

Inquiry into *VET in Schools* by House of Representatives

Submission from Don College

30th September, 2003

Introduction

Don College is the major provider of year 11 and 12 education in this region, drawing students from Deloraine in the east to Penguin in the west. The College offers a range of VET Programs designed to cater for the needs of students and the local community. Students are able to explore various pathway options by combining studies in VET with study in pre-tertiary subjects and other areas of the curriculum. A number of VET programs have been specifically developed for students with low literacy, numeracy and social skills. Other programs have been organised to cater for a broad range of students including students on track to university. Students are engaged in a flexible friendly learning environment providing opportunities to network with community organisations, service providers and industry. The Don College VET program has established a high profile in the local community together with the expectation of excellence and achievement.

Beginning with a few students and a couple of courses in 1995, vocational and educational training (VET) at Don College has grown into a comprehensive program involving 15 courses and over 300 students in 2003. These students are successfully combining VET courses with TCE studies.

A key feature of all Don College VET programs is integration. To gain valuable real life experiences teachers provide students with a range of opportunities to cooperatively develop events, functions and products, combining the skills of various industry areas. Risk is controlled through progressive simulated real life experiences and enterprises.

The situation at Don College in relation to the terms of reference.

1. The range, structure, resourcing and delivery of vocational education programs in schools, including teacher training and the impact of vocational education on other programs.

In 2003 30% of students at Don College are enrolled in VET across 15 programs.

The College recognises the importance of VET as a significant component of its educational offerings and commits considerable resources, both human and physical, to ensure that it delivers a program of excellence. For example

- Within the College the program is managed by a VET project team (VPT) made up of an Assistant Principal (who has VET as a major area of responsibility), an AST3 (program leader), a senior teacher (with reduction in teaching duties to allow for VET leadership), and a full-time Development Officer.
- Time is allocated in the timetable for all program co-ordinators to meet together with the VPT on a fortnightly basis to address issues and concerns related to program delivery and to provide mutual support in the pursuit of excellence.
- An industry placement co-ordinator is employed by the College to ensure quality control across programs and co-ordination with industry and worksites.

VET at Don encourages innovative approaches to the delivery of programs by providing staff with professional learning in thinking and learning styles, contemporary adolescent behaviour, issues and concerns, and current industry practice.

Five programs have retention as their prime focus – Pathways, Work Related Learning and Enterprise Retail, Primary Industries and Automotive. These programs provide students with a range of social and work related skills as well as a pathway to other VET programs and employment or further education. Both the Primary Industries and Automotive programs are delivered in partnership with other RTOs further strengthening networks and future opportunities for students. Their primary intake is students at risk of discontinuing their education/training.

All VET students are supported in TCE studies including Work Placement C (VS708C) and Industry related TCE syllabuses. Students receive National VET Certification and their VET qualifications are listed on TCE Certificates.

In 2003 students have the opportunity to achieve certification in qualifications from the following Training Packages:- Business, Agriculture, Horticulture, Veterinary Nursing, Seafood Industry, Automotive, Community Services, Children’s Services, Hospitality, Tourism, Information Technology, General Construction, Outdoor Recreation and Retail. Pathways to Work and Work Related Learning Programs use Certificate I in Workplace Skills.

Issues identified by staff and students of Don College in relation to item 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to remote work places (e.g. distances in a rural area to supervise students on work placement) • Cost of TAFE partnerships • Low status of VET relative to academic programs • VET needs to be attractive to students choosing a University pathway (i.e. count towards TE score) • Need for funding for <i>Teacher In Industry</i> programs • Need for programs to train industry personnel in VET delivery and assessment • Inflexibility of some Training Packages • Double professional development requirements for VET teachers • AQTF requirements over and above normal administrative requirements • Work placement costs and accessibility for some programs • VET timetabling impacts on the timetabling of the rest of the curriculum • Cost of administrative and management support for AQTF and also Work Placement • Student feedback indicates that VET requires a similar commitment and work load to non-VET subjects • Students leaving to employment and further training needs to be acknowledged as a positive outcome

2. The differences between school-based and other vocational education programs and the resulting qualifications, and the pattern of industry acceptance of school-based programs.

Key features of our VET in Schools program include

- **Structured workplace learning**

All VET programs at Don involve extensive Industry Placement where employers assist in the delivery and assessment. We currently have 300 worksites providing industry placements in our programs. We also have the capacity in a number of our programs to provide simulated on-the-job training at the College. For example:

- Hospitality runs internal catering services at Don with support from qualified Chefs working in industry
- Children’s Services uses the on-campus Adjunct Care Centre to provide students with Industry skills in preparation for Industry Placement.

- **Holistic approach to education and training**

The integration of VET within the College program allows us to include the education of the whole person with the specific training associated with the VET program. The key competencies, which are part of every TCE program, can be directly mapped onto the employability skills identified by the Business Council of Australia, while the development of the personal attributes identified as being important for employment is central to the educational goals of the College.

- **Comprehensive support network**

VET students have a specific support structure within the VET program, as well as having access to the wide range of support services (e.g. social worker, course counsellors, Centrelink, Anglicare, chaplain) in the overall College.

Our programs are further enhanced by learning which takes place in an environment where students are empowered and encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. The outcome of this is students being connected and committed to their VET programs. Support is provided through a supportive management structure and provision of resources to enhance the development and sharing of creative ideas by staff. Consistent with the *Tasmanian VET Strategy 2003* this encourages students to learn and develop new skills including life skills, self confidence and initiative.

The Don College is the major provider of year 11 and 12 education in an area which is recognised nationally as a socially disadvantaged rural and regional community. Retention of students in post compulsory education is a major challenge and goal for the College. VET provides one of the successful solutions for youth at risk, students in rural and regional communities and people returning to work and study which are targeted groups identified by the Minister in the Tasmanian VET Strategy.

The blend of practice and theory and a variety of learning environments promotes and stimulates learning in VET Programs at the Don College. We provide a variety of learning environments including the traditional classroom, self paced learning, ICT based learning, external providers, peer support opportunities, community mentors, industry placements and enterprise.

Examples include:

- Hospitality students College Café and Restaurant enterprise
- The KAKKA Challenge
- Children's Services students assist with the provision of on-campus child care for parents returning to education
- The on-campus Adjunct Care Facility was built to specifications by VET Building and Construction class
- Business Services organise and conduct the VET Evening of Celebration
- Business Services, Tourism and IT students provided management and running support for the Barrington Student Enterprise Forum 2002
- Community Services students provide individual-based support for students with special needs
- Community Services students annually conduct a Student Health Expo
- Outdoor Recreation students organise and lead recreational activities for VET Tourism students

The Don College provides an extensive range of career services which are accessible by all students, including:

- 3 staff who specifically provide student career support involving counselling, resume writing, job information and applications
- Regular weekly timeslot on campus for Jobs Pathways personnel
- Close links with training and employment agencies, including onsite marketing and promotion of employment opportunities
- Annual Careers Expo involving employment agencies and institutions of further training and education
- All VET students are provided with the opportunity for individual job search skills preparation and career counselling in consultation with employment service providers

Don VET addresses the needs of people in those groups that are traditionally under-represented in vocational education and training using a range of strategies and processes including:

- Early identification and intervention approaches are established to determine students who need additional / alternative support
- Developmental stages of students and prior learning and experience are recognised and built into delivery of programs
- Learning styles of students are identified and included in delivery and planning of programs
- Literacy and numeracy testing is conducted by the college and students at risk are identified and intervention strategies are applied
- Outside agencies are utilised to enhance career information and support
- A Deaf Centre has been established on campus to support participation of deaf students in College programs including VET programs

Issues identified by staff and students of Don College in relation to item 2

- | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of acceptance of VET in Schools by other Training Providers and some segments of Industry – should not be an issue as all schools and RTOs meet AQTF requirements and are bound to mutual obligation • Class sizes – schools often need higher numbers than other RTOs to run a class • Maturity of students • High demand for voluntary support from employers for work placement • Teachers gaining and maintaining technical skills • Loss of ITABS makes Industry consultation more difficult • Communication between schools and some industry segments who lack knowledge of VET system • Pathway and partnership difficulties between Schools and TAFE |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

3. Vocational education in new and emerging industries

Our Strategic Plan is being reviewed in the light of the *Tasmanian VET Strategy 2003*, the *ANTA National VET Strategy 2004-2010* and local needs.

In accordance with the directions identified in the Cradle Coast Authority Strategic Plan and the *Tasmanian VET Strategy 2003* the College VPT is currently investigating future developments in delivery of electro-technology, enhancement of the Tourism program, and integration of the IT program with other industry areas.

Furthermore, social trends, student behaviour and lifestyle are monitored and courses designed in response to changing social conditions. Examples of this include VET Hospitality, Bar Operations and VET Work Studies.

The long term sustainability of VET at the Don College is assured as it is an integral component of the core business of the College.

Issues identified by staff and students of Don College in relation to item 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resourcing required to establish new programs with small enrolments• Work required to extend scope• Lack of ITABs and therefore contact with Industry• Lack of work placements in new sectors• Difficulty in finding qualified teachers with industry recognition

4. The accessibility and effectiveness of vocational education for indigenous students

A range of strategies are implemented to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to participate in VET. For example

- Focused marketing
- Inclusion of whole family at enrolment
- Getting to know the student in year 10
- Provision of opportunity to learn about Aboriginal culture
- Ongoing support through College Aboriginal support program (VEGAS)

These have resulted in an increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students receiving VET certification from Don College. Currently, 19 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are enrolled in VET programs. This is a marked improvement from 3 students in 1998. In 2002 18 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students received VET certification.

Conclusion

We believe very strongly in the importance of VET programs in our College and we are proud of what we have achieved and are achieving with and for our students. However, we have identified a number of key issues which need to be addressed if we are to continue to deliver the best possible education and training.

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