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The Secretary
Standing Committee on Education & Training
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
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Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the enquiry into Vocational Education in Schools.

I enclose the brief submission prepared by the Housing Industry Association.

Yours faithfully

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National Director
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Housing Industry Association

Submission into

House of Representatives

Standing Committee on Education & Training

August 2002

1. Introduction

The Housing Industry Association (HIA) is pleased to respond to the enquiry as it has long been involved in attempts to provide a pathway from school to employment in the housing industry.

For a number of reasons their attempts have met with limited success and some of these difficulties encountered have been detailed in this submission.

2. About HIA

HIA is Australia's peak residential building industry organization with a diverse membership that covers all occupations in the industry.

Its membership totals in excess of 32,000 nationally with a large number of member companies being small businesses.

The industry provides jobs for almost 370,000 Australians and on the basis of the industry's employment multiplier, for each on site worker employed, housing generates an off site job in a related industry.

HIA's membership because of their small business structure rely much on the associations advice and training services to equip them individually and as an industry to meet the challenges in a rapidly changing market.

HIA's service focus means it builds close relationships with members. Many of the industry's challenges are therefore clearly worked through in its organisational structure particularly it's Committee structure and National Policy Congress (NPC).

The industry's future skill needs has been identified by the NPC as a major issue to be addressed and Vocational Training delivered in schools is an important policy area for the industry as it is viewed as the stepping-stone to a career in the housing industry.

It has significant challenges however for the stakeholders involved in its successful development and implementation in the industry.

3. Terms of Reference

- (1) *The range, structure, resource and delivery of vocational education programs in schools including teacher training and the impact of vocational education on other programs.*

A major concern to HIA is the tension that often exists between education and training departments within governments. This is even more evident where the departments are under the direction of separate Ministers with in a government.

In several States, notably Tasmania the VET program delivery works extremely well with VET training carried out for schools by TAFE's. This is highly valued by industry and an accepted pathway to careers in the industry.

In other states the training received by young people in a VET program while at school is often disregarded when commencing an apprenticeship in the industry.

Many trade programs require teaching of hand skills in a range of occupational areas. Many schools are not equipped to deliver the required training in these areas and yet it has often been the experience that many students upon completion of the course have been deemed to be competent.

TAFE's, the major providers of apprentice training consider many students have not achieved competence, and required they redo particular competency standards to achieve competence.

HIA has worked hard at a number of fronts to address some of these issues. The school-based program needs to be well structured and ensure its purpose is well documented and articulated. The program must articulate into ongoing training but only where it is appropriate to do so and competence can be achieved.

Staff who deliver school based programs must be well trained and understand the industry in which they deliver training. It is important that students do not get false impressions or wrong information about the industry in which they intend to develop a career.

A close partnership is essential between schools that deliver industry programs and the providers that deliver ongoing training in e.g. apprenticeships.

There exists in some states a real stand off in the relationship between schools and the TAFE system.

As an example, in WA TAFE is required to charge schools approx \$70 per hour for program delivery in building and construction. Schools have advised they have available \$40 per hour and consequently very little VET in school delivery occurs for the industry.

In a competitive environment where the industry is seeking to entice young people to come into the industry, the building industry is not being exposed to students in most schools.

HIA urges the nationally government seeks to break down the barriers between schools and the TAFE system.

Particularly in some occupational areas which require specific facilities, to see schools attempt to deliver training when at the same time TAFE colleges are under utilized, is a waste of resources.

A clear pathway that helps student's progress from school to work and the provision of appropriate training to achieve that is required.

- (2) *The difference between school based and other vocational education programs and the resending qualifications and the pattern of industry acceptance of school based programs.*

As indicated there is a definite lack of structure to achieve beneficial outcomes for VET in school programs in many states/territories.

It is considered essential that there be specific funding provided to create positions for a person that facilitates the linkage required between schools, VET providers and industry.

A model that works well is the industry placement of facilitation under the Business Education Partnership Advocates program funded by the government and the Enterprises and Career Education Foundation (ECEP).

The industry association do not have the capacity to fund their position, yet there value in promoting careers to students and schools and creating linkages to job opportunities is essential.

The Group Schemes in the industry see this position as a vital link and a resource for them to seek out suitable young students for the industry.

HIA recommends that funding be considered for these positions to address an urgent need to attract young people to meet it's the future industry skill shortage expected.

HIA has supported a placement in its Queensland office, providing facilities and obtaining industry support to make it a great success.

It has become the avenue for jobs in the industry for many young people and is highly valued by both direct employers of apprentices and group scheme managers.