

5

The impact on schools

Overview

- 5.1 The growth in vocational education has impacted on most aspects of school life. This chapter discusses the impact on schools of the growth in vocational education. It also discusses structural and administrative issues such as school programming and timetabling and the responses of students to workload demands. The effect on teachers of the introduction and growth of vocational education, and the need for greater professional development and pre-service training, were identified to the Committee as significant issues. The requirement of schools offering VET programs to meet the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) criteria has also required significant investment to develop expertise and to meet reporting standards. This issue, and the position in relation to schools as registered training organisations (RTOs), is reviewed and the chapter concludes with consideration of the sustainability of current arrangements.
- 5.2 The impact of vocational education cannot be viewed in isolation. Prior to the growth in vocational education was the significant increase in school retention from the 1980s and changes to curriculum frameworks around the nation. Significant reform as a result of these two factors has required substantial changes to the organisation and culture of schools, which have impacted greatly on teachers, especially those responsible for delivering VET to students. The requirements of VET and its rapid growth since the mid 1990s have also affected staff and programs of non-VET general education courses.
- 5.3 This chapter focuses on practitioner perspectives, moving from the review of policy and broad trends in previous chapters to consideration of the practice of vocational education in schools. As Ms Christine Klee, Director of VET at Redlands College in Queensland, writes:

The road from policy to practice is indeed long and winding and often it is up to the VET coordinator to interpret then apply the directives handed down from administrators to ensure that policy becomes reality.¹

- 5.4 The Western Australian Curriculum Council submitted to the inquiry that the impact of VET in Schools has contributed significantly to:
- engaging students who may otherwise not have returned to post-compulsory schooling;
 - motivating students through national recognition of their achievement;
 - enabling student achievement of nationally agreed career education outcomes;
 - promoting pathways from school into further VET;
 - fostering development of generic competencies and employability skills critical to career and transition planning;
 - transforming pedagogy by integrating a practical, workplace orientation in student learning programs; and
 - transforming school environments through promotion of linkages with the local community, industry and workplaces.²
- 5.5 Evidence presented to the Committee in formal submissions and hearings, and informal discussions with students and teachers in schools across the country, repeated this message. It is clear that the impact of VET on schools has been significant. It has been felt by all members of school communities, and has affected many facets of school operations. The challenge for education authorities and the community is to maintain the enthusiasm of participants while dealing with a range of issues for VET and general education which the growth in VET has caused.

Impact on school programming

- 5.6 The applied nature of the learning in VET programs, often combined with infrastructure changes and the need for work placements, has fundamentally altered school environments. Comments from the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations reflect the community's awareness of the changes:

The impact of vocational education on other school programs has not been adequately assessed to date. Anecdotal evidence is ambivalent. Schools have had to find or raise the funds to 'turn

1 Klee, C, 2002, 'A practitioner's view of vocational education and training in schools', *Exhibit No. 40*, p. 51.

2 Western Australian Curriculum Council Secretariat, *Submission No. 65*, pp. 1-2.

over' classrooms and facilities, make adjustments to school structures, entice appropriate staff, and struggle with the challenge of retaining students in the school who otherwise would have left long ago - and coping with their often very different learning needs and behaviours.³

- 5.7 Communities have been asked to support VET initiatives but there are calls for a more inclusive planning approach, with the whole school community being asked to participate in decision making to support the changes, and to be accountable, rather than parents being seen solely as a fundraising source for new VET facilities.⁴
- 5.8 Another response to the inquiry, from NSW, recognized the value of vocational courses and opportunities for students but suggested that in the planning and administration of vocational education there needs to be more detailed consideration of course requirements and of the time lost to other compulsory courses.

The Tamworth Teachers' Association wishes to draw notice to the concerns of a large number of teachers in Tamworth secondary schools regarding the impact of VET courses on core teaching hours and subjects. Compulsory work placement of up to 70 hours per course and external timetables, driven by TAFE, remove students from other in-school classes, having a resultant impact on the delivery of those courses. The impact is still greater on those students taking multiple VET courses. Recognition of this trend needs to incorporate controls in the future, to guarantee the delivery of the core curriculum.⁵

- 5.9 This frequently expressed view reflects the pressure on staff and students to meet the demands of VET, and suggests that an effective balanced approach to general and vocational education has not yet been achieved. It also suggests that as a major provider TAFE may not have been providing the flexibility sought by the teachers to timetable learning plans which best cater for students.

3 Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Submission No. 63*, p. 9.

4 Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Submission No. 63*, p. 10.

5 Tamworth Teachers Association, *Submission No. 89*, p. 1.

Impact on non-VET programs

Other program numbers and enrolments

- 5.10 As discussed briefly in the previous chapter on subject selection, *Patterns of Participation in Year 12*⁶ identified increasing participation in vocationally oriented courses over the period 1990 to 2001. There has been growth in computer studies and business studies and declining enrolments in the humanities, biological and physical sciences. Over this period there has also been a trend of reductions in the number of students undertaking specialisations, such as double units in mathematics, physics and chemistry, and two subjects in the humanities and social sciences.
- 5.11 This national research is based on all students, not just those undertaking VET programs. As such it can only provide an indication of trends, not the impact of VET on individual students or schools. Table 5. 1 does demonstrate that there have been reductions in English and mathematics, and a decrease in a range of Society and Environment programs, as well as Science.

Impact on students

- 5.12 Much of the discussion of the practical implications of VET for schools has focussed on the school systems and staff, without much consideration of the effect on students. During the course of the inquiry the Committee met many students at schools across Australia to gain their views on the benefits and challenges of vocational education.
- 5.13 Overwhelmingly, the students were very positive about their experiences and had to be prompted to make recommendations on possible improvements to the system. However, core themes that arose related to workload, career advice, transport and work placements.

6 Fullarton, S et al., 2003, *Patterns of participation in year 12, LSAY Research Report 33*, ACER, p. viii.

Table 5.1 Year participation rates in subject areas, 1993-2001

Key Learning Area	Subjects	Percentage of Year 12 students	
		1993	2001
English	English	92.1	88.0
Mathematics	Mathematics	86.3	84.3
Society and Environment	History	21.1	18.2
	Geography	18.3	12.0
	Politics and Social Studies	15.2	7.0
	Economics	17.8	7.0
	Legal Studies	15.2	11.8
	Accounting	12.0	6.4
	Business Studies	9.2	22.7
	Secretarial Studies	4.3	1.4
	Tourism and Hospitality	1.9	2.2
	Religious Studies	17.6	15.5
Science	Chemistry	22.6	17.8
	Physics	20.4	16.6
	Biology	31.7	25.4
	General/Multi Strand Science	7.2	7.0
	Psychology	5.1	6.9
	Other Sciences	4.2	3.2
Arts	Creative and Visual Arts	17.4	20.9
	Performing Arts	7.3	10.0
	Music	3.6	6.2
LOTE		8.7	10.0
Technology	Computer Studies	20.7	27.0
	Technical Studies	16.9	16.4
	Home Science	11.0	6.1
	Food/Catering	3.8	9.8
	Agriculture	2.4	2.6
	Child Studies	Na	4.2
Health and Physical Education	Physical Education	17.6	15.0
	Health	1.9	9.9
Not classified/other		1.7	0.1

Source Adapted from: Fullarton, S, Walker, M, Ainley, J and Hillman, K 2003, *Patterns of participation in year 12, LSAY Research Report 33, ACER, Table 9: p. 28.* Note: Data refer to the percentage of Year 12 students taking one or more subjects from the area.

Student workload

- 5.14 The effect of timetabling must be considered when workload issues are raised. Most Year 12 students throughout Australia undertake between four and six courses, (average 5.3).⁷ Where students miss classes and are required to make up the content and activities, this increases their workload, especially if the student is undertaking more than one VET course. An example was provided in Western Australia:

For some students it does create challenges with managing their workloads. They come back to a class situation after regularly missing classes. So they have an increased workload compared to their peers, and catching up is often difficult in an educational climate where curriculum is process driven rather than content driven. In the old days it was easy to catch up content, but if students are working on group projects or tasks it is very difficult for them to manage.⁸

- 5.15 Similarly in NSW, managing work placements to ensure that the sufficient time was available for studying for exams was a concern:

I found it quite difficult to do my work placement. I still have not completed enough hours, because I had exams during the time that everyone else was going on work placement and I could not afford to take the time off due to exams.⁹

- 5.16 Comments such as this suggest that there has been insufficient accommodation of VET students' needs in the regular school timetable. (This is discussed again below, in section 5.27-5.30.) The extent to which a school has addressed this is likely to reflect the number of students involved in VET programs, and the commitment made by the school and by the non-VET teachers on the staff.

- 5.17 Concerns for students' success in the whole of the senior certificate were also expressed to the Committee:

Workload is another important consideration for students when undertaking VET in Schools programs. The requirements in some states do seem to be enormous, on top of the school work which is expected in Years 11 and 12. Again, it is logical that if there is too much one suffers and the student is set up for failure. The wellbeing of students is of great concern to us. For this reason and

7 Fullarton, S et al., 2003, *Patterns of participation in year 12, LSAY Research Report 33*, ACER, Table 6, p. 24.

8 Mrs Sue-Ellen Dean-Bull, Head of Department, Home Economics, St Stephen's School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 5 August 2003, Perth, p. 969.

9 Ms Sally Taber, Student, Wagga Wagga High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 July 2003, Wagga Wagga, p. 801.

for the demonstrated success of VET in Schools programs, coordination is very important.¹⁰

- 5.18 The format of delivery was also presented as a factor affecting a student's workload. The independent schools sector in Queensland provided a comparison to show the variation in delivery methods:

The main difference between VET delivered by schools and that delivered by other RTOs is in the time-frame for delivery and the student workload. The gaining of a VET qualification at Certificate I or II level is only one component in a school student's course of study spread over two years. VET undertaken with other RTOs at Certificate I or II level is concentrated into one course of study and is completed over a matter of weeks.¹¹

- 5.19 Students themselves noted the challenges, but were generally prepared to cope with the workload. In Tasmania, the difficulty of trying to manage combined workloads was identified by a student who told the Committee that he had decided to pursue a vocational rather than university path in Information Technology, as credit of VET studies to tertiary entrance scores was not in place.

You have to make a decision. You cannot go halfway with anything, because they expect a lot in the VET subjects. Pre-tertiary and VET subjects in the same year would be quite a bit of work. At the start of the year you have to make that decision and stick to it.¹²

- 5.20 Those VET subjects with work placements add to the workload when classes are missed:

If you have an exam ... and if you have to go to a work placement on a Thursday and you do not get home until five, and then you have to study and come to school the next day, it can get very difficult at times.¹³

- 5.21 However, in speaking to the Committee the students were always very positive in their attitude to the benefits of the VET courses, with the opportunity to develop hands-on skills and 'test-out' possible careers highly appreciated. Especially in rural or remote areas, the demands of

10 Ms Therese Bryant, National Education and Training Officer, Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 September 2003, Melbourne, p. 1221.

11 The Association of Independent Schools in Queensland, *Submission No. 81*, p. 9.

12 Mr Grant Cooper, Student, Don College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 September 2003, Devonport, p. 1302.

13 Ms Shara Couchman, Student, Junee High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 1 July 2003, Junee, NSW, p. 745; see also Ms Sally Taber, Student, Wagga Wagga High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 July 2003, Wagga Wagga, NSW, p. 802.

courses in conjunction with travel and transport requirements were onerous.¹⁴

- 5.22 It appeared to the Committee that these aspects of students' needs were being addressed to some extent but that this was not being pursued as rigorously as possible. The Committee acknowledges that not every study combination can be supported by schools, especially smaller or rural schools. Students in every year have to make subject selections, and facilitating VET options to ensure that other key programs are not disadvantaged and the student is not unfairly overburdened should be a key goal. Greater attention should therefore be given to identifying the workload demands that are being placed on students undertaking VET, and minimising the need for students to catch up on missed sessions.

Work placements

- 5.23 The benefits of work placements have been identified by students and industry as central to the most effective VET programs. The variety and the practical nature of the experience offered by work placements appeals to many students:

I chose to do the hospitality course because I did not want to just sit around and do theory for the whole year. I wanted to actually have a taste of the work force and find out what I really want to get into, to see if it is the right thing for me. It has been really good so far. I am on my third work placement at the moment. All three of them have really given me a different taste of what to expect when I leave school and what I am going to get into.¹⁵

- 5.24 The logistics of organising placements can be challenging for schools and students. In some cases where external coordination, such as in a cluster arrangement, has been possible this has reduced the load on students, teachers and school VET coordinators. Commenting on the need for continued Commonwealth funding for work placements, the Deputy Principal at Wagga Wagga High School said that work placements would not work without the central coordinator, Wagga Wagga Compact.¹⁶

14 See for example Ms Kahli Lutterel, Student, Northland Secondary College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 September 2003, Melbourne, p. 1269; Ms Megan Caswell, Student, Taminmin High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2003, Humpty Doo, NT, p. 496; and Ms Rebecca Erkelens, Student, Taminmin High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 April 2003, Humpty Doo, NT, p. 495.

15 Mr Joshua Williams, Student, Don College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 September 2003, Devonport, p. 1303.

16 Mr Michael Powell, Deputy Principal, Wagga Wagga High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 July 2003, Wagga Wagga, NSW, p. 806.

Schools would otherwise be fighting each other for placements. However, schools in more remote settings suggested that a cluster coordinator may not be the most appropriate in rural situations, and a dedicated VET coordinator could be appointed to the school.¹⁷

- 5.25 The demand for work placements at more senior levels may be having a detrimental effect on career education and generic work experience programs during middle high school years due to the limited number of placements available.

I find that students in schools now have fewer ideas or goals of what they would like to be as they get older. School to Work is in place to address that issue. Previously we did some of our careers training with counselling in Years 9 and 10, and they had work experience. Work experience has run out because we are saturated in work placements for Years 11 and 12 with the VET courses.¹⁸

- 5.26 The Committee notes that strategies to address this issue need to be identified. Some organisations have tried to make more explicit the type of work placement that is being sought, distinguishing between work experience, industry-specific work placements and non industry-specific work skills placements, identifying what is required from the employer.¹⁹ A further issue is that in some cases little challenging work has been, or can be, provided for the students.²⁰ This diminishes the benefits of the work placement.

Timetabling

- 5.27 The restructuring of timetables to accommodate students undertaking workplace learning has been described by some as the most challenging operational issue for most schools.²¹ The successful adoption of VET requires changes to traditional timetabling. Some schools have dramatically changed their school timetable while others are waiting for participation rates to grow to a level that justifies a more fundamental

17 Mr Lee Wright, Principal, Junee High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 1 July 2003, Junee, NSW, p. 765.

18 Mr Colin Feather, Deputy Principal, Mount Austin High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 July 2003, Wagga Wagga, NSW, p. 837.

19 HEBTP, *Exhibit No. 121*, and Mr Roderic Grosvenor, School to Work Project Officer, The Association of Independent Schools of Tasmania, *Transcript of Evidence*, 1 October 2003, Hobart, p. 1399.

20 Mrs Wendy de Souza, Owner-Operator, Cutting Remark (Hairdressing), *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 April 2003, Alice Springs, p. 583; Ms Mary Dennison, Administration Manager, Audio Loc Sound Design Pty Ltd, *Transcript of Evidence*, 25 February 2003, Sydney, p. 49.

21 Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce, *Submission No. 96*, p. 3; see also NCVER *Submission No. 82*, p. 9 in relation to School-based New Apprenticeships; and Dr Ian Cornford, *Submission No. 67*, p. 2.

restructuring of the school's programs. Some schools may allocate special days or afternoons for students to do their placements or work, but others do not. It is easier in schools like many in Queensland, where a greater proportion of students do VET or School-based New Apprenticeships (SBNAs). Where VET students are in the minority it is harder for them to have their timetable appropriately adjusted.²²

We had the old industrial model [timetable] one size fits all. We know we have to move away from that and we are. With those myriad opportunities and pathways, managing the administration becomes a much more complex task. We do have a duty of care for kids. We need to know where they are. Where we might have had 150 senior students all on the same type of timetable six subjects for two years now we have maybe 100 of those 150 doing that and 50 of them doing all sorts of variations on that.²³

5.28 Some schools have adopted a seven day timetable and others a five day timetable. Seven-day timetabling (which follows in a 1-7 day sequence regardless of the day of the week or the interruption of weekends and public holidays) causes problems for industry, as it doesn't allow for the same day being allocated for work release each week. The major challenge is to offer a range of programs that do not normally fit into a 9.00 am to 3.00 pm timetable while assuring the parents that this is required for senior students.

5.29 In some cluster arrangements negotiations have enabled specific days to be allocated to free up the timetable. One example in Victoria demonstrates the flexibility that can be achieved. This one day a week model was also identified in other school site visits during the inquiry.

In the Yarra Valley cluster, we have negotiated that Wednesday would be the day that we would offer VET courses and students go to TAFE. That works very well. For those students who would be doing a whole-day course in our own school with only four 70-minute periods a day, we would timetable it so they had at least one spare. They would have to pick up on two lessons, and the afternoon lesson would be scheduled as their VET provision.

... in the Yarra Valley cluster it has worked very well having VET on a specified day, and most VET courses in our region are on a Wednesday afternoon. They start at about one o'clock and they go

22 Dr Erica Smith, Faculty of Education, Charles Sturt University, *Submission No. 101*, p. 1.

23 Mr Raymond Johnston, Principal, Tannum Sands State High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 April 2003, Gladstone, p. 399.

till four or five. Transport is an issue. We have to get the students there and back, but generally that works well.²⁴

- 5.30 The Committee acknowledges the difficulty of meeting the need for greater flexibility in timetabling associated with individual programs for students. However, there is now a range of examples of how different schools and structures are managing this organisational task. The sharing of approaches should be encouraged by educational authorities. Discussions with local school communities to identify needs and then implement the resultant changes would facilitate the process.

Impact on teachers

- 5.31 The demands on the teaching profession and concerns about the age profile of teachers in general are issues which have been the subject of growing concern in recent years. Similar concerns, particularly in relation to vocational education teachers, especially those in what were traditional vocational areas, were voiced to the Committee:

There have been so many changes to the curriculum, there have been so many changes in terms of expectations of the role of educators, particularly secondary, that people in their early to mid-50s find that pretty overwhelming. When you are overwhelmed, you are less likely to embrace new ideas or engage in different ways of doing things in the schools.²⁵

- 5.32 A similar view was expressed in Queensland:

The ageing teacher population restricts the capacity for energetic innovation in the delivery of vocational programs.²⁶

- 5.33 To implement policy requirements, different training and accountability practices have been introduced to be incorporated with other systems and duties of staff. VET teachers are required to become experienced in a wide range of industry training practices and often to manage, and re-engage in learning, students who have been disillusioned by past school experiences. Teachers need to become experienced in the implementation of:

- an additional and diverse route of engagement for students often disillusioned by traditional academic course offerings;

24 Mr Alan Ross, Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 September 2003, Melbourne, p. 1173.

25 Professor Graham Dellar, Dean, Faculty of Education, Curtin University of Technology, *Transcript of Evidence*, 5 August 2003, Perth, p. 935.

26 Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission No. 66*, p. 4.

- rigorous administrative accountability processes involving continuous review and audits in order to comply with national industry standards;
- the interpretation and application of training plans for students (as determined by the particular training package used);
- competency based training and assessment and its application on a case-by-case basis;
- the demands of an integrated flexible training program as students interact in the workplace and receive off-campus industry specific training;
- assessment protocols for students training on and off-the-job;
- the complex senior certification process used to formally acknowledge the performance of VET school students;
- the confusing tertiary application process for VET students;
- personal upskilling to meet industry standards; and
- public relations activities to promote VET in schools to students, parents, employers and the wider community.²⁷

5.34 Clearly this is no small challenge, and the number of changes in what is required has made working in the vocational education field much more demanding. The Committee was repeatedly impressed by the dedication that VET teachers and coordinators displayed to support the implementation of vocational education. In a range of schools the response to the acknowledgement by the Committee of their dedication was that “I/we do it for the students”.

Teaching VET is very different from teaching modern history, which is my background, where you go in and talk to the kids. You love your subject. When you teach VET, you love the kids.²⁸

5.35 This dedication and professional commitment is admirable. However, it is of concern to the Committee that the examples of dedication and goodwill it witnessed were accompanied by descriptions of continual long hours, including those necessary to meet the reporting requirements, and being on-call at weekends and holidays to support students who are on work placements. Unreasonable demands on staff culminate in stress and ‘burn-out’, resulting in high turnover in vocational education teacher and coordination positions.

The burnout factor is interesting because there is anecdotal information to show that a number of people go into teaching VET and really like doing it. However, they find it is such a heavy

27 Klee, C, 2002, ‘A practitioner’s view of vocational education and training in schools’, *Exhibit No. 40*, pp. 51-52.

28 Ms Christine Klee, Director of VET, Redlands College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 6 March 2003, Canberra, p. 181.

workload et cetera that they opt out. I think the previous director in the ACT was of the opinion that there was a sufficiently trained number of people within the system but they were not all teaching VET because many were opting out. The demands become too much, so you opt out. Why wouldn't they?²⁹

Burnout is a real issue. It is about the support necessary in delivering the course. If we keep coming back to the comparison with other mainstream courses, with other curriculum areas, it appears that there is not the extra workload for history, science and whatever. I am not trying to denigrate those subjects, but it is an inordinate amount of extra work. Teachers are aware of that. They see in the staffrooms that their colleagues are stressed.³⁰

- 5.36 In October 1999, the newsletter of the Vocational Education and Training Network, *The VETNETWORKER*, included an article on strategies and tips to assist VET Coordinators to avoid burnout.³¹ An important tip was to develop a good support network. Examples of networks were provided to the Committee in a range of settings across Australia. One example highlighted the need for a coordinated approach, with support for VET and careers education. Often these positions are grouped together in one staffing position, but depending on the size of the school there may be a need for both positions. Staff at Junee High School provided an example to the Committee of their operations and requirements in rural NSW following reduction in funding:

As the person who has been fulfilling the role of coordinator four days a week, three days a week and now two days a week, I can say that with the two-day-a-week model, there is an awful lot that is slipping through the net and not being supported. Four days a week was probably the best we operated at without burnout on behalf of the coordinator. At the moment, the two-day-a-week model is certainly pushing me to the point where, for the two days that I am here, quite often lunch and recess are not an option. I am also not able to chase the students and support the staff in the same way that I have been able to do in that position ... We do not want to see the erosion of a fairly quality product, but that is already occurring ... If you could go to four days a week some people

29 Mr Michael Bradley, ACT President, Australian College of Educators, *Transcript of Evidence*, 14 August 2003, Canberra, p. 1120.

30 Mr Peter Brabin, Chief Education Officer, Wagga Wagga District Office, NSW Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 July 2003, Wagga Wagga, NSW, p. 832, *see also* AEU *Submission No. 72*, p. 9.

31 Meredith, A., 1999, *The VETNETWORKER*, VETNETwork, October 1999, Issue 4, pp 4-5, <<http://www.vetnetwork.org.au/publications/newsletter/httpfiles/october99/index.html>>.

would see it as excessive, but the careers adviser, Fred Byrne, and I work very closely together ... In that way there has actually been a coordinated approach from day one.³²

- 5.37 The Committee notes that the growth in participation in VET and the corresponding increase in demands on available resources, and associated burnout of key staff, hinder the achievement of quality outcomes, for the staff or students involved. Recruitment of new staff into positions without adequate support and unrealistic workload expectations are poor human resource practices, but often it is a choice between that and not offering VET to the students. This issue is reconsidered in Chapter 6 as a system factor³³ that needs to be addressed.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that state and territory education authorities recognise in their staffing formulae the additional workload of teachers with significant VET responsibilities, and reduce the classroom teaching load to reflect the extra work, supervision and reporting requirements of teaching VET.

Teacher development

- 5.38 Adequate and appropriate professional development is a key factor that would make a very significant contribution to high quality delivery of VET in Schools.³⁴ Vocational education, and VET in Schools in particular, have required teachers to reconsider the way they teach and the content of their teaching. Pedagogy, pre-service training, industry experience and ongoing professional development on VET issues are all areas requiring attention.

32 Mrs Marie Knight, Vocational Education Coordinator, Junee High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, 1 July 2003, Junee, NSW, p. 766.

33 System factors are centrally driven which include regulation of standards, funding models, national or statewide industry input, availability of experienced staff. School factors include timetabling, management of curriculum and teaching methodology as examples.

34 DEST, *Exhibit No. 89*, p. 141.

Teachers too have felt the impact of the development of VET. Most VET teachers speak enthusiastically for the benefits to students across the whole school. Professional development (PD) for these VET staff should be accessible and appropriate; the PD should be timely and not purely classroom learning but provide opportunities for meaningful interaction with industry.³⁵

Pedagogy

- 5.39 The impact of vocational education on other courses was recognised by some state authorities in evidence to the Committee. In South Australia the impact of embedding competencies in mainstream South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) curriculum courses has required changes in teaching practice:

The introduction of VET in the senior secondary certificate has made an enormous impact on how the senior secondary certificate is constructed and conceived, and how teachers approach their work.

In South Australian schools, VET was introduced in the early 1990s in three industry areas with further systematic integration of VET across the SACE curriculum from 1997. This policy of recognition of VET outcomes towards the SACE has had a positive impact on programs which students undertake to complete their SACE. For some it has meant an introduction into the VET sector, and for others the gaining of dual accreditation and development across the mainstream subjects of the SACE. As all subjects in the SACE are able to embed units of competency, this has meant a considerable change to the pedagogy adopted by teachers in schools.³⁶

- 5.40 The Australian Education Union (AEU) commented on the broader educational expectations on schools, arguing that embedding of VET assists in combining general and vocational education in secondary schools. However, the Australian National Training Authority VET policy works against this goal, preferring the stand-alone model of delivery. This means that students are far more likely to be 'streamed' into either VET or traditional academic routes. Some states and territories have provided assistance to schools in embedding a competency-based curriculum and assessment system in general education subjects. However, the conceptual and practical implications of doing so have generally not been satisfactorily worked through, such as the impact on teaching methods. At

35 Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Submission No. 63*, p. 10.

36 South Australian Government, *Submission No. 97*, p. 19.

the school level it has resulted in dual assessments, with some VET teachers and coordinators commenting that their workload had more than doubled. Some teachers believed that there should be a move to stand alone courses to reduce duplication, assist with planning, and better meet specific student's needs. The AEU commented that the 'issue is not clear cut'.³⁷

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that educational authorities and industry representatives undertake further analysis of the relative costs and benefits of embedded and stand alone courses; and that authorities move towards a nationally consistent approach bearing in mind the suitability of particular subjects to either type of course.

- 5.41 The embedding of competencies into curriculum courses has also had an impact on traditional areas of the curriculum, and some teachers are more comfortable with this change than others.

I think it is linking back to the holistic approach and ... pedagogy. A lot of teachers come into the system in isolation, looking at their teaching, and they have a certain view of the way students should learn and what is important. For a lot of teachers, vocational education is not important, especially in the traditional areas of maths, social science and English, and that is where there are huge issues ... I feel the emphasis needs to be on the right type of information for the students and also on getting teachers to making a pedagogical mind shift and understand that is not their subject in isolation that is important. They have got to place that student in the real world and that involves work, employment, further training, everything.³⁸

- 5.42 Difficulties operating in different educational environments have, for some teachers, given rise to challenges in the methods of teaching and working with students:

We do have in this state, and I guess it is the same around Australia, a structural problem in that you have two types of VET teachers: the TAFE teacher and the VET in Schools teacher. They

37 AEU, *Submission No. 72*, pp. 36-39.

38 Mr Damien Shuttleworth, Manager, Enterprise and Industry Program, Mandurah Senior College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 4 August 2003, Mandurah, p. 857.

are quite different, both in pedagogy and skills of teaching and in their industry training. You have to try to bring the two together.³⁹

- 5.43 These differences, in addition to structural factors, create tensions and barriers which do not assist in the delivery of quality services.

Pedagogy and teaching styles in colleges in Tasmania vary widely from the pedagogy and delivery of training in TAFE. However, the two institutions endeavour to work together to provide VET in Schools, often with wide variations in philosophy, funding, commercial accountability and objectives. This has and continues to create unnecessary tensions.⁴⁰

- 5.44 The need for change has been identified and at a national level the National Goals for Schooling recognise that their achievement entails a commitment to collaboration between all jurisdictions for the purposes of enhancing the status and quality of the teaching profession. Teacher training is central to achieving this and includes three components: the need for pre-service teacher education, in-service professional development, and industry experience.

Need for pre-service

- 5.45 Pre-service training (teacher education) refers to the preparation of teachers suitable for employment by education authorities. In its submission to the inquiry the AEU identified a range of issues in relation to teacher qualifications and experience:

Systems and teacher education institutions should ensure that professional development (pre- and in-service) for teachers of VET in secondary schools is based on the following:

- a broad-base in pedagogy, curriculum and assessment theory and practice (including as a minimum all competencies contained in the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training) linked to recognised general teaching qualifications;
- appropriate industry qualifications and experience meeting AQTF compliance and national training package requirements.⁴¹

- 5.46 The need for additional qualifications under the Australian Quality Training Framework was widely mentioned as a substantial compliance issue. Other details associated with the AQTF requirements will be discussed in the section on requirements for RTO certification.

39 Mr Phillip Purnell, VET in Schools Development Officer, Don College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 September 2003, Devonport, Tasmania, p. 1321.

40 Hellyer College, *Submission No. 105*, p. 3.

41 AEU, *Submission No. 72*, p. 36.

- 5.47 The AEU recommends that the criteria for the qualifications of teachers and assessors in terms of industry qualifications and experience and teacher education qualifications should be reviewed. One issue that arose in evidence to the Committee was that the arrangements for the recognition of competence in the requirements for Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training varied across different jurisdictions. This will need to be addressed in the new Training and Assessment Training Package.
- 5.48 A mapping of the competencies in the Training and Assessment Package for teacher education qualifications is required to ensure that teachers new to the education system are appropriately qualified to meet the requirements of the AQTF. The question that will need to be answered is whether all secondary teachers should be required to demonstrate their competence to meet the standards, or only VET specialists. Considering that teachers who had not anticipated doing so often end up teaching VET, the Committee believes that the pre-service training of all secondary teachers should provide some components relevant to teaching VET. It should also provide qualifications consistent with the requirements of the AQTF in Assessment and Workplace Training for those whose specialties are more likely to result in them teaching a VET in Schools course. This could well be the majority of secondary teacher trainees.
- 5.49 It should be acknowledged that many teachers already in service have significant expertise in the area of learning methodologies, curriculum development and assessment. Greater consistency across the jurisdictions and improved recognition arrangements need to be developed to encourage greater numbers of teachers to participate in vocational education in schools and to ensure industry confidence in VET qualifications.

Response in the higher education sector

- 5.50 Teacher education specialists have identified a need for greater flexibility in providing teacher education.⁴² Traditionally, teacher training concerned with vocational preparation occurred in different institutions to teacher training focused on other schooling levels. It was suggested to the Committee that greater interchange is required to maximise the benefits of varying expertise. One of the challenges for the education system is to ensure that the ever increasing expectations of teachers' expertise remain realistic, and that unachievable targets are not set. Preparing young people for post school options is a priority but Professor Lyn Yates of the University of Technology in Sydney made the point that there needs to be

42 Professor Lyn Yates, *Submission No. 12*, p. 2.

differentiation in teaching specialisation. Not all teachers will wish to specialise in vocationally oriented courses.⁴³ However, the Committee considers that exposure to a range of teaching strategies, and an awareness of students preferences for differing learning styles can only improve a teacher's effectiveness, no matter what the specialisation that is being considered.

- 5.51 Across Australia there are 38 institutions providing teacher education faculties and schools.⁴⁴ Some universities offer post graduate programs in Technology Teaching or Vocational Education and Training.⁴⁵ The Commonwealth funds the university sector but believes the content of programs is a state or territory responsibility:

The Commonwealth is the major funding source for teacher education but considers that the responsibility for the content and structure of teacher education courses lies with universities, in consultation with State and Territory government and non-government education authorities. The latter have primary responsibility for the employment of teachers, including their development in relation to their teaching skills and understanding.⁴⁶

- 5.52 The Australian Industry Group suggested that teacher training include some exposure to VET in Schools for all teachers so they are aware that there is an alternative to the mainstream academic courses for school students.⁴⁷ The Committee was told that in Queensland the University of Central Queensland and the University of Southern Queensland include some training in VET for pre-service teachers.⁴⁸ The Committee welcomes this approach and believes that other institutions should consider similar strategies, and that they involve educators with greater industry and vocational education experience.
- 5.53 As an example, strategies to address these issues are currently being developed at Deakin University.

What we are going to do in Geelong is bring together a program that will involve preparation of teachers for post-compulsory years of schooling, the ACE sector and TAFE. We think we need to bring those three together and we need to then look at teaching

43 Professor Lyn Yates, Professor of Teacher Education, University of Technology, Sydney, *Transcript of Evidence*, 26 February 2003, Sydney, p. 158.

44 Australian Council of Deans of Education website: <www.acde.edu.au/aboutus/faculties.htm>.

45 La Trobe University, *Submission No. 52*, p. 1; Curtin University, *Submission No. 18*, pp. 1-2.

46 DEST, *Submission No. 75*, p. 45.

47 Australian Industry Group, *Submission No 76*, p. 9.

48 Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission No. 66*, p. 4.

environments that are not just school classrooms ... [students] want a much more engaging sort of education and, frankly, our secondary schools are struggling to give that to them. We need to think of learning environments that are out of the classroom. They can include the classroom, but in a different form and also augmented by adult learning environments in the ACE sector, the TAFE sector, and work placements. We need to put together a teacher education program that is focused on a pedagogy that would be compatible with that image of teachers' work.⁴⁹

5.54 The importance of enterprise is one component of this need for change in the education and training sectors to address the pedagogy required to facilitate the development of 'enterprise attributes'.⁵⁰ Given the increasing multiplicity of roles that educators are asked to perform the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEP) commissioned the Australian College of Education to:

- determine current understanding and attitudes of practicing teachers, trainee teachers and teacher educators toward policy and practice of vocational learning;
- identify a range of issues and future strategies to build the capacity of teachers and teacher educators to integrate vocational education across the curriculum; and
- link education to work and community more effectively.⁵¹

5.55 The publication *Learning in a Knowledge Society* to which this report has previously referred is an outcome of that research.⁵² Various education and training departments have worked with universities, industry and TAFE to include relevant VET qualifications in teacher retraining programs and pre-service teacher education programs.⁵³ However, the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) notes that it is difficult to provide a comprehensive national overview of vocational education in teacher education. The South Australian Government states that a national response to initial teacher education is required to ensure that the national standards required by the AQTF are met.⁵⁴

49 Associate Professor John Henry, Director, Research Institute for Professional and Vocational Education, Faculty of Education, Deakin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 September 2003, Melbourne, p. 1168.

50 Mr Graeme Harvey, *Submission No. 107*, p. 2.

51 ECEF, *Submission No. 84*, p. 43.

52 Australian College of Educators, *Exhibit No. 40*, p. 2.

53 NSW DET, *Submission No. 94*, p. 20.

54 South Australian Government, *Submission No. 97*, p. 4.

- 5.56 The Committee believes that there is a strong need to revise teacher education courses to encompass the vocational education agenda.

Need for professional development

- 5.57 In-service training (or professional development) involves the development and improvement of those currently employed as teachers in relation to teacher skills (such as pedagogy and classroom management) and understanding (such as in relation to subject matter).
- 5.58 The Committee heard evidence from the Queensland Catholic Education Commission that schools have to bear all the professional development costs associated with upskilling teachers to deliver vocational programs. A concern was expressed that schools which have dedicated significant funds to do so often find that these personnel then move to other schools leaving them without the expertise and not fully benefiting from funds expended. In its submission the Commission highlighted the urgent need for the professional development of teachers in adult learning pedagogy to better cater for the increasing numbers of students choosing to study vocational programs.⁵⁵
- 5.59 Funding from the Commonwealth under Quality Teacher Programmes has supported professional development for a significant number of teachers, including 8400 specifically for VET in Schools.⁵⁶ In South Australia and Western Australia, independent school VET teachers have been funded under the Quality Teacher Programme to complete the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training so that they comply with the AQTF requirements. Teachers have obtained recent industry experience through industry placements for teachers, also funded through the Quality Teacher Programme.⁵⁷
- 5.60 In particular, the extent to which teacher qualifications meet the criteria of Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training should be examined and a nationally consistent approach adopted. In one jurisdiction, appropriate recognition of prior learning (RPL) occurred; in others the teachers were required to attend three days plus an RPL process with the cost met by the school for backfilling and the course cost of \$5000 for six teachers.⁵⁸ This issue may be more pressing with the replacement of this

55 Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission No. 66*, p. 4.

56 Mr Tony Greer, Group Manager, Schools Group, DEST, *Transcript of Evidence*, 26 June 2003, Canberra, p. 707.

57 National Council of Independent Schools' Associations, *Submission No. 79*, p. 14.

58 Ms Julianne Spring, Careers Coordinator and Mr Martin Coogan, Teacher, Northland Secondary College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 September 2003, East Preston, Victoria, pp. 1286-1287.

Certificate with the new Training and Assessment Package that is wider in scope scheduled for 2004.⁵⁹

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the MCEETYA Taskforce on Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership (TQELT) pursue changes to teacher education programs to achieve a nationally consistent approach. This should include greater consideration of vocational education issues, including the need for:

- **potential VET teachers to meet the competencies required to Certificate IV in the new Training and Assessment Package and more specialised training in VET-related subject areas.**

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that a consistent application of Recognition of Prior Learning be pursued nationally to ensure that current schools and teachers are not financially disadvantaged in meeting compliance requirements of the AQTF.

Need for industry placement

- 5.61 The need to access industry experience was raised in submissions and public hearings by industry, education authorities and teachers.⁶⁰ The Australian Industry Group indicated in its submission that industry would expect that those teachers who deliver VET in Schools are given the appropriate professional development and relevant industry experience before and during the time they are required to teach VET courses.
- 5.62 As with broader professional development, the cost and time for industry knowledge and experience are a demand on schools, teachers and budgets. In the Queensland Catholic system teachers of vocational programs are required to gain industry experience and to ensure this experience is

59 CCH Australia Ltd, 18 November 2003, *New Training and Assessment Package*, Human Resource Headlines, <www.cch.com.au>.

60 Australian Industry Group, *Submission No. 76*, p. 9; Ms Susan Hyde, District Superintendent, Central South West, SA Department of Education and Children's Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 August 2003, Adelaide, p. 1029. See also Mr Jason Sessarago, Marymount College, *Transcript of Evidence*, Burleigh Waters, 8 April 2003, p. 240.

updated annually. Schools must bear this additional cost as such experience is undertaken in school time.⁶¹ The National Council of Independent Schools' Associations (NCISA) noted that there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that this requirement has led to an increase in schools outsourcing the VET delivery of their programs. NCISA argues that in the longer term, this will result in increased costs of VET delivery and limit the long-term sustainability of school-based programs.

5.63 As an example of the way one school manages its industry experience program for teachers, Marymount College uses Quality Teacher Programme funding, which part-funds the experience. During the school's vocational commitment week many teachers are freed from classes and these do not have to be covered. During that week site visits and contact with industry give exposure to structured workplace learning. The right industry placement is also important. However, there have been cases where teachers have felt that the placement has not been very productive.⁶²

5.64 Other witnesses spoke of teachers undertaking industry placements during the end of year break or vacation times.⁶³ In Victoria, the Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network endorsed this approach and outlined its concerns with teacher training and industry placements:

It is difficult to recruit teachers with the appropriate range of Industry experience to deliver courses that meet specific Industry requirements. The group identified that there are many teachers who need ongoing training and Industry updating to be credible to deliver VET. The current level of Professional Development and Training budget allocations to schools is minimal in the light of the need in this area. The TRIP program was identified as useful in this regard but many teachers undertaking a TRIP placement do not return to the schools sector. The group strongly endorsed the need for funding for short Industry specific training courses of 4-6 weeks duration that could be undertaken at the end of the school year.⁶⁴

5.65 The Teacher Return to Industry Program (TRIP) which operated in Victoria funded teachers in schools to return to industry. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) also supports the scheme but

61 Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission No. 66*, p. 3.

62 Ms Anne Rebgetz, Assistant Principal Administration, Marymount College, *Transcript of Evidence*, Burleigh Waters, 8 April 2003, p. 240.

63 Mr Joe McCorley, Executive Director, Queensland Catholic Education Commission *Transcript of Evidence*, 9 April 2003, Brisbane, p. 318.

64 Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network, *Submission No. 47*, p. 2.

suggests that an increased allocation would be worthwhile across all jurisdictions.⁶⁵ ACCI and members endorse schemes where there is limited teacher release to industry programs and where those programs put an emphasis on participating teachers returning to the classroom.⁶⁶ ACCI and members also favour schemes where there is an intensive and regular teacher professional development program operating within industry settings, and where stronger links between industry and education are developed.

- 5.66 The Victorian scheme (TRIP) was coordinated by the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) and the Victorian Department of Education and Training. The scheme enabled fifty teachers per year to spend up to forty weeks in an industry working on specific and agreed projects between the employer and the school. Salaries were paid by the Department and then the payments made by employers were used to fund coordination through VECCI and partially backfill the teachers' positions. After operating for eleven years up to 2003, a revised program is proposed that will try to cater for a larger group of teachers for shorter time periods, up to ten weeks as part of a teacher professional development strategy announced in November 2003.⁶⁷
- 5.67 The view from practitioners is that teachers value the opportunity to be brought up to date on industry approaches to entry-level training, on current practices and on what industry values in terms of new employees. Simultaneously the programs confirm the extensive array of teachers' skills valued by industry. In particular these include communication, problem solving, instructional and group management skills.⁶⁸

65 Mr Stephen Balzary, Director, Employment and Training, ACCI, Senate Hansard, Inquiry into current and future skills needs, Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee, 20 June 2003, Canberra, *see also* ACCI, *Submission No. 95*, p. 15.

66 ACCI, *Submission No. 95*, pp. 15-16.

67 Lynne Kosky, MP, Victorian Minister for Education and Training, 2003, *Minister's Statement: Blueprint for Education. Building the skills of the education workforce*. Flagship strategy 5: Teacher Professional Development, p. 20, <http://www.det.vic.gov.au/det/resources/pdfs/blueprint/pp17-21_Blueprint.pdf>.

68 Frost, M. 1997, Teacher Education for Vocational Education and Training in Schools, in the *Australian Teacher Education Conference Diversity, Difference, Discontinuity: Remapping Teacher Education for the Next Decade, 5th-8th July 1997*, p. 2, <<http://www.vetnetwork.org.au/resources/papers/teachered.html>>.

- 5.68 Other programs include the Teacher Industry Experience Program (TIEP), which could be included with initial teaching rounds.⁶⁹ The NSW Department of Education and Training indicated that greater resourcing is required to increase professional development and industry experience for teachers of VET in Schools.⁷⁰
- 5.69 The availability of suitable placements was a particular issue at rural schools and also in some metropolitan schools visited for the AEU project.⁷¹ The importance of teacher experience in industry is identified as crucial for the credibility of VET programs. This issue is discussed further in relation to industry acceptance of school programs in Chapter 6.
- 5.70 A survey of Australian teachers conducted in 1999 for *PD 2000: A National Mapping of School Teacher Professional Development* found that 23.8 per cent of teachers – more than those teaching VET subjects – had industry experience, retail and hospitality being highest.⁷² However there is a caution as to how recent that experience may be, with some industries undergoing significant technological change in recent years.
- 5.71 The Committee supports the further development of a national scheme to encourage increased teacher exposure to industry developments. The Committee also notes that as industry requires improved teacher knowledge and experience to assist in the development of the future workforce, it also has a responsibility to continue supporting teacher placements as there are benefits for industry, teachers, school systems and students.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that a national industry placement program be developed to support teachers accessing industry experience. The involvement of industry in part should be pursued to sponsor such a program in conjunction with state and federal government funding.

69 Vocational Pathways, *Submission No. 8*, p. 1.

70 NSW Department of Education and Training, *Submission No. 94*, p. 5.

71 AEU, *Submission No. 72*, p. 35.

72 DEST, *Submission No. 75*, pp. 46-47.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that education authorities implement initiatives to attract suitable industry qualified personnel into VET teaching, including supported and accelerated education training, with assistance for HECS provided by the Commonwealth.

Change in systems

- 5.72 The former ECEF, in conjunction with the MCEETYA Taskforce on Transition from School, also identified the need for change in teaching practices in schools to support generic workplace or employability skills. They identified a range of strategies including providing support for states and territories to:
- promote active teaching and learning approaches that ensure young people in schools have access to learning in a broad range of settings which assist them to develop employability skills, and develop strategies that reinforce the role of school as community resources;
 - incorporate opportunities for the development of employability skills in the design of learning experiences;
 - incorporate work-based and community-based programs;
 - outline professional development and pre-service programs for teachers;
 - identify different models of schools as learning organisations which capitalize on employability skills to assist student transitions; and
 - incorporate opportunities for working with external partners.⁷³
- 5.73 The AEU supports this broader approach, with systems and teacher education institutions ensuring that professional development (pre- and in-service) for teachers of VET in secondary schools is based on a broad-base in pedagogy, curriculum and assessment theory and practice. This should include as a minimum all competencies contained in the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, linked to recognised general teaching qualifications. The need for appropriate industry qualifications and experience is also highly desirable to meet AQTF compliance and national training package requirements.⁷⁴

73 ECEF, *Submission No. 84*, p. 27.

74 AEU, *Submission No. 72*, p. 35.

- 5.74 The Committee considers addressing teacher development issues a priority to improve the effectiveness of vocational education and assist with culture change. Adoption of such practices will require changes to pre-service education courses and the provision of additional funding to schools to facilitate industry placement and training for teachers.

Accreditation of schools as RTOs

- 5.75 The time and paperwork for meeting the AQTF requirements were seen in many schools as very onerous. The reasons for the requirements are understood but given that the schools already have substantial reporting requirements, the duplication was described as unnecessary:

just making sure we meet the AQTF requirements. That is an enormous task ... We are audited. We do all those things, being in the nature of a state school. If there were that subset and some delineation it would really help to offset some of the workload. I went recently to a forum organised by the Inner Northern LLEN. There were teachers from a number of other schools and people from other LLENs, and this incredible frustration with the enormous amount of paperwork came through loud and clear.⁷⁵

- 5.76 It has been noted that teachers in VET are required to be doubly qualified to meet the teaching qualifications and industry qualifications/competencies. Additionally, meeting the AQTF requirements which are different from other school requirements often means two sets of reporting. This tends to reduce efficiencies and threaten sustainability.⁷⁶

- 5.77 The workload for any organisation wishing to gain RTO status is substantial, and non-school organisations question whether it is appropriate for schools to expend their resources on achieving that status. For example, in the Northern Territory the Chamber of Commerce, which is also an RTO, stated that:

schools do not have carte blanche to automatically become RTOs. They have to go through the same process that we did, and that includes policies and procedures, and quality manuals. It is horrendous, and rightly so; it is a high benchmark to achieve.

75 Ms Raffaella Galati-Brown, Principal, Northland Secondary College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 3 September 2003, p. 1289.

76 Hobart Education Business Training Partnership, *Submission No. 22*, p. 3.

Whether it is appropriate that schools be RTOs, or whether that is the perfect opportunity for them to partner, should be debated.⁷⁷

- 5.78 An example was provided to the Committee in Burnie of the workload on an experienced teacher who was allocated the task of gaining the school RTO status.⁷⁸ A research project conducted by the AEU found that at almost all schools visited, teacher and school administrators commented negatively about the processes associated with demonstrating AQTF compliance. They were seen as excessively detailed, time-consuming and unnecessarily bureaucratic. In terms of quality assurance, far too much effort and expense is devoted to accountability mechanisms in comparison to the effort and expense devoted to professional development, industry release, support and advice. A better balance is needed.
- 5.79 The AEU recommended in its submission that this issue be reviewed. Commonwealth, state and territory governments need to refine the interpretation and implementation of VET in Schools compliance with the AQTF standards. Additionally, adequate resourcing should be provided to alleviate the workload of teachers.⁷⁹
- 5.80 Assisting schools and teachers to meet the requirements of industry standards and AQTF requirements is considered to be a more productive way of achieving quality rather than the introduction of a reduced set of standards which may reduce the confidence that industry has in VET in Schools.
- Even though the AQTF requirements are horrendously onerous, at least they mean that, under this current system, people will walk out with an equivalent qualification to what they would get from a private provider or a TAFE. That, in itself, is significant. I know there are proposals to perhaps water that down, but if that is going to be the case it needs to be done very carefully. I would much rather see support in schools for AQTF compliance than the watering down of the programs that we offer.⁸⁰
- 5.81 The Committee supports this approach of providing assistance to achieve AQTF compliance, while also streamlining joint administrative requirements. Improved resourcing needs to assist VET coordinators,

77 Mrs Carole Frost, Chief Executive Officer, Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Transcript of evidence*, 28 April 2003, Darwin, p. 476.

78 Ms Judith Watson, VET Coordinator and TCE Coordinator, Marist Regional College, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 September 2003, Burnie, TAS, p. 364.

79 AEU, *Submission No. 72*, p. 32.

80 Ms Maureen Romanet, Senior Schooling, Head of Department, Elanora State High School; and Committee Member, South Coast Industry Schools Coordinating Organisation, *Transcript of Evidence*, Brisbane, 9 April 2003, p. 383.

especially in the set-up phase of programs and establishing RTO status. An additional concern of the Committee is that much of the focus has been on meeting quality assurance requirements rather than on quality improvement in teaching and learning. The Committee hopes that this will now become the main focus in the next phase of development of vocational education in schools. It is important that the burden of compliance is reduced in order to allow teachers and administrators to focus on pedagogy and outcomes, but this needs to be done without compromising confidence in compliance with AQTF standards.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the reporting requirements of RTOs, school VET coordinators and teachers be streamlined in order to reduce the administrative burden, but without compromising the integrity of such arrangements.

Sustainability

5.82 As noted earlier in this report the sustainability of VET programs has been described as tenuous. In response to a Committee question on how to maintain 70 per cent of students participating in VET programs, an employer in NSW said:

I find it a very difficult question. I love the program but I have the feeling, although I am fairly new to town, that, if Marie Knight gets service burnout which is possible, or a few teachers move, the whole program could crash, despite what any business person would do. I am not saying this in a disparaging way; I just feel that it is almost hanging on a thread. I feel it is the exceptional and extraordinary efforts of teachers and personnel that are holding it together, and maybe the support of the business.⁸¹

5.83 Similar views were expressed in other schools, culminating in the question of whether the program in its current form is sustainable. The Don College in Tasmania provided an overview of the key issues that it felt need to be addressed to continue to deliver the best possible education and training:

81 Mr Neil Druce, Green Grove Organics, *Transcript of Evidence*, 1 July 2003, Junee, NSW, p. 787.

1. Role and status of schools in provision of entry level training
2. Cost of VET delivery including Work Placement and general administration
3. Access to suitable work placements
4. Support of Teachers in Industry Program
5. Training of industry people in delivery and assessment of VET
6. Prescriptive nature of training packages
7. Recognition of VET in Schools as a legitimate pathway to employment, further training and non-VET options, including University
8. Overall sustainability of VET in Schools ⁸²

5.84 A number of these issues have been briefly discussed in this and previous chapters. The sustainability of VET in Schools largely relies on its efficient delivery. Some defining features of efficient delivery developed so far include:

- mechanisms for schools to achieve critical mass such as:
 - ⇒ clustering arrangements;
 - ⇒ streamlined use of TAFE and other RTOs; and
 - ⇒ planned use of workplace learning;
- school operations and culture that include features such as:
 - ⇒ timetabling;
 - ⇒ delivery strategies;
 - ⇒ length of the school day;
 - ⇒ purchasing and providing VET provision; and
 - ⇒ transport to facilitate the mobility of students.

5.85 The report *The Cost of VET in Schools* provides national information on cost efficiency and benchmarks on delivery mechanisms and jurisdictional differences. Although this work does not examine the quality of the programs delivered, it does provide comparisons.⁸³ Further work is being undertaken by DEST to explore the changes required to achieve organisational efficiencies in the implementation of VET in Schools programs. Organisational changes may involve:

- curriculum;
- class size;
- timetabling;

82 Don College, *Submission No. 104*, p. 5.

83 DEST, *Exhibit No. 89*.

- teacher workload;
 - finance;
 - staffing arrangements of schools;
 - economies of scale;
 - coordinating work placements for students;
 - managing VET coordination activities;
 - identifying the potential for wider implementation of good practice; and
 - school clustering and other areas where innovative and efficiency measures may be developed and applied.⁸⁴
- 5.86 The need for greater sustainability was identified as a key issue for ECEF to develop processes to investigate and establish sustainable options for business and industry involvement with enterprise education. This may include in-kind arrangements and an industry owned trust fund to develop viable ongoing alternatives and sustainability rather than reliance on Commonwealth funding.⁸⁵ With the transfer of ECEF to DEST this priority may be under review.

Summary

- 5.87 The impact of vocational education and more specifically VET in Schools has been considerable. Many students are highly appreciative of the opportunities that VET provides, although the workload requirements in some cases need addressing. The degree to which schools have incorporated the organisational and structural requirements for conducting VET in Schools has been raised as a key point in sustaining high quality VET in senior secondary school. Greater sustainability is associated with greater mainstreaming and parity of esteem of VET. This is reflected in the day to day operations of schools and the 'messages' that schools send to their teachers, students and community about the status and relevance of VET courses. Without this, and without adequate resourcing VET sustainability is questionable. Aspects of school operations and culture which require addressing to sustain VET include:
- operational features such as timetabling and the length of the school day, purchasing and providing VET provision, and transport to facilitate mobility of students;
 - perceptions of the parity between general and vocational education;

84 ECEF, *Submission No. 84*, pp. 48-49.

85 ECEF, *Submission No. 84*, p. 35.

- equal treatment in career education and student counselling with advocacy of a wide range of training and employment options, beyond the traditional tertiary courses and related jobs;⁸⁶ and
 - professional development for teachers, and addressing workload issues.
- 5.88 The ECEF submission suggested that the transition in school operations will take a further two years of concentrated effort (although changing entrenched cultural attitudes may take somewhat longer).⁸⁷ Given the views expressed to the Committee by a number of teachers, it is likely that without significant commitment and action by authorities to assist with resourcing, the turnover of more VET teachers and coordinators can be expected. Improvements in quality will therefore be more difficult to achieve.
- 5.89 Innovative models for structural solutions have been generated more through leadership and innovation at the school and local level rather through system leadership. States and territories that have senior secondary colleges seem to have a number of well-established models for incorporating VET into school structures and culture. The Committee noted that some high schools operating in clusters across school sectors and with TAFE are also effectively managing the complexities of structural and cultural change.
- 5.90 The variety of approaches to managing and delivering VET would seem to indicate that there is no single successful model for schools.
- 5.91 The next chapter focuses on system factors that need to be addressed to ensure that sustainability is achieved with improved quality outcomes.

86 ECEF, *Submission No. 84*, p. 47.

87 ECEF, *Submission No. 84*, p. 47.