



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Standing Committee on Education & Training
Inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools

MEDIA ALERT

Issued: 29 March 2004

Chair: Kerry Bartlett MP
Deputy: Rod Sawford MP

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Vocational education in schools - Report released

The House Education Committee today released its report on vocational education in schools. *Learning to Work* makes 41 recommendations including addressing funding, teacher preparation and development, national consistency, industry involvement, and greater coordination between education sectors.

The growth of VET in Schools has been remarkable: student numbers have tripled since 1996. In 2002 95 per cent of all schools offered VET in senior secondary programs, and 44 per cent of students were enrolled in VET in Schools programs. This has required significant changes to schools and school systems. Despite some important policy developments at government level the growth has not been matched by adequate planning, coordination or resourcing and has relied heavily on the commitment of a relatively small number of teachers, principals, VET and work placement coordinators. The programs offered by schools and for schools by other VET providers have fundamentally changed the way schools work. In many schools senior students take their courses in a range of settings, including workplaces outside the school. The issues identified in the report need to be urgently addressed.

Recommendations include:

- urgently reviewing and improving resourcing, infrastructure and processes, both within and across educational sectors, and arrangements between the Commonwealth and the states and territories;
- expanding partnerships between industry, the community and schools to support work placement requirements and address skill shortages;
- improving access to vocational education for students with specific needs, such as students 'at risk', Indigenous students, and student with disabilities, especially before the post-compulsory level; and
- national changes to teacher education and professional development, greater access to industry placement for experienced teachers, and encouraging more industry professionals into VET;

The Committee Chair, Mr Kerry Bartlett MP, said "Around 70 per cent of students do not wish to or are unable to go to university. Vocational education and training (VET) offers an equally valid and productive path to post-school options. Without access to vocational education, such as careers education, work experience and accredited vocational education and training (VET) courses the path for many students is not clear. An increased focus on developing employability skills and national industry-specific qualifications will assist young people to find employment, or to go on to further study in VET, or at university. We must ensure that doors to careers are not closed before young people are able to decide their future interests. The focus of VET in Schools programs should be more on skill shortages, both in traditional trade areas, as well as in new and emerging industries such as in photonics."

Other recommendations include:

- additional funding for ANTA to reflect the growing number of VET in Schools students
- a generic workskills certificate for all students, and the development of qualifications for emerging industries;
- supporting greater access to vocational education for rural and remote students, and ensuring that there is flexibility to ensure that regional areas' needs are being met.
- improving the delivery and access to professional career education and advice, with a need for greater accountability and national standards.

The report is available from the website and from the Committee Secretariat Office (R1-106). For background information on the inquiry, including submission and public hearing transcripts, visit: www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/edt/ves/index.htm .

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