding should build on previous efforts to achieve sustainability in the delivery of VET in Schools programs and promote the further integration of VET in Schools programs into the resourcing, operations and culture of the system and schools.” (Clause 8)

Since its inception, funding in Western Australian government schools has been built on a sustainable model with resources from general education being diverted into Vocational Education and Training in Schools. It was apparent very early however that VET in Schools costs more than general education and that long term sustainability depends upon additional funds being found for VET in Schools delivery.

In order to meet the shortfall between the cost of VET and the cost of general education, in addition to the ANTA funding which is \$1.4 million per annum for government schools, the State government provides almost \$1.2 million per annum for Vocational Education and Training in Schools programs.

This additional funding recognises that Vocational Education and Training in Schools costs approximately 25% more than the provision of general education. In 1999 the Department of Education in this State undertook a detailed cost analysis of VET delivery. The findings corresponded with similar investigations that were undertaken in South Australia and Victoria. The Commonwealth is currently undertaking research to validate the findings and test their applicability to other States and Territories.

There are several resourcing issues that have emerged as VET in Schools has grown from the small student numbers (in this State from 1 991 students or 8.3% of the cohort in 1997 to 15 230 or 42% of the cohort in 2002) to become part of mainstream education. During the 1997 to 2001 period, there were 21 000 student VET placements and this is expected to double in the next quadrennium so that over 70% of all senior students will be undertaking VET studies. The resulting resourcing issues are addressed below.

- The present allocative mechanism distributes the \$20 million to States and Territories based on an agreed standard formula. Within the States and Territories, the distribution within the school sectors is based on the Years 11 and 12 school population, not on the number of students doing VET in Schools. In Western Australia, 85.4% of all VET students attend government schools but under the present formula receives only 66% of the State's \$2.1 million ANTA allocation. This is a short fall of \$374 000 per annum in the government school share of the ANTA funds if they were distributed on the basis of student participation in VET programs. ANTA's justification for not shifting to a participation based distribution within the States has been that the States are not Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) compliant and therefore there are definitional inconsistencies from one State to another. As the problem is one of distribution within a State rather than across States these inconsistencies are irrelevant. The present ANTA agreement expires at the end of 2004 but the allocative mechanism for distribution to school sectors within the States should be adjusted immediately in order to gain a more equitable distribution of funds.

Proposed recommendation

That the allocative mechanism for ANTA distribution of funds within the States and Territories should be based on student Vocational Education and Training in Schools participation not Years 11 and 12 student enrolment.

- The \$20 million of ANTA funds that has been quarantined for the delivery of Vocational Education and Training in Schools will not be adequate to meet the additional cost of VET delivery, even taking into account the additional resources that are being injected by government school sectors. At present, training across Australia is funded from both State and Commonwealth budgets. When VET in Schools meets AVETMIS Standards, as is expected during 2003, then the school sectors should be entitled to access ANTA funding on an equal footing with any other training provider, obviating the need for quarantined funding. Access to ANTA funds should be for the additional costs on Vocational Education and Training in Schools delivery, the bulk being funded from school sectors' general education budgets.

Proposed recommendation

That as providers of training, school sectors have direct access to ANTA funding based on the number of annual student contact hours that are being delivered.

TERM OF REFERENCE

The differences between school-based and other vocational education programs and the resulting qualifications, and the pattern of industry acceptance of school-based programs.

In Western Australia there are three forms of delivery of Vocational Education and Training in Schools. Schools can deliver themselves as a registered training provider, the service can be fully purchased from a Registered Training Organisation, usually a TAFE, or the school can enter into an auspicing arrangement whereby the school delivers the training and quality assurance is purchased from an external registered training organisation. Each form of delivery has to comply to the requirements of the Australian Quality Training Framework so through registration and audit, meet the same standards.

One of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) standards demands that trainers have a Certificate IV Workplace Assessor qualification or its equivalent to deliver VET. The Department of Education now has over 3 000 teachers with this qualification and together with their teaching qualifications and recent industry experience where required, places them in a better position to deliver training than many TAFE lecturers.

The second prerequisite of the AQTF standards is for equipment to be of industry standard before registration can occur. There is an agreement between the Department of Education and the Department of Training that schools will not duplicate training resources and if they are readily available on other sites, they will be used. No school can deliver either as a registered provider or in an auspicing arrangement unless the AQTF standards in regard to plant are met. This is checked as part of registration and the audit process.

In spite of the above safeguards for the necessary standards to be met, there is a minority of industry and training groups in Western Australia that promote the view that Vocational Education and Training in Schools is an inferior form of training delivery than that delivered by other providers. This minority group comprises largely of other training providers and industry bodies that have direct involvement in training, hence could be seen to have a conflict of interest when propagating this viewpoint. Their position is further undermined because most of the quality assurance for Vocational Education and Training in Schools is undertaken by staff who also provide the quality assurance in TAFEs. This is because auspicing arrangements and fully purchased services comprise 65% of all Vocational Education and Training in Schools delivery.

In the *AQTF and VET in Schools: A report to the National Training Quality Council* (VET in Schools subgroup of the Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities, February 2002) the project “did not find any substantive evidence to support these (industry) concerns, at this stage.”

In contrast to the occasional anecdotal evidence provided by some industry groups and training providers, there is quantitative evidence in this State to demonstrate that Vocational Education and Training in Schools is achieving successful outcomes for students. One rural region in Western Australia has been collecting student destination data since 1999. The region has a 15 to 19-year-old youth unemployment rate of over 18%. The following chart shows the destinations of Vocational Education and Training in Schools students in that region over the three year period.

	2001	2001	2000	2000	1999	1999
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Full Time Employment	50	37	29	33	35	37
Apprenticeships/ Traineeships	38	29	30	34	28	30
Part Time Work	7	5	6	7	7	7
Full time Study	23	18	16	18	16	17
Part Time Study	0	0	1	1	2	2
Unemployed	2	2	0	0	2	2
Other	2	2	5	6	4	4
Unknown	9	7				
TOTALS	131	100	87	100	94	100

Although other regions have not been collecting data of this type for as long, the pattern that is emerging is similar. Industry and training institutions are welcoming the graduates from Vocational Education and Training in Schools programs and these students are not the group who are becoming unemployment statistics.

The student satisfaction data that are collected with the destination data indicate that students value most the supportive environment that schools provide. They are young adults, who in many cases do not have the skills to embark on independent learning.

The destination survey in this rural region also revealed that there are benefits for the region. 78% of the VET students took up work or further study in the regions while 16% went to the capital city and 6% had other destinations. This is an important outcome for a rural region faced with population decline.

It is therefore apparent that Vocational Education and Training in Schools is a quality program delivering tangible outcomes for young people and that any view that it is an inferior product to other training is a perception held by some groups rather than a reality. It is therefore important to address this perception rather than make major revisions to the program.

If the perceptions are to be addressed, a communications and public relations strategy will be needed. Previous attempts to provide blanket national media coverage on related topics have proven to be of little value with analyses revealing little consequent public awareness. As the group who has concerns about VET in Schools programs is small and identifiable, the communication strategy should be structured around locally targeted groups using hard evidence of the local successes.

A communications strategy based on local training outcomes would be enhanced if it were supported by a substantial and independent study into the impact of VET in Schools. Such a study would focus on the immediate outcomes of student transition to work or further education or training and also include a longitudinal approach so that the longer term effectiveness of student programs can be determined.

Proposed recommendations

That the success of Vocational Education and Training in Schools programs with its distinctive characteristics most suited to the student age group, is acknowledged.

That support is given to local communities to develop student tracking data for the 15 to 19-year-old age group and to disseminate the results of the findings.

That a national independent study is commissioned to examine the impact of VET in Schools programs on students' capacity to perform effectively in work or further training.

TERM OF REFERENCE

The accessibility and effectiveness of vocational education for Indigenous students.

Take-up of Vocational Education and Training in Schools by Indigenous students has exceeded that of the full cohort of students. In 2001, of the 974 indigenous students there were 579 or just under 60% doing VET programs. The participation rate compares with the 42.5% of the general cohort. 110 of these students were in Years 9 and 10. These students were in programs that met the same standards as the more senior students.

School-based Traineeships (or School-based New Apprenticeships) for Indigenous students were piloted in 2000 and 2001. They differ from other School-based Traineeships because of the mentoring support that is provided to the students and because their wages are fully funded. The 100% wage subsidy makes Aboriginal School-based Traineeships high cost programs, with funding currently being sourced from six organisations. The pilot indicated that the additional costs were warranted in that the success rates are considerably higher than the national average for all trainees. In 2001, 29 Aboriginal students commenced Aboriginal School-based Traineeships with two cancellations, one completion and 26 still active.

The success of the pilot has led to broader implementation in 2002. During 2002, 164 Indigenous students have commenced Aboriginal School-based Traineeships and 89.3% of these students remain in the program.

Historically, Aboriginal student retention in this State has been unacceptably low. The success and larger scale implementation of Aboriginal School-based Traineeships that is now occurring will improve retention and in turn lead to better student transition from school. Although a high cost program, in this context it can be seen as an efficient and effective program that may have relevance to the rest of Australia.

Proposed recommendations

That the Commonwealth continues to provide its contribution to the costs of conducting Aboriginal School-based Traineeships.

That the Aboriginal School-based Traineeships that operate in Western Australia is considered as a model for adoption by other States and Territories.