

# CHAPTER 3: TAFE'S SPECIAL ROLES

## Introduction

3.1 Institutes of TAFE play special roles which other providers of further education generally do not fulfill. TAFE's primary role is the delivery of vocational education and training but it strives to meet this role while monitoring social equity objectives. It is this unique aspect of TAFE that is its defining quality.

3.2 This chapter examines TAFE's role in regional Australia, how it fulfils its community service obligations and its contribution to trade training.

## TAFE in regional Australia

*A successful TAFE can be a vital part of regional life, regional community, and certainly regional industry...In regional Australia our institutes are looked on with great pride and ownership.*<sup>1</sup> [Mr Ralph Clarke, Council President, Wodonga Institute of TAFE]

3.3 The existence of a vibrant TAFE sector in regional Australia is to be valued by all Australians. TAFE provides a range of services in rural communities which simply would not be readily available were commercial considerations to be the main priority. It is highly unlikely that private providers would or could offer at an affordable price the range and quality of programs in regional areas currently available through TAFE.

3.4 TAFE plays an important role in the education, training, and general life of regional communities. In these areas, a TAFE institute is more than just an educational institution. It provides a focal point for current technologies, philosophies and skills<sup>2</sup> and can contribute significantly to a region's social and economic growth.

## ***Contributing to regional growth***

3.5 TAFE contributes to regional growth and stability by supporting social infrastructure, providing tertiary programs and by flexibly delivering VET programs. Institutes which attract students from beyond their immediate catchment area support their region's economic prosperity by bringing extra people into the area who otherwise may have shifted to larger population

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1 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 307-8.

2 South West TAFE, *Submission No. 29*, p. 2.

centres. TAFE institutes provide employment opportunities and in some instances the local TAFE college is one of the largest employers in the region.<sup>3</sup>

3.6 TAFE institutes also help to provide a competitive skills base from which local companies can select employees. The Committee is well aware that despite high unemployment many small regional centres have a shortage of skilled workers, particularly in the trades.<sup>4</sup> It is one reason why industry is reluctant to locate in rural centres.<sup>5</sup> However, the presence of a TAFE institute in a region can make investing in the area more attractive due to the availability of skilled workers and the ability to access further training.

3.7 TAFE's responsiveness to its local community is of critical importance to the regions. For example, Wodonga Institute of TAFE's strategic planning model links its operation with regional economic development goals and directions. Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE has developed specific niche training for the mining, telecommunications and transport industries in the area to help support regional economic development. Such interconnection between TAFE and industry helps to ensure that both the institutes and the regions they serve grow and remain viable.

### **Supporting social infrastructure**

3.8 Regional TAFE institutes help support their local social infrastructure by contributing to areas such as community services, childcare and the arts.<sup>6</sup> This support is particularly important given the higher rates of unemployment in non-metropolitan Australia than in metropolitan centres.

3.9 In its previous report, *Youth employment: A working solution*, the Committee examined the issue of diminished employment opportunities in regional areas and the resulting drift of young people from regional to larger metropolitan areas to pursue employment, education and training opportunities.<sup>7</sup> The evidence suggests that the existence of a post-secondary institution in a regional area can reduce this movement. For example in the Albury-Wodonga region (which is well serviced by the presence of four post-secondary campuses) the Wodonga Institute of TAFE asserts that, owing to the presence of a number of tertiary institutions, the area still has a strong representation of all age groups, and particularly 15-34 year olds.<sup>8</sup> In South-West Victoria there is significant migration of young people to major cities,

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3 Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE, *Submission No. 13*, p. 1.

4 *Youth employment: A working solution*, pp. 7-9.

5 Central West Area Consultative Committee, *Submission No. 27*, p. 3.

6 Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE, *Submission No. 13*, p. 1.

7 *Youth employment: A working solution*, pp. 24-25.

8 Wodonga Institute of TAFE, *Submission No. 40*, p. 3.

except in Warrnambool where there is a TAFE institute and a university campus.<sup>9</sup>

### **Flexible delivery of VET**

3.10 In regional Australia institutes of TAFE are expected by their local communities to provide a range of awards and subjects which would otherwise be unavailable in the area. TAFE institutes also offer VET programs by flexible delivery strategies, in order to overcome the spread of the population across rural Australia and the consequent difficulty many students have in attending classes and workshops. Examples of flexibility include off-campus study options, such as courses delivered by correspondence and via the Internet, and modules which allow students to work within their own timeframe.<sup>10</sup> Whilst flexible modes of delivery are not exclusive to regional institutes of TAFE, the Committee considers that they are particularly important in enabling and encouraging rural populations to participate in further education. Governments at the State and Federal levels should encourage greater use of emerging technologies to increase the flexibility of delivery modes in regional areas.

3.11 The higher costs of course delivery and the requirement to offer a wide range of courses through different media often means that regional TAFE institutes are engaged in financially unprofitable activities. The opportunity for them to specialise in particular areas of VET (as occurs in metropolitan areas) is limited.<sup>11</sup>

### **Tertiary delivery in rural areas**

3.12 In addition to providing vocational education and training to regional communities, some regional institutes of TAFE offer the only point of access to university study in the area. For example, in Albany a TAFE institute is being contracted by Edith Cowan University to teach some of its courses in visual arts.<sup>12</sup> This is an excellent way to broaden access to higher education while minimising cost, at least in the early years of study, to both students and government.

3.13 Without such arrangements many students would either leave the region to attend university or simply choose not to pursue a university education at all. Equity therefore provides an additional reason for tertiary education delivery by TAFE in rural areas. There is much greater scope for using this type of arrangement as a cost effective alternative to universities

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9 Mr Thomas Lindsey, Convenor, Greater Green Triangle Association Post-secondary Education Consortium, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 343.

10 Dullard, Jane, No boundaries to flexible study in East Gippsland, *The Age*, 1 May 1998, p. B9.

11 Wodonga Institute of TAFE, *Submission No. 40*, p. 2.

12 Mr Tom Walmsey, Director Academic Services, Edith Cowan University, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 57.

establishing their own campuses in a region. However, the important task of providing university units must not overshadow TAFE's other, more traditional roles in regional centres.

### ***The importance of TAFE to regional Australia***

3.14 It is of the utmost importance that TAFE continues to provide a wide range of awards and subjects, including tertiary units, which aid regional development because many are unlikely to be offered by other providers, particularly outside major regional centres.

*Equity ...is not an issue for the private provider.*<sup>13</sup>  
[Representative of private providers at the 1997 NCVET conference]

*Given the need to provide training on a for-profit basis, it is unlikely that commercial providers will actively pursue access and equity goals, especially when their pursuit constitutes a cost to their operation and their need to function in a competitive manner.*<sup>14</sup> [Barnett and Wilson]

3.15 Regional TAFE institutes must be able to compete with public and private metropolitan colleges for local clientele if they are to continue to deliver the range of benefits to rural communities that are outlined above. It is the Committee's view that decisions on the allocation of funding to regional TAFE institutes must take account of the higher cost of delivery in regional and remote areas.

## **TAFE's community service obligations**

### ***Promoting social equity***

3.16 TAFE fulfils an important social responsibility by broadening access to education and training opportunities for the socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged. TAFE's accessibility as a geographically dispersed provider and an open sector is crucial. TAFE's separate identity is fundamental to its accessibility and approachability. If its identity were to become too confused with university many who now access TAFE's second chance opportunities might be intimidated and discouraged from attending.

*The widespread TAFE infrastructure and experienced staff with student support services provide a ready facility for*

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13 Quoted in *Submission No. 73*, p. 2.

14 Quoted in *Submission No. 96*, p. 5.

*delivering education options to disadvantaged groups.*<sup>15</sup>  
[The Australian Academy of Humanities]

3.17 There are a number of barriers to participation in further education which TAFE, as a relatively low cost, highly accessible education and training provider, helps to overcome. These include:

- location;
- lack of employment status;
- limited educational experience;
- lack of income support;
- homelessness;
- limited access to support such as childcare;
- having a disability; and
- coming from a non-English-speaking background.

3.18 TAFE students tend to come from lower socio-economic groups than those in higher education. The majority of TAFE students are mature-aged<sup>16</sup> and many have no previous certificate or recognised training or skills.<sup>17</sup>

3.19 The Committee considers it vitally important that institutes of TAFE continue to focus on their whole of community approach and provide wide-ranging access to education and training for all groups.

### **'Second chance' education**

3.20 TAFE plays a valuable role in the provision of opportunities for people who did not complete their secondary education and who may not otherwise pursue further education. At least twenty-seven per cent of VET students enrolled in 1996 had not completed year 12.<sup>18</sup> Clearly the absence of prerequisites for entry to most TAFE courses is important to TAFE fulfilling its obligations to 'second chance' education.

3.21 There are clear advantages to TAFE study for such people, including improved job opportunities and chances to participate in further study. In 1996 57.1 per cent of TAFE graduates with no previous post-school qualifications reported having benefited in some way from their TAFE study.<sup>19</sup> Of the 1996 TAFE graduates who reported their occupation prior to their course as

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15 *Submission No. 78*, p. 6.

16 *Submission No. 66*, p. 4.

17 ANTA, *Exhibit No. 29*, p. 33.

18 A further fifty per cent of VET students did not identify their highest school qualification level attained. NCVER, *Exhibit No. 24*, p. 20.

19 NCVER, *Exhibit No. 25*, p. 28.

'labourer', less than half (44.5 per cent) recorded 'labourer' as their occupation following graduation.<sup>20</sup>

### **Senior secondary education for school aged students**

3.22 To receive the Youth Allowance, young people under 18 years of age without Year 12 or equivalent are required to be in full-time education or training, unless they are specifically exempt from this requirement.<sup>21</sup> Declining school retention rates reflect in part that secondary schools are not catering for the needs of many young people. The Committee strongly asserts that learning opportunities for young people need to be as varied as possible. TAFE is one possible additional option which will meet the needs of some young, and not so young, people.

3.23 It is the Committee's understanding that in Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland, TAFE does not offer, or is not permitted to provide, a Senior Secondary Qualification or its equivalent to school age young people.

*We run an adult VCE program that [young] students cannot do...because the rules from the board of studies here are set up such that it is not possible. Nobody can enrol. But there are a number of kids for whom, I think, a TAFE college type of environment might suit a lot better. Again, in user choice terms, you would think that option might be open.*<sup>22</sup>

[Mr Barrie Baker, Director, South West Institute of TAFE]

There is almost certainly a latent demand for these courses and perhaps variants which include some vocational training together with senior secondary general education.

3.24 By contrast, NSW does in some circumstances permit young people to enrol in TAFE secondary programs and the significance of this opportunity to those students was passionately expressed to the Committee by a NSW TAFE teacher:

*I am particularly concerned that we maintain the courses as they stand for our students. Many of our students are disadvantaged, and I feel that they deserve a second chance. Many of the students have either been ejected from school situations or have not fitted in to school situations, or else they are mature age students...[M]ost of them...are working to support themselves in part-time employment, and therefore a TAFE situation suits them ideally...Now the bottom line for all employment opportunities is the Higher*

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20 *ibid*, p. 16.

21 Joint Media Release, *Common Youth Allowance*, Senator Jocelyn Newman and Senator Amanda Vanstone, 17 June 1997, Attachment: Youth Allowance the Facts, p. 4.

22 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 350.

*School Certificate. If we lock out these disadvantaged students from their last chance at turning their lives around, I feel that the whole community will suffer as a result.*<sup>23</sup>

[Ms Susan Flowers]

3.25 In New South Wales 10,711 students were enrolled in HSC or Tertiary Preparation courses at an institute of TAFE in 1996. Of these, 3,713 were aged 15-18.<sup>24</sup> TAFE provides a forum in which they can study without having to return to a school environment which may be inappropriate for them.

*TAFE, because it has essentially an adult-oriented approach to teaching, is a much more supportive environment for those students...[who] have had some difficulty and have been labelled...as a problem, or somebody who is not going to do particularly well...The role that TAFE plays in providing second chance education and helping young adults leap the barrier from lack of success into a new start is critical.*<sup>25</sup> [Associate Professor Bruce King, Director, Flexible Learning Centre, University of South Australia]

3.26 Where young people are required to be engaged in education or training to receive income support the Committee considers it to be poor policy to prevent a relatively small number of young people from undertaking a senior secondary qualification through TAFE. The additional cost of providing the TAFE senior secondary option should not be excessive, especially if it is balanced against the long term cost of neglecting this group altogether.

3.27 It should be recognised that the secondary school format does not suit every individual wishing to undertake their Secondary School Certificate and that other options should be available to them to complete this qualification. TAFE in most states and territories could be available almost immediately as an additional education option for school age young people.

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23 *ibid*, p. 490

24 NSW Department of Education and Training, *Submission No. 98.1*, p. 1.

25 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 136. Associate Professor King was Director of the Southern Sydney Institute of TAFE in NSW in 1995/96.

**3.28 Recommendation 3.1**

**The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training pursue, with the relevant State and Territory Ministers, the universal provision of secondary education through TAFE. This should be an option available to school age young people whose needs are not met in a traditional secondary school learning environment.**

**Employment skills**

3.29 Many unemployed people look to TAFE to provide them with the skills that will help them gain employment. This takes the form of both technically specific courses focusing on a particular industry or vocation and courses teaching job-seeking skills, such as interview techniques and resumé preparation.

3.30 The Central West Area Consultative Committee suggested to the Committee that there is greater scope for institutes of TAFE to focus more specifically on the provision of skills and work ethic development for the unemployed. TAFE institutes are well equipped to offer such services because of their community focus and the wide range of services they provide.<sup>26</sup> The Committee would like to see a more concerted effort by TAFE institutes to provide employment skills training, along with governmental encouragement of such training through the provision of incentives for both the institutes and the unemployed to participate.

3.31 TAFE also provides skills for people who are seeking promotion or wish to change occupation. For such people, TAFE provides an important means of improving their life options at a lower financial cost than university study. Also, TAFE's flexible study options, and particularly the provision of part-time study, are well suited to students who are already working. Several witnesses mentioned to the Committee that the development of TAFE curricula tends to take into account primarily the needs and demands of industry. By focusing on industry, this arrangement neglects the needs (in terms of course delivery methods) of those students who undertake TAFE studies on their own initiative, particularly for a change or improvement in career.<sup>27</sup> The Committee considers that action must be taken to rectify this situation, particularly if lifelong education is to be encouraged.

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26 Central West Area Consultative Committee, *Submission No. 27*, p. 2.

27 See, for example, Ms Virginia Battye, Director, Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 115.



## **Education for people with disabilities**

3.32 Based on a survey of 1997 TAFE graduates in which 6.1 per cent identified themselves as having a disability,<sup>28</sup> it is estimated that about 75,000 TAFE students have a disability. This places extra pressure on TAFE to provide courses suited to the special needs of this group.

3.33 TAFE has the capacity to deliver a wide range of programs to a diverse range of clients. Some TAFE institutes run specific programs for people with disabilities, such as employment education, work placement, literacy and numeracy programs. An example is the Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE's programs offered to meet the educational needs of students with physical and intellectual impairment. These are particularly important because the institute's campuses are located adjacent to a mental health centre and the Royal Institute for the Blind.<sup>29</sup>

3.34 People with disabilities also have an important contribution to make to society and they should have opportunities to access education and training that will enable them to participate fully in society. Providing this type of training is more costly and can have a significant impact upon the productivity and efficiency of TAFE.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, it must be funded to continue. This is a responsibility of government.

## ***Adult and community education***

3.35 The Committee endorses the OECD's proposition that all people should be actively encouraged to continue learning throughout their lives.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, it is essential to the long term prosperity and social development of Australia that its citizens are well educated and committed to lifelong learning. As many people as possible should have access to the benefits that ongoing training provides, such as improved job opportunities, higher income and self fulfilment. One avenue through which lifelong learning can be pursued is Adult and Community Education (ACE). The ACE sector provides locally accessible, community-based educational opportunities for adults, especially those who may have difficulty participating in more formal education programs.

3.36 In most states, TAFE is a provider of ACE, but there are also a number of private providers offering similar programs. ACE programs are provided by TAFE institutes, universities, schools, neighbourhood centres, community education centres, adult education providers and Skillshare centres. Approximately 15 per cent of all registered training providers in Australia are ACE providers which deliver 1.5-2 per cent of all VET courses.<sup>32</sup>

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28 NCVER, *Exhibit No. 25*, p. 49.

29 Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE, *Submission No. 83*, p. 3.

30 *ibid.*

31 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Lifelong learning for all*, Meeting of the education committee at ministerial level, 16-17 January 1996.

32 Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, *Submission No. 92*, p. 1.

In New South Wales the entire ‘further education’ component of TAFE has been transferred to the ACE sector which, under market contestability, is now becoming a competitor to TAFE in the delivery of some VET programs.<sup>33</sup>

3.37 Most statistics on ACE provision do not differentiate between ACE programs offered by TAFE institutes and ACE offered by other providers. Therefore, only broad generalisations can be made about TAFE’s role in the ACE market.

3.38 Usually ACE courses are undertaken for work or leisure-related purposes and are shorter in duration than many other TAFE programs. Approximately 20 per cent of all ACE provision is general education and training, such as literacy, basic education and English as a second language (ESL) training.<sup>34</sup> Where public funding is accessible to ACE providers, they deliver VET programs in accordance with Government specifications. Sometimes ACE providers can deliver recognised VET programs in rural areas where other VET provision is limited or non-existent.

3.39 ACE represents an excellent opportunity for students to get a ‘taste’ of what is on offer before committing to a course that may be more expensive and demanding (in terms of both money and time). It can provide a valuable stepping stone to other learning.

*[The University of Newcastle has] some students... who came to the campus in adult and continuing education for short courses — two- or three-day type things — and they suddenly discovered that they were better educated than they believed they were because they had not had, for a variety of reasons, what is now regarded as an appropriate secondary education. So they enrolled in the TAFE programs, they completed the TAFE programs, and they have now graduated with their degree.<sup>35</sup> [Professor Leslie Eastcott, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Director, Central Coast Campus, University of NSW]*

3.40 ACE is often used to update work skills. About 70 per cent of participants in adult education specify work-related motives for undertaking their course.<sup>36</sup> In this area ACE primarily provides non-industry specific occupational training.

3.41 The Committee is concerned that the valuable general education and community service roles which ACE has the potential to fulfil are being overshadowed by the emphasis on vocational education. This is primarily

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33 Mr Robert Puffett, Assistant Director-General, Technical and Further Education, NSW TAFE Commission and Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 716.

34 Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, *Submission No. 92*, p. 2.

35 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 486.

36 Dr Alastair Crombie, Executive Director, Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 644.

because government funding is often only available for courses which are seen as explicitly vocational in nature.

### ***Funding for community service obligations***

3.42 Private providers are unlikely to voluntarily meet wider social obligations where these impose higher costs. It is therefore imperative that government specifications for programs put to tender clearly identify the social obligations which the successful bidder will be expected to meet. If institutes of TAFE are to continue to play a key role in community service, it is vital that community service obligations such as providing second chance education, employment training and education for people with disabilities are recognised and funded appropriately. This is particularly an issue for TAFE institutes that teach a large proportion of disadvantaged students. It is important that there is continued support from all levels of government for TAFE to continue to fulfil its community service obligations.

3.43 The Committee encourages TAFE institutes to undertake profitable courses, provided that community service obligations are still met to an appropriate standard and that the courses are affordable. In fact the commercial experience and competition can build the skills base within TAFE which will improve the delivery of publicly funded programs.

*Once a fully market based system is implemented and if no public service role is articulated and funded by Government for TAFE Institutes, autonomous TAFE institutes cannot be relied on to pick up the pieces left behind by market failure.<sup>37</sup> [Adelaide Institute of TAFE]*

3.44 Funding for TAFE is dealt with in detail in Chapter 6.

## **Trade training**

### ***The trade tradition***

3.45 TAFE had its genesis in trade training. It is an important role that goes beyond the mere teaching of skills. The skilled trades have a rich heritage which includes their own culture and professional ethos and extends to inculcating in tradespeople an obligation to 'pass on the trade.' TAFE has always been an important part of socialising young people into trades.

*Trades and the training for them form a continuing, evolving tradition. It is appropriate that the tradition be represented in our community...by institutions dedicated to the preservation and development of the trade tradition as it*

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37 Submission No. 73, p. 3.

*evolves in accordance with society's needs.*<sup>38</sup> [University of Southern Queensland]

3.46 It is the view of the Committee that TAFE colleges have a proud history, in partnership with employers, of developing and perpetuating trade skills and the tradition of the trades. Despite some criticism of the relevance and flexibility of training, which is being addressed, TAFE institutes should continue to play an essential role in the provision of trade training.

*There is enormous socialisation into the trades and industries through TAFE. There are very close associations between individual enterprises and whole industries with the training that occurs in a particular field, not only through the setting of the curriculum but through placement and, more particularly, through the involvement of those industries in observing and monitoring what is going on in the TAFE colleges.*<sup>39</sup> [Associate Professor Bruce King, Director, Flexible Learning Centre, University of South Australia]

3.47 Despite the rapid growth in traineeship numbers the Committee believes that traineeships and apprenticeships still have unrealised potential as the pathway from school to work for many more young people.

### **Apprentice numbers**

3.48 The Committee notes that the number of people commencing traditional apprenticeship training is declining. The number of apprenticeship commencements grew from 49,300 in 1984/85 to a peak of 62,700 in 1988/89 but has since fallen dramatically to only 44,100 in 1996/97. At the same time, the number of people commencing traineeships has increased from 1,000 in 1986 to 54,400 in 1997.<sup>40</sup>

3.49 Following the introduction of New Apprenticeships and accompanying reforms to the indentured training system which are minimising the differences between apprenticeship and traineeship training, official statistics usually combine data on traineeship and apprenticeship numbers because 'the historical distinction between them is no longer valid'.<sup>41</sup> The result is a total which indicates strong growth in the numbers of those in training, but fails to acknowledge the fact that the number of apprentices in the traditional trades are declining. NCVER figures on the total number of apprentices and trainees by occupation group support this assertion. The numbers of those involved in training in most of the traditional trades (Occupation Group 4, including metal trades, electrical trades and

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38 *Submission No. 5*, p. 1.

39 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 139.

40 NCVER, *Exhibit No. 45*, p. 3.

41 *ibid*, p. 8.

hairdressing) have decreased significantly from their peaks. This is clearly shown in the Table at Appendix V.

3.50 The NCVER claims that the decline in trade based apprenticeships is being offset by growth in the occupational group, ‘labourers and related workers’, as this is the category where people undertaking trade based *traineeships* are recorded. It is not yet clear how many trainees in these areas will articulate into Certificate Level III and IV courses and therefore whether Australia is still producing sufficient tradespeople qualified to an appropriate level. The Committee believes that the termination point of traineeships in trade based occupations must be closely monitored to determine whether this is the case.

3.51 DEETYA has identified widespread skill shortages in a range of traditional trades.<sup>42</sup> Decreasing apprentice numbers was identified as an issue in the Committee’s previous report,<sup>43</sup> yet still the Committee has been unable to obtain a clear explanation of the decrease, or any analysis of the likely implications of the decline, from the Commonwealth authorities responsible for this issue. The Committee is deeply concerned by this issue and will continue to monitor it until the question is resolved.

### **Quality of apprenticeship applicants**

3.52 As interest in apprenticeships falls and traineeships increases, the Committee has heard that the calibre of applicants seeking to become an apprentice is also declining.

*There is considerable qualitative evidence to suggest that both the number and quality of young people applying to take up apprenticeships is declining at a time when there is a high risk of skills shortages in the future.*<sup>44</sup> [ANTA]

3.53 A 1997 DEETYA survey investigating the labour market for apprentices throughout Australia found that employers are generally satisfied with the quality of apprentices recruited, but feel that the supply of suitable *applicants* has fallen in recent years. Only 28 per cent of employers believe that the quality of applicants has improved over the last three years.

3.54 The main reasons given by employers for rejecting applicants were:

- personality conflicts;
- poor attitude, presentation or skill levels once on the job; and

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42 Analysis and Evaluation Division, DEETYA, *Job Futures. Information for careers advisers*, February 1998, p. 6. See Appendix VII.

43 *Youth employment; A working solution*, pp. 59-60.

44 *Exhibit No. 30*, p. 24.

- insufficient literacy or numeracy skills (which are more significant than formal education).<sup>45</sup>

3.55 Employer size appears to be a significant factor in attracting suitable applicants. The survey found that the larger the size of the employer, the more likely it was to attract suitable applicants for apprenticeships, probably because larger employers are able to advertise more widely and can offer more extensive career opportunities than smaller companies.<sup>46</sup>

3.56 The negative image of trades appears to be linked to decreasing interest in apprenticeships. The Committee feels that secondary school students are not sufficiently aware of and encouraged to consider an apprenticeship as a viable alternative to other forms of further study or employment. School leavers do not see beyond the immediate period of apprentice training to the opportunities which present themselves once an apprenticeship has been completed.

*People see being a sheet metal worker or fitter and turner as something that is dirty...But if you look at some of the heads of industry, they started off as apprentices.*<sup>47</sup>

[Ms Stella Axarlis, Chairwoman, ANTA Apprenticeships Board]

3.57 There is a need for improved marketing of the trades generally, and the high quality apprentice training which TAFE in particular has to offer. This is in part related to the inadequacy of career counselling in schools, where the emphasis is frequently on university. Alternative pathways are not always suggested to students for their consideration. This issue was considered by the Committee at greater length in its previous inquiry.<sup>48</sup>

3.58 TAFE institutes and employers need to market themselves to young people more successfully.

*[In] the next couple of years...we have to pay a bit more attention to how employers in building and construction and metals and engineering in particular can be helped to do a better job in marketing themselves into the school leavers market to pick up better people.*<sup>49</sup> [Mr Terry Moran, Chief Executive Officer, ANTA]

3.59 The idea has been successfully trialed in South Australia where a professional effort has been made to market apprenticeship opportunities to

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45 Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Analysis and Evaluation Division, *Labour Market for Apprentices. Employer and Group Training Company Experience in Recruiting Apprentices*, December 1997, p. 14.

46 *ibid*, p. 9.

47 quoted in Bitu, N, School leavers shun apprenticeships, *The Australian*, 14 April 1998, p. 7.

48 *Youth employment: A working solution*, pp. 48-57.

49 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 660.

school leavers, improving the number and quality of applicants for apprenticeships.<sup>50</sup> The need for better marketing of TAFE and improved career and education guidance services is examined in greater detail in Chapter 4.

### **Pre-apprenticeship training**

3.60 Pre-vocational training provides young people with the general and vocational skills to enable them to make a successful transition to vocational education, training and employment. This is offered at TAFE institutes which run pre-vocational courses that take the place of the first year of an apprenticeship.<sup>51</sup> Students undertaking this study path who then seek employment as an apprentice save their employer early training costs and are productive for their employer from day one because they already possess some basic skills. This system also has favour with employers because it reduces the risk to them of employing someone unsuited to the trade.

3.61 The Commonwealth currently funds pre-vocational training through the Access Program, which provides pre-apprenticeship and pre-traineeship training for people disadvantaged in the labour market who need preliminary training before they can successfully participate in an apprenticeship or traineeship. This includes, but is not limited to, early school leavers, people with literacy or numeracy difficulties, homeless youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people with disabilities.<sup>52</sup>

3.62 The Committee endorses the continuation of this program considering pre-apprenticeship training to be a useful option and a potentially valuable means of encouraging more young people to take on apprenticeships. Young people can determine whether they are suited to a particular career without having to commit to a three or four year training program when they have no experience of the occupation. It should also encourage employers to take on apprentices who they know already have some prior skills and experience in the trade.

3.63 It is possible that TAFE might be able to provide the full trade training experience without establishing traditional indenture arrangements with an outside employer. Some TAFE institutes proposed that they could establish group training companies to employ trainees and apprentices, provide training, and use their existing links to employers to place them in enterprises.<sup>53</sup> It is unclear to the Committee whether the new recognition framework for training will allow appropriately equipped TAFE institutes to create this type of arrangement but the possibility is worth exploring if it creates more training opportunities.

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50 *ibid.*

51 See, for example, Ms Virginia Battye, Director, Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 107.

52 *New Apprenticeship Access Programme*, [http://www.deetya.gov.au/minwn/ellison/efs\\_naap.htm](http://www.deetya.gov.au/minwn/ellison/efs_naap.htm) (as at 22 May 1998)

53 Mr Terry Moran, Chief Executive Officer, ANTA, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 661.

3.64 Another option supported by the Committee is the provision of apprenticeships and traineeships being undertaken on a part-time basis so that students can commence a traineeship or apprenticeship whilst still at school.<sup>54</sup> TAFE and VET in schools is explored in greater detail in Chapter 4.

## **Education and training for enrolled nurses**

3.65 The nursing vocation is divided into two streams — registered nurses and enrolled nurses. Throughout Australia education and training for registered nurses is undertaken in universities. In most States and Territories TAFE has taken on the role of providing education and training for enrolled nurses.

3.66 Nursing authorities are generally satisfied with TAFE as a provider of education and training for enrolled nurses and consider TAFE a reliable benchmark against which to assess private providers.<sup>55</sup> However, there are problems with the provision of enrolled nurse education and training. Courses to prepare enrolled nurses for practice vary from state to state and articulation arrangements between nursing courses at TAFE and university are frequently unsatisfactory.

### ***Inconsistent standards***

3.67 While TAFE can provide an avenue into enrolled nursing in all states and territories except Tasmania, the courses offered vary considerably. This is in contrast to the standard of training to become a registered nurse which is a three year bachelor degree in every jurisdiction.

3.68 In Western Australia an aspiring enrolled nurse undertakes a two year associate diploma; in Queensland, an 18 month diploma; and in the remaining states and territories, a certificate IV course although each course is different. This diversity of approach creates practical difficulties when an enrolled nurse seeks employment in another jurisdiction. Mutual recognition legislation requires states and territories to recognise each others' enrolled nurse qualifications despite the lack of common preparation.<sup>56</sup>

3.69 A number of nursing authorities have suggested that TAFE needs to take a national approach to curriculum development. This erroneously suggests that the responsibility for a national approach to enrolled nurse education rests with TAFE. It is instead the responsibility of nursing

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54 Mr Mark Patterson, Chief Executive, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 437.

55 see *Submissions No. 32, 33, 37 & 38*.

56 Mr James O'Dempsey, Executive Officer, Queensland Nursing Council, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 587, and see Australian Council of Deans of Nursing, *Submission No. 11*, p. 1.



authorities in each jurisdiction to agree on and establish an appropriate national standard against which TAFE should design its courses.

**3.70 Recommendation 3.2**

**The Committee recommends that the Minister for Health and Family Services, in consultation with State and Territory Ministers and nursing authorities, establish a uniform standard of preparation for enrolled nurses throughout Australia.**

***Articulation***

3.71 Articulation between TAFE and university nursing courses is important because many enrolled nurses want to upgrade their qualifications and seek registration. There are also university nursing students who, for various reasons, do not wish to continue university study but who seek recognition of prior learning in TAFE courses in order to qualify for enrolment.<sup>57</sup>

3.72 In order to improve articulation between the levels of nursing education there should be greater cooperation between TAFE and university in the design of TAFE courses leading to enrolment. This is a matter that should be addressed when TAFE is developing courses to meet a uniform national standard of preparation for enrolled nurses. Nursing authorities and employers should agree on and specify the appropriate level of credit transfer they want the TAFE course to provide towards a Bachelor of Nursing. Equally there should be national uniform agreement on credit transfer for university nursing undergraduates transferring to a TAFE enrolled nursing course.

**3.73 Recommendation 3.3**

**The Committee recommends that the Minister for Health and Family Services and the Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, in consultation with their respective State and Territory Ministers and nursing authorities, seek to establish a uniform national agreement on credit transfer from TAFE to university and from university to TAFE for nursing education.**

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57 Nurses Board of South Australia, *Submission No. 37*, p. 2.