

Submission to House Standing Committee

On Education and Training

VET in Schools.

Vocational Education Programs in schools have provided a major opportunity for students in rural and remote areas of NSW to receive appropriate curriculum choice under the NSW New HSC. Prior to the introduction of the New HSC in 2000, students who were completing the HSC due to lack of employment and training options, were given little chance to complete entry level industry training. The NEW HSC in NSW has given the 80% of non tertiary intending students an opportunity to begin entry level training prior to leaving year 12, and complete a HSC which has a blend of subjects that suit the students in senior years.

The expansion in the provision of VET courses in schools has been driven by student demand, the courses are attractive to all students because they provide;

1. entry level, dual accredited industry training,
2. a subject that contributes to the NSW HSC,
3. work placement; further employment opportunity,
4. a subject that can contribute towards the U.A.I (university entry)
5. competency based assessment, and
6. modified course outcomes for students with special needs.

Vincentia High School offers VET courses in three frameworks, Tourism and Hospitality, Construction and Information Technology. Some students take multiple courses, and many make a conscious decision to avoid university options because they clearly see their future in transition to work or further training in TAFE. The senior school has over 60% of students undertaking study in a VET course.

VET and Curriculum Changes

The success of these courses has been underpinned by fundamental changes to the schools organization and curriculum program. Vincentia High school adopted an extended day timetable to help with the logistics of VET course requirements, including a senior student free Friday where work placement could occur. The impact on other subjects has been minimal, often these subjects had poor student outcomes because the students were unable to cope with the academic rigour and left school or received results so low they prejudiced job opportunities.

VET and Senior School Retention

The overall impact of VET in Schools for Vincentia High School has been to **INCREASE RETENTION** of students into the senior school. Co-operating with the Nowra Institute of TAFE on other VET provision, and Aerospace Mechanical Services, has widened our curriculum to meet the needs of all students.

This is also of benefit to the 12% of Koori students at our school, and innovative programs such as the WADU program are delivering important outcomes for Koori students in accessing VET.

VET Course Costs

The courses are costly to set up, and because they are delivered under the auspices of the Batemans Bay DET RTO, the quality of these courses is constantly audited. The resource and workload implications for teaching staff has become a serious issue, and the management of these courses has created significant imposts on the school budget.

This will be an on-going factor in the success of VET in schools. Funding will need to meet recurrent costs of courses, and at present Vincentia High School has had to rely on community sources of funding to make real improvements work spaces. The purchase of an industrial kitchen bay has only been achieved through expenditure of school funds, and no funds are available for installation.

VET and Quality Delivery

The funding of VET in schools by the Commonwealth Government is critical in supporting the **QUALITY** provision of VET in schools. The DET school sector is unable to fund the significant costs associated with the provision of quality simulated work spaces, work placement programs, and training and development to network teachers over issues such as validating assessment of competencies and retraining. ECEF is critical as a funding source in the provision of support services to VET in schools, especially for rural and remote schools where the distance from TAFE facilities and employment options create special problems for communities.

The staff of VET in schools programs are committed to quality deliver of the courses. The success of these programs relies on the students transition to employment and further training, and given supportive levels of funding the staff have proved to be innovative and effective delivers of these courses. The staff at Vincentia have been willing to access programs such as Teachers in Business to forge closer ties with TAFE and industry, improving their industry accreditation and ability to deliver the courses. Staff have been willing to participate in Workskills Competitions and allow industry assessors to judge students. All VET staff have completed Certificate IV Workplace Assessment training.

Quality delivery will need adequate resourcing from State and Federal sources.

VET in Schools and Work place Learning

VET in schools frameworks require workplace learning. The provision of this important industry placement is vital to the success of VET in schools. Work place learning for Vincentia High School has been provided by the Shoalhaven Schools Workplace Learning Program Inc. This community managed program has been outstandingly successful.

The issue here is to meet the **DEMAND** for workplace learning opportunities that have grown significantly over time.

The second issue is the need for consistent, long term funding of these organizations to ensure the future of VET in Schools programs. The continual cycle of re-application for funding on a 12 month basis saps the strength and resilience of these programs. Continuity of resourcing is vital.

VET in schools and acceptance by industry.

Vet in school programs at Vincentia High School have produced excellent transition outcomes for students. The school is aware of many students moving to apprenticeships and work situations in hospitality, construction and Information Technology positions. This is one of the strengths of the VET program over time with parents and students.

Industry acceptance is varied. I believe Vincentia High School provides adequate entry level training, and industry can, and will build on the training process. This is the whole point of the National Training agenda. Schools should not be the end of the training process, but should have a part to play in providing entry level skills and competencies. This is critical in rural and remote schools where other training opportunities are severely limited.

The relationship with TAFE is mutually beneficial. Vincentia High School provides cert 1 and 2 training that flows directly into apprenticeship, traineeship or further TAFE training. This school has provided TAFE with a potent source of interested and committed students who want to improve their vocational skills by completing certificate level studies.

VET in schools should be seen as complementing the existing training opportunities, not being in competition with other providers.

VET in Schools and Part Time School Based Traineeships

The promotion of School based Part Time Traineeships has been unsuccessful. The outcomes of this program over time have been very modest, and this is simply because the structure, and administration of such traineeships is over complex and frustrating.

Students do not want to proceed with school based traineeships when they realise that it effectively extends their time at senior school to three or four years. Most students have difficulty negotiating with an employer (except their parents /relatives) when the circumstances are so unpredictable. The money aimed at part time school based traineeships should be directed to the VET in schools agenda, and provide real and tangible outcomes for senior students.

VET in schools and Indigenous students.

Vet has provided positive outcomes for Indigenous students at Vincentia High School. Students have chosen all three Frameworks, Hospitality, Construction and Information Technology. The competency assessment has encouraged retention to the HSC of many of our indigenous students. More still needs to be achieved, especially in seeking community support from parents and Elders.

VET in Schools: Conclusions

1. VET in schools provides training opportunities for students in rural and remote communities that are vital to accessing career opportunities and transition to work in areas of high unemployment.
2. VET in schools complements existing training opportunities, and the seamless transition for students should be seen as a greater positive for the national training agenda.
3. Vet in schools has increased student retention by providing a curriculum more appropriate for the 80% of non tertiary intending students.
4. Vet in schools has added appropriate work skills and competencies to students intending tertiary study through dual accreditation.
5. Vet in schools programs have a funding imperative from both State and Federal Governments that should be recognised.
6. Vet in schools has created opportunities for students with special needs and indigenous students to complete appropriate HSC qualifications.
7. Vet in schools has provided structure work place learning opportunities for students, with obvious benefits in employment outcomes for students.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the committees investigations,

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