

CHAPTER 4: TAFE'S EMERGING ROLES

4.1 Australia is experiencing change that is having a significant impact on the roles of TAFE and VET generally. Changes including technological advancement in production and communication; intensifying international competition; labour market change (including greater mechanisation of jobs and casualisation of the workforce); and developments in secondary education are creating new roles for TAFE. TAFE must respond to these changes and evolve appropriately to meet the needs of employers and individual students.

A flexible VET provider

4.2 TAFE is becoming increasingly flexible in its course delivery. This represents a response to growing demand for flexibility and a greater availability of technology to assist with course delivery. All of this has a number of implications for the administration and teaching of vocational education and training, which in turn impact on TAFE's role.

4.3 There has been a cooperative effort between State, Territory and Commonwealth governments to promote a more client centred approach to training, which led to the development in 1997 of the Flexible Delivery Implementation Plan. This scheme has assisted the expansion of the training offered in a range of modes and at times that meet client needs.¹

VET in the workplace

4.4 The delivery of VET in the workplace is becoming more popular with employers. There may be greater scope for TAFE to deliver VET in the workplace, and to provide training services and consultancies in private and public sector enterprises, both nationally and internationally, on a fee-for-service basis.²

4.5 Eastern Institute of TAFE provides an industry consultancy service, through which its consultants visit enterprises and assist with: the provision of training needs, delivery and assessment; organisational development; and quality management implementation. This sometimes involves industry trainers supported by institute staff. The Institute has developed these programs in areas such as the vehicle manufacturing, food processing and metals and electronic manufacturing industries.³ Increasingly, enterprises are specifying training requirements and conditions for delivery.⁴

1 ANTA, *Exhibit No. 36*, p. 7.

2 University of Melbourne, *Submission No. 59*, p. 1.

3 Eastern Institute of TAFE, *Submission No. 31*, p. 14.

4 Mr Robert Puffett, Assistant Director-General, Technical and Further Education, NSW TAFE Commission, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 705.

4.6 One of the benefits of such arrangements is that TAFE teaching staff are now returning to industry more regularly than was previously the case and are gaining exposure to the latest industry equipment and production methods.⁵

Distance education

4.7 The availability of distance education has increased. New delivery technologies mean that, in some subject areas, location is no longer an issue for institutes of TAFE. This may enable individual institutes to focus on their areas of competitive strength and deliver to a wider audience of students by delivering programs developed for local industry to interstate students and firms further afield.

4.8 An example is the flexible delivery provided by the Open Training and Education Network (OTEN) of NSW TAFE, which is the largest provider of distance education in Australia.⁶ OTEN provides training in a wide range of subject areas, many of which include both on- and off-the-job training. Individual TAFE institutes are also experimenting with more sophisticated distance education delivery. Eastern Institute of TAFE, for example, is using computer mediated and managed learning through the internet.⁷ This 'at home' delivery allows greater choice and flexibility for many students and particularly those with disabilities or in remote locations.

4.9 New delivery technologies include the internet and teleconferencing facilities. Such technology provides new roles for TAFE, such as developing material to be delivered using the new media; acting as a broker for courses which will be available from other providers via the internet and other emerging electronic delivery; and supporting students undertaking these courses.⁸

Vocational education and training in schools

4.10 The proportion of young people completing year 12 is decreasing having risen steadily during the 1980s to a peak in the early 1990s. (In 1992, the apparent retention rate of secondary students to year 12 was 77.1 per cent. In 1997 this figure had fallen to 71.8 per cent.)⁹ Courses with a greater vocational focus, made available in years 11 and 12, provide no benefit to students who have already dropped out. The availability of a variety of course options throughout secondary school is one important way for making school more attractive to students who may currently feel alienated. As such, it may also improve school retention rates. The Committee therefore strongly

5 *ibid*, p. 701.

6 ANTA, *Exhibit No. 34*, p. 19.

7 Eastern Institute of TAFE, *Submission No. 31*, p. 4.

8 Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE, *Submission No. 83*, pp. 2-3.

9 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Schools Australia*, Catalogue No. 4221.0, 1997, p. 69.

recommends the provision of vocational education in schools commencing earlier than year 11.

*The best [educational] programs combine students having a continuing experience of general education with an experience of some aspect of vocational education and training.*¹⁰ [Mr Terry Moran, Chief Executive Officer, ANTA]

4.11 Concern has been raised during the inquiry that students participating in VET in schools programs are foregoing a comprehensive education.

*On the one hand you have had this very marked vocational push in the schools, and it is working. There are large numbers of students going into those programs in the upper part of the secondary school, which is terrific in many ways, but at the same time we are talking about the need for cultural literacy, and in particular for teaching about citizenship and all of those other sorts of things which are history based and literature based... Yet a lot of the students are drifting out of the sort of subjects which actually give them access and the knowledge and the skills to be able to cope with some of those areas and to understand a lot of the concepts... there is a cultural side to education which we need to preserve very carefully.*¹¹ [Associate Prof Michael White, Curtin University of Technology]

4.12 Criticism of the increase in vocational education in schools needs to be set in a proper historical context. Compared to school retention rates 15-20 years ago, there are now many more secondary students in school who would have left at year 9 or 10 to undertake an apprenticeship or pursue unskilled employment. Fifteen years ago general education for 60 per cent of young people ceased before year 11. With the ratio of early leavers reversed, the curriculum must adjust to meet the needs of students with a wider range of interests, aspirations and abilities. The increased provision of VET in schools is an important factor in encouraging young people to remain in formal education. Obviously, as senior students undertake vocational education as an element in the secondary education program they are still receiving more general, cultural education than would be the case had they left school at year 9 or 10.

4.13 It has been put to the Committee that VET in schools has not lived up to its potential. NSW, which at 38,000¹² has the largest number of school students undertaking VET of any State, has identified (and is moving to address) a number of shortcomings in VET programs.

10 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 650.

11 *ibid*, p. 75.

12 TAFE NSW, *Submission No. 98*, p. 10.

*The great number of young people taking [a vocational course] have not counted it towards an HSC. The drop-out rate has been very high. It has been taught in facilities which do not have an industry standard and it has often been taught by teachers from say, an industrial arts area, or some area of over-supply who have been retrained to take VET.*¹³ [Dr Kenneth Boston, Managing Director, NSW TAFE Commission and Director General, Department of Education and Training]

4.14 VET in schools is still in a fledgling and experimental state. It is not as widely available to students as it should be and programs are of varying quality and relevance to industry.

4.15 Major factors leading to successful VET in schools programs include the availability of specially trained teachers, proximity to a TAFE institute and diversity of local industry.¹⁴ Also important is the availability of sufficient funding and administrative support. The Committee looked at these issues in more detail in its previous inquiry.¹⁵

Accreditation for schools offering VET

4.16 Ideally, all schools delivering VET must be registered training providers with all schools offering industry developed training packages resulting in awards recognised under the Australian Qualifications Framework. VET in schools programs must meet the following criteria to be recognised:

- be based on national industry directed skills/competency standards;
- relate to, or provide, vocational education and training certificates within the AQF and senior secondary certificates endorsed by State and Territory Boards of Studies;
- provide for industry identified requirements for structured workplace learning and assessment;
- take account of national and local skill shortages and industry needs;
- articulate with apprenticeships, traineeships, employment and further training;
- be delivered by providers who meet Australian Recognition Framework (ARF) registration requirements;
- provide for the needs of the equity target groups; and
- develop regional and community partnerships.¹⁶

13 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 714.

14 Former tech schools lead the way, *The Age*, 26 August 1997, p. C11.

15 *Youth employment: A working solution*, pp. 38-47.

16 ANTA, *Exhibit No. 33*, pp. 37-38.

4.17 Currently, hundreds of schools are providing VET. The training which they provide has equivalent status, recognition and accreditation to that provided elsewhere.¹⁷ For example, in the ACT Certificate I and II level programs are being offered in the senior secondary colleges in areas such as tourism, hospitality, child care and some of the metal trades.¹⁸ Victorian secondary schools offer Certificates I-IV in fields such as hospitality, professional writing and editing from year 9.¹⁹

4.18 Students participating in VET in schools programs are twice as likely to continue on to TAFE as those who do not participate.²⁰ To maximise the efficient use of students' time and public resources, it is therefore important that credit is provided for TAFE or VET completed in schools.

4.19 Basically a more comprehensive, integrated VET in schools program with an appropriate combination of vocational and general education is needed. The Committee fully endorses the following statement by NSW TAFE:

What we are reaching for is that sort of change: essentially a curriculum view where comprehensive secondary education means that you can go into a comprehensive high school and you can take both vocational education programs and general secondary education programs. They will all be accredited towards your HSC. They will all articulate with the Australian qualifications framework...they will use industry training packages where they are available and they will articulate with employment and with further and higher education.²¹ [Dr Kenneth Boston, Managing Director, NSW TAFE Commission and Director General, Department of Education and Training]

Teaching VET in schools

4.20 It is commendable that many schools and secondary teachers are attempting to give their students greater subject choice by offering VET courses. However, these are often highly technical courses which require specialist knowledge, skills and industry contacts. In some courses, it is appropriate for schools to provide VET courses; in others it is not.

Say in office skills, office administration – schools have got computer labs where we can recognise that curriculum and recognise that teacher. Why shouldn't it be done there? But

17 Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, *Submission No. 63*, p. 6.

18 Mr Aidan O'Leary, Convenor, National TAFE Science Network, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 617.

19 Mr Edward Brierley, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 324.

20 Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, *Submission No. 63*, p. 3.

21 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 715.

*if it is, say, aspects of the early certificates in commercial cookery and... we have got a kitchen with all the bells and whistles and all of those things and you have got a very minor facility in schools, why not use it; that is what it is there for. So we have got to open those doors and... talk to one another.*²² [Mr Geoffrey Smith, Director, Wodonga Institute of TAFE]

4.21 It is often inappropriate for secondary teachers to be offering these courses.

*There are proposals to utilise TAFE courses in schools without sufficient awareness that these courses are designed to be taught by instructors with substantial industry experience and supported by appropriate level equipment and facilities.*²³ [TAFE SA]

*There is a very strong argument... that teachers in the school system are not competent, at this stage in any case, to deliver any medium- to high-level VET training, that the kids need to go out of the schools and into the TAFE colleges or into the VET providers to get the right sort of people teaching them and to work in the right sort of conditions, because we have found that the least safe conditions are actually in the schools.*²⁴ [Mr Jon Birman, Deputy Director Operations, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia]

4.22 Schools wishing to offer VET must be able to provide suitably qualified instructors for their students. Some schools have teaching staff who have been retrained to meet industry standards for the delivery of dual accredited courses to senior secondary students.²⁵ However, often the most rational way to achieve an appropriate level of instruction for VET programs in secondary schools is through arrangements which enable schools to utilise the skills of appropriately qualified TAFE instructors.

*A future model which involves TAFE teachers in the delivery of industry study programs to secondary school students either in school or on TAFE premises is an obvious step forward.*²⁶ [TAFE NSW Managers Association]

Unfortunately, there are often barriers in the way of schools and TAFE coming to these sorts of arrangements (such as the lack of autonomy provided to school principals).

22 *ibid*, p. 319 (emphasis added).

23 *Submission No. 78*, p. 9.

24 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 21.

25 See, for example, Catholic Education Commission NSW, *Submission No. 99*, p. 1.

26 *Submission No. 90.1*, p. 1.

*There ought to be access for schools to TAFE facilities at a reasonable cost where specialist facilities and courses are not available in schools.*²⁷ [Australian Secondary Principals' Association]

Collaboration between institutes of TAFE and schools

4.23 Collaboration between schools and institutes of TAFE will avoid unnecessary duplication of resources and make VET in schools courses more industry responsive.

4.24 In some States, VET and school bureaucracies have been amalgamated to form a single department, which is intended to make collaboration more simple.

*... Our new organisation of the Department of Education and Training allows us to reposition the government schools and TAFE in a partnership to be able to be more responsive.*²⁸ [Mr Robert Puffett, Assistant Director-General, Technical and Further Education, NSW TAFE Commission and Department of Education and Training]

*There will be greater scope for resource sharing in the areas of facilities, equipment and teaching expertise. Future joint staff development, marketing, policy and planning activities have the potential to result in efficiency and effective gains across both sectors. The new department will also facilitate a further co-location of TAFE-school facilities in order to maximise student access to vocational education and training.*²⁹ [Mr Darryl Carter, Executive Director, TAFE SA]

4.25 Many TAFE institutes and secondary schools and colleges are already entering into arrangements to offer VET in schools. Students in South Australia's Seymour College and the Douglas Mawson Institute of TAFE have the option of working towards an information technology diploma while they complete their school studies. Students taking part receive credit towards a number of qualifications and receive points for tertiary entrance scores.³⁰ Eastern Institute of TAFE is offering to deliver VET courses to secondary colleges on a TAFE campus or a school site; provide curriculum and equipment support for programs delivered by the schools; and provide professional development programs for secondary college staff to enable them to conduct VET programs in the school.³¹ South West Institute of TAFE in Victoria offers holiday programs which allow students to participate in

27 *Submission No. 44*, p. 1.

28 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 703.

29 *ibid*, p. 102.

30 School offers diploma credit, *The Advertiser*, 6 March 1998, p. 28.

31 Eastern Institute of TAFE, *Submission No. 31*, p. 10.

modules which they cannot get at school because it is difficult to coordinate timetables between a number of schools.³²

4.26 The Committee views such arrangements as highly preferable to allowing inappropriately qualified school teachers to teach VET in schools. There should be an increase in the amount of collaboration between TAFE institutes and secondary schools, which should be encouraged and facilitated by governments at all levels.

Funding and administration for VET in schools

4.27 The number of secondary students participating in VET courses is rising significantly every year. The Commonwealth Government has provided \$20 million a year for four years (beginning in 1996-97) through the relevant state training authorities as an incentive for schools to offer VET. There is an additional \$5 million for regional schools.³³ As the number of students undertaking VET in schools increases each year, the same annual level of funding sharply reduces as a per capita amount. Victorian schools have been told that after three years the funding arrangement will not continue and the courses will have to be self sufficient.³⁴ As one witness stated:

*This is causing great disquiet in the Victorian secondary school community, because it means...schools are going to drop VET like a hot brick, and that would be a terrible tragedy.*³⁵

*All schools in the nation have been using their own resources to support these courses, and it is getting a bit wearing.*³⁶ [Mr Edward Brierley, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals]

4.28 Schools wishing to offer VET are in a difficult position. Most VET courses require payment for materials, equipment and, sometimes, expert tuition, but schools in some jurisdictions are not permitted to charge their students fees to cover these costs. When schools can and do charge higher fees for VET courses, that can have the effect of excluding students.

*Unfortunately the cost of access [to VET] for secondary students often precludes them from taking advantage of the courses offered.*³⁷ [Australian Secondary Principals' Association]

32 Mr Barrie Baker, Director, South West Institute of TAFE, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 349.

33 Mr Terry Moran, Chief Executive, ANTA, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 650.

34 Mr Edward Brierley, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 328.

35 *ibid.*

36 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 324.

37 *Submission No. 44*, p. 1.

4.29 Concern has been expressed that the Commonwealth demands (such as compliance with the National Training Framework (NTF), AQF and ARF) placed upon schools which want to provide recognised VET are beyond the capacity of many schools to meet.³⁸ Secondary schools should provide VET to appropriate standards. However, they need to be appropriately funded to meet the higher cost of VET courses for their students. Ideally, schools should have the funds and administrative autonomy to enter into arrangements with nearby TAFE institutes or other providers to deliver VET programs to their students. Ideally, schools would purchase VET services from TAFE on behalf of their students.

4.30 Recommendation 4.1

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth make available to secondary schools specific funding which enables them to purchase VET training through TAFE. Where this is not practicable, VET in schools program funding should be supplied to schools to provide their own VET.

4.31 Recommendation 4.2

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth increase the funding commitment for VET in schools programs to ensure that the initial per capita figure is at least maintained. It should also adopt a funding mechanism that maintains real per capita funding irrespective of fluctuations in demand for VET in schools.

General studies in TAFE

4.32 It is in the long-term interest of industry to have well-educated employees who possess appropriate general and interpersonal skills as well as industry specific skills. However, industry has exhibited a reluctance to make the longer term investment concentrating instead on the development of its immediate workforce needs. The Committee would like to see the incorporation of more elements of general education in VET, using methods appropriate to VET students and industry, so as to train more ‘rounded’ TAFE graduates for industry, society and personal development.

*Competency based training when limited to narrow, vocationally specific competencies works against the principles of lifelong education.*³⁹ [TAFE SA]

38 Catholic Education Commission NSW, *Submission No. 99*, p. 2.

39 *Submission No. 78*, p. 14.

4.33 In 1996 research was carried out into the extent to which training in vocational competencies leads to the acquisition of generic competencies, or the Mayer key competencies, which are the foundation of lifelong learning. It was found that very little transfer occurs, unless there are specific educational strategies in place to achieve it.⁴⁰ The way in which this occurs is particularly important, if it is to seem relevant and valuable to students and potential employers. Previous attempts at including general studies in vocational courses have generally been unsuccessful.

*In the past...students have seen them as being either watered down, irrelevant, something you do not have to do, of low status or not being valuable to the employer. So they do not work. We know they do not work; we know that when they are seen as separate they do not work. If you call it 'economics' or 'liberal studies', I suspect it will not work either. It will be seen as being too hard; they will have difficulty engaging with it and so on.*⁴¹ [Prof John Stevenson, Head of School of Vocational, Technology and Arts Education, Griffith University]

4.34 It is therefore necessary to incorporate elements of general studies into vocational education in a way which makes it relevant to the students and their employers.

*[A positive example is] treating a vocation in a historical kind of way; that is, trying to bring a historical element into the vocation itself so that history was not being taught over there and vocational skills over here but, while the skills were being developed, their context within the history of that vocation was being explored as well, and the role of that vocation in a contemporary society was being explored. So that was giving the person more pride in their vocation: seeing its value within society was enabling them to articulate that value and to be critical about that value in respect of other kinds of vocations.*⁴² [Prof John Stevenson, Head of School of Vocational, Technology and Arts Education, Griffith University]

40 Curtis et al, Teaching and Learning the Key Competencies in the VET Sector: Research Support, Adelaide: Flinders Institute for the Study of Teaching, 1996, quoted in TAFE SA, *Submission No. 78*, p. 5.

41 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 594.

42 *ibid.*

Research in TAFE

Collaborative research

4.35 There is scope for TAFE to become more involved in collaborative research partnerships with the research arms of universities. This prospect is supported by the Australian Research Council, responsible for making recommendations to the Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs about the distribution of funds under research programs, national research priorities and the coordination of research policy.

*The ARC...would welcome collaboration between researchers in higher education and vocational education and training institutes and ...would be pleased to consider funding appropriate projects jointly with the Research Advisory Council.*⁴³ [Australian Research Council]

4.36 It is important, however, that if TAFE develops a greater research capacity, it does not lose its practical focus.

*A detachment from the practical would be a terrible risk for TAFE. If research activity led to a detachment and an abstracting of knowledge that was not grounded in practice and concrete, I think we would have been moved backwards.*⁴⁴ [Prof John Stevenson, Head of School of Vocational, Technology and Arts Education, Griffith University]

4.37 It is the view of the Committee that TAFE institutes should be permitted to undertake applied research through collaborative ventures with universities. The Committee would like to see a greater proportion of research funding granted to joint initiatives by TAFE institutes and universities for research into practical everyday problems.

4.38 Recommendation 4.3

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs pursue with State Education Ministers the removal of barriers to TAFE institutes entering collaborative research ventures with universities.

43 *Submission No. 45*, p. 1.

44 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 601.

4.39 Recommendation 4.4

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs ask the Australian Research Council to give further consideration to appropriate collaborative research projects and to report on these to the Minister within six months.

Current research

4.40 TAFE research primarily focuses on issues such as best practice in workplace delivery, consultancy services, flexible learning and competency based training.⁴⁵ The focus is usually on pedagogical method, rather than subject content and it is entirely appropriate that TAFE institutes should conduct this type of research, with or without the assistance of universities.

*I think a research capacity that is focused on the development of VET policy, and that focuses on the client base, is appropriate and desirable.*⁴⁶ [Mr Peter Veenker, Chief Executive and Director General, Canberra Institute of Technology]

4.41 Several TAFE institutes indicated to the Committee that their staff are involved in research. Casey Institute of TAFE has commissioned research into the outcomes of TAFE study and the attractiveness of TAFE as a study option. Wodonga Institute of TAFE has implemented a number of research initiatives. The Institute has its own research officer and has formed a Research Reference Group with representation from the Institute's Council, senior managers and teaching Heads of Department. This led to the adoption of a Research Strategy which has provided formal direction for Institute research activity, and has resulted in successful tendering for research project funding and the development of regional and state networks for VET researchers. An example of the Institute's work is its research into workplace mentoring and guidance, in partnership with Griffith University.⁴⁷

4.42 Time constraints on TAFE instructors make it difficult for them to conduct research. Their teaching commitments are not designed to accommodate research unlike those of university lecturers, nor is the TAFE teaching year. Joint research projects would need to recognise this and grant TAFE staff relief from teaching duties commensurable with their level of participation on a research project.

45 Casey Institute of TAFE, *Submission No. 50*, p. 5.

46 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 414.

47 Wodonga Institute of TAFE, 1996 Annual Report, *Exhibit No. 16*, p. 13.

Competition for funding

4.43 In the past, the TAFE sector's attempts to undertake research have been stifled by a lack of access to research funding.

*If we do a little bit of research, it is going to have to be funded from other sources. Generally speaking, university sources of funds are not available.*⁴⁸ [Mr Aiden O'Leary, Convenor, National TAFE Science Network]

When ANTA has attempted to foster research in TAFE (in partnership with a university) the research has then gone to the university. TAFE frequently does not have the skills to do the research. It also does not have the opportunity to acquire the skills through collaborative research ventures.⁴⁹

*We [TAFE] need the expertise of the university in the research methodology side.*⁵⁰ [Mr Charles Wilkins, President, Victorian Association of Directors of TAFE]

4.44 ANTA does have a research funding program for VET. ANTA currently funds three key research centres in higher education institutions and a joint university/TAFE centre. ANTA also makes available funding for VET research and evaluation through the National Research and Evaluation Committee. Currently, neither higher education nor VET statistical collections offer any real indication of the scope of this collaboration and further research is required on the costs and benefits of this activity.⁵¹

4.45 Recommendation 4.5

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs raise in the ANTA Ministerial Council the need for better information to be obtained on the extent of higher education/TAFE research collaboration including a cost benefit analysis of such activities.

New TAFE enterprises

4.46 Some TAFE institutes are seeking to operate new enterprises, such as employment services and group training companies, which would complement their existing focus on employment based training. Some institutes already have these arrangements in place, but in some jurisdictions there are barriers to TAFE undertaking these activities. These obstacles clearly make TAFE less

48 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 624.

49 Mr Charles Wilkins, President, Victorian Association of Directors of TAFE Institutes, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 301.

50 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 302.

51 ANTA, *Exhibit No. 29*, p. 26.

able to compete with private providers, who are free to offer services which add value to their vocational education and training businesses.

Group training companies

4.47 The Committee endorses the role of group training companies in enhancing employment based training opportunities for young people. There is scope for some institutes of TAFE to operate group training companies, to provide more opportunities for people who wish to undertake employment based training.

4.48 Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE has indicated that there is support within the sector for TAFE institutes to operate group training companies.

*It would be a very solid option for us to be able...to employ trainees or apprentices so we can ensure they are training, because at the moment there is very little choice for apprentices and trainees. They can either try and get employment through a company or they can get employment through a group training scheme, but there is no competition to a group training scheme. TAFEs are not able to compete in that area, and we see that as a definite disadvantage for us.*⁵² [Mrs Elizabeth Nicholls, Director/Chief Executive Officer, Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE]

4.49 Were TAFE institutes permitted to form group training companies, TAFE's existing links with industry would support a group training role. It would strengthen TAFE's trainee and apprentice training role by reinforcing the links between TAFE study and positive employment outcomes. It also has the potential to create more employment-based training opportunities.

Providing employment services

4.50 The employment services which institutes of TAFE provide or want to provide are linked to their core business of employment related education and training. Institute based employment services have the potential to make TAFE a more attractive option to school leavers and job seekers.

*In the future, the success of institutes [of TAFE] will be measured by the number of their graduates who gain and maintain meaningful employment.*⁵³ [Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE]

52 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 276.

53 *Submission No. 83*, p. 1.

*It adds value to what we do.*⁵⁴ [Mr Charles Wilkins, President, Victorian Association of Directors of TAFE Institutes]

4.51 The types of employment services available vary from institute to institute. Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE provides an employment service which assists with preparing curricula vitae, teaching interviewing skills and matching students to jobs. The institute has 3,600 participating enterprises and placed 1,000 students in work in 1997.⁵⁵ The service has been extended to other TAFE institutes in South Australia.

4.52 Work placements within many TAFE courses expose students to potential employers and often lead to students being offered employment.

*One of the best forms of job placement is practical placement, where students go out and undertake practical placement within the work force. We find that a lot of good comes from that program.*⁵⁶ [Ms Antonia George, Associate Director, Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE]

4.53 Some institutes of TAFE in Victoria joined consortia which submitted tenders to become Employment Placement Enterprises (EPEs), recently appointed by DEETYA. TAFE institutes see this as a natural extension of, and payment for, a service they have performed on an informal basis for a long time.

*In some respects it is going to legitimise a situation which already exists. We do a lot of it anyway. We have got a good office admin area. They get people who ring them up asking for good students, and can put them forward for a job. There has always been that. I guess if we undertake it on a full-time, paid basis, you are just making it another part of the process. Students come to us to get a job. They do not come to us to get necessarily a qualification, unless it leads to a job. If we can provide them with both, then we are supplying a one-stop service.*⁵⁷ [Mr Russell Francis, General Manager, Education and Client Services, Barton Institute of TAFE]

4.54 These are just three examples of a wide range of employment services offered by TAFE institutes. The Committee believes that institutes should be freed from restrictions and empowered to operate group training companies and employment services if they so desire.

4.55 One measure which governments use of a TAFE institute's success is the employment outcomes of its graduates.

54 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 298.

55 Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE, *Submission No. 83*, pp. 1-2.

56 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 240.

57 *ibid*, p. 253.

*[South Australian] TAFE institutes are required to report on student employment outcomes and directly assist graduates in their search for employment by appointing institute based employment placement officers. The government expects TAFE SA, as the public provider, to provide training in areas of identified skill shortage so as to optimise the employment prospects of graduates and to provide a supply of skilled workers to industry.*⁵⁸ [Mr Darryl Carter, Executive Director, TAFE SA]

4.56 Having institutes act as group training companies or EPEs is a logical extension of TAFE's vocational education and training role which capitalises on TAFE's existing links with industry and local employers to benefit both employers and students. The existence of successful employment service ventures at TAFE would also help promote TAFE courses as gateways to employment. However, before it is a viable option, TAFE institutes need to be empowered by the State, Territory and Commonwealth Governments to operate subsidiary companies.

4.57 Recommendation 4.6

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, in conjunction with State Ministers for education, remove any barriers to institutes of TAFE establishing subsidiary companies or enterprises for the purpose of operating Employment Placement Enterprises and group training companies.

Education exports

4.58 Institutes of TAFE have had a relatively limited involvement in international education and training. However, over the past five years Australian TAFE products have become increasingly known and valued in South East Asia and Pacific Rim countries. TAFE lecturers teaching in training consultancies overseas and the growing number of overseas students studying here gives TAFE an increasing body of international market intelligence.⁵⁹ New South Wales TAFE has indicated to the Committee that it is providing consultancies and support in South-East Asia, the Middle East, the Pacific and Central America. To attain these contracts, NSW TAFE has beaten tenders submitted by German, British, Canadian and American providers, indicating that NSW TAFE is meeting international benchmarks and providing value for service.⁶⁰

58 *ibid*, p. 103.

59 Regency Institute of TAFE, *Submission No. 84*, p. 5.

60 Mr Robert Puffett, Assistant Director-General, Technical and Further Education, NSW TAFE Commission, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 701.

4.59 Some TAFE institutes have established mechanisms to increase educational exports. TAFE SA institutes have formed an international education consortium through which they are establishing economic, technological and cultural links between Australia and various Asian nations. Another example is Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE's Centre for International Education and Training which has allowed the Institute to significantly increase the two way flow of students and fellowship holders.⁶¹

4.60 Other institutes have concluded arrangements with particular countries. Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE has in place an agreement with South Korea through which Korean students complete the second year of the diploma level course in aerospace systems at the TAFE institute and can then progress to a Monash University degree through established articulation arrangements.⁶² This highlights the advantage in overseas markets of having in place articulation arrangements between TAFE institutes and universities.

*Collaboration [between TAFE institutes and universities]... is actually attractive from an export point of view. The way it works commonly at the moment is that a student might do an associate diploma of hospitality in TAFE and then get some recognition of that towards a business or commerce degree in a university, get some advance standing because they have covered some marketing or covered some accounting and then they can complete a university degree.*⁶³ [Prof John Chipman, Vice-Chancellor and President, Central Queensland University]

4.61 There is also scope to set up learning centres in Asia which will serve as platforms from which to deliver TAFE programs and form bases for Australian students to learn the language and be immersed in the local culture.⁶⁴

4.62 The Committee endorses attempts by TAFE institutes to market themselves internationally, provided this is done without institutes losing focus on their core functions (such as fulfilling community service obligations and providing trade training) and the needs of local industry.

4.63 The Committee notes the argument presented by the Victorian Government that dual sector institutions may have an advantage in promoting education exports. This warrants further detailed examination and a policy position by the Commonwealth.

61 Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE, *Submission No. 83*, p. 2.

62 Ms Antonia George, Associate Director, Social and Applied Sciences, Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 229.

63 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 570.

64 Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE, *Submission No. 83*, p. 2.

Careers guidance and the promotion of VET

Careers guidance in schools

4.64 The advice on post-secondary education and employment options given to young people at school impacts significantly on the decisions they make once they have left school. Guidance services are inadequate and virtually non-existent outside educational institutions. This is an issue of grave concern to the Committee.

4.65 Australia spends about \$7 billion per annum of public and private money on VET. Commonwealth Government funding for higher education in 1997 was \$5.5 billion, which includes student contributions and liabilities through HECS. Despite the enormous expenditure on post-secondary education Australia has no consistent national guidance program to help people understand and navigate the system.

4.66 In many cases careers counselling has not reflected the full range and value of pathways and options available to young people and has lacked a labour market outcome focus. There has been too much emphasis on higher education as the only valuable outcome, with VET presented as a second best option.⁶⁵

4.67 In its previous report, the Committee considered the issue of inadequate careers guidance, particularly for students who do not wish to go to university. The Committee found that teachers appointed as careers guidance counsellors were often badly equipped for this role, lacking up-to-date information on employment trends and the opportunities available to students who do not continue on to university. Often guidance counsellors simply do not have the time or the background information to provide comprehensive advice. Consequently, the Committee recommended that comprehensive, appropriately resourced careers guidance which addresses these problems should be made an entitlement for all secondary students.⁶⁶

4.68 The issue has yet to be adequately addressed by Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments.

*We have had to sell TAFE so hard to schools **because the school teachers sell university not TAFE**. Our whole issue, in our relationship with the schools — which is extremely positive in New South Wales — has been about teaching school teachers that 55 per cent of their students will not go to university and “Please give them the information about where to find the level of qualification that they need”.⁶⁷*

65 ANTA, *Exhibit No. 30*, p. 24.

66 *Youth employment: A working solution*, pp. 48-56.

67 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 473 (emphasis added).

[Ms Ardyce Harris, Vice-President, NSW TAFE Managers' Association]

4.69 One of the main problems here is the fact that most school teachers have no experience of TAFE themselves. They progressed straight from secondary school to teachers college or university and back to school, and are generally unaware of the range of options that TAFE can offer. The lack of sufficient funding to provide adequate resources and information to careers guidance officers compounds this problem. The Committee reasserts its position that careers guidance in schools should be better resourced to enable properly qualified and equipped counsellors to provide comprehensive advice to students. Careers guidance must be regarded as a legitimate need and right for all secondary students.

Marketing TAFE to school leavers

4.70 To an extent, it is the responsibility of the TAFE sector to better market itself to school leavers and the wider community, to make them aware of the TAFE option. Some TAFE institutes are already doing this.

*We have very strong links with the local secondary community colleges, and we make sure that we are running more and more programs, which are not only dual recognition, but are also what we call TAFE tasters. Our job is to market ourselves to likely candidates in future years, and the only way we can do that is to make sure that they have knowledge of where we are, and come in and see the sort of skills that we are doing. So we often run one-week programs for, say, year 10 students from Sandringham Secondary, and we might have 300 of them on site. We pay for that ourselves but they might try some fabrication. They might try some cooking. They might try some food processing. They might try some electronics and some word processing.*⁶⁸ [Mr Russell Francis, General Manager, Education and Client Services, Barton Institute of TAFE]

4.71 The Committee would like to see more TAFE institutes providing opportunities for potential students to experience what they have to offer. Representatives of TAFE need to get into the schools and make students aware of their options and how beneficial a TAFE qualification can be.

Adult careers guidance

4.72 TAFE needs to be marketed just as effectively to potential mature aged students who are unsure of their options.

68 *ibid*, p. 254.

...[W]e have now got a very serious level of sub-optimal use of resources because people are unable to identify with any ease what are the next steps available to them in their learning...Adult education is full of these stories of people flogging around for five or six years and finally landing on the one thing that was terrific for them. You say, 'What a lovely story, but what a shame there was not a process.' If a 45-year-old bricklayer gets laid off now, has got some skills, does not have them recognised and so on, and needs to reconstruct, there is no obvious place where that person can go and reliably be introduced to the spectrum of learning opportunities.⁶⁹ [Dr Alastair Crombie, Executive Director, Australian Association of Adult and Community Education]

4.73 One of the Commonwealth Government's initiatives is the Career Counselling Programme which is to be part of the Mutual Obligation arrangements that include the Work for the Dole scheme. This offers access to career counselling for unemployed people 18 to 24 years of age who have been unemployed for at least six months and are interested in undertaking part-time education and training. Part of this program aims to direct people to information on educational requirements and programs, and assist them to identify and match their goals, interests and ability.⁷⁰

4.74 Whilst the Committee views this scheme as a positive step towards providing people with more information on their education and career options, it considers that current government-sponsored careers guidance programs do not go far enough in reaching those most in need of careers guidance. The Career Counselling Programme excludes people over 25 years of age. However, anyone facing unemployment or the need to retrain or upgrade their education needs guidance on the education and training options available and their potential to lead to employment in local circumstances.

The diversification of pathways, learning opportunities, including the increasing range and variety of Internet delivered and other distance education opportunities, has made it more and more vital that we take seriously now the need for a national information, guidance and counselling service. We do not have this. We have that cultural lag that we have still by and large got most of our resources for educational guidance and counselling parked at the front end of people's educational lives or the final years of secondary or, of course, universities, to attend to their

69 *ibid*, p. 637.

70 *Request for Tender for the provision of a Career Counselling Programme and a National Managing Agent*, pp. 1-3. This can be accessed at <http://www.deetya.gov.au/divisions/mot/career/rtf339.htm>.

*graduates.*⁷¹ [Dr Alastair Crombie, Executive Director,
Australian Association of Adult and Community Education]

4.75 Existing career guidance arrangements for school students and the wider community are lacking, in terms of both the resourcing of career guidance services and the range of information available. Improving the guidance and information available by providing an open comprehensive service to people to negotiate the post secondary education system has the potential to save individuals and the community a vast amount of time and money, maximise human potential and match prospective students to courses most suited to their needs.

4.76 While it would be appropriate to charge employed people seeking advice on further education and training opportunities with a view to changing jobs, the service should be free of charge to people on benefits and other low income earners. How the Government decides to provide the service is a decision best made in light of its experience with the new Career Counselling Programme. The Commonwealth should fund a universal career guidance service, in addition to funding the improvement in careers guidance in secondary schools the Committee recommended in its youth employment report.

4.77 Recommendation 4.7

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government fund a universal careers guidance service.

71 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 636.