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To:                    The Secretary  
Standing Committee on Education and Training  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
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**7.10.02**

## **Submission from Career Education Association of Victoria**

### **Inquiry into vocational education in schools**

On 18 July 2002 the Minister for Education Science and Training, Hon Dr Brendan Nelson MP, asked the Committee to inquire into the place of vocational education in schools, its growth and development and its effectiveness in preparing students for post-school options.

The Committee invites interested persons and organisations to make submissions addressing the terms of reference by 14 October 2002. In order to facilitate electronic publishing of submissions, the committee would prefer them to be [emailed](#) or sent on disk to the [secretariat](#), if possible.

### **Terms of Reference**

The House Committee on Education and Training is to inquire into the place of vocational education in schools, its growth and development and its effectiveness in preparing students for post-school options, with particular reference to:

- the range, structure, resourcing and delivery of vocational education programs in schools, including teacher training and the impact of vocational education on other programs;
- the differences between school-based and other vocational education programs and the resulting qualifications, and the pattern of industry acceptance of school-based programs;
- vocational education in new and emerging industries; and
- the accessibility and effectiveness of vocational education for indigenous students.

Dear Honourable Members of the Committee on Education and Training,

We are pleased to have an opportunity to present a submission on behalf of our 600 members representing government, catholic and independent schools in metropolitan and regional Victoria.

We would like to comment on the terms of reference. By “Vocational education in schools” we presume you are referring to the inclusion of accredited VET programs in secondary school curriculum as opposed to a broader definition of vocational education, to include VET in schools PLUS:

- Career and work education programs
- Work experience
- Individual and group counselling for students
- Enterprise education
- And other related programs and activities that impact on the development of young people’s preparation to enter the world of work.

In summary, our dilemma is precisely this. That the federal government, and to a lesser extent, other stakeholders have collapsed the whole field of *vocational learning* into the VET in schools basket – hoping it will deliver all, and be an easy to quantify educational item.

Our members embraced the concept of expanding secondary school curriculum with VET studies and have worked extremely hard to make the implementation and delivery work for students, other teachers, school management, the registered training organisations participating and a range of other parties involved in support activities and delivery.

Our comments in relation to the first term of reference

- **the range, structure, resourcing and delivery of vocational education programs in schools, including teacher training and the impact of vocational education on other programs;**

are as follows:

#### **Supporting comments:**

- 👤 members have embraced the number and diversity of VET programs available on offer to secondary students
- 👤 members have aimed to increase understanding of the value of VETIS programs by students, parents, other teachers, school managements, and employers
- 👤 members continue to lobby for the inclusion and growth of VET programs within the secondary school curriculum with limited resources and time allocation to assist in this.

#### **Barriers to delivery:**

- 👤 sustainability of specific programs is difficult due to funding shortfalls, the vagaries of student choices, the vagaries of TAFE and private RTO fees and appropriate training, program availability etc.
- 👤 quality teacher training needs to be improved via FREE delivery of workplace assessor training to teachers, and inclusion of VET program awareness in undergraduate and postgraduate teacher training programs.

👤 VET programs become the main vehicle for students at risk of leaving school early and can be seen as a marginal program in core curriculum offerings

👤 lack of adequate and appropriate work placements available to service the needs of all VETIS programs. Most VET program placements allow students to view an industry rather than allow for on the job delivery of competencies.

In relation to the first term of reference point:

👤 **The impact of vocational education on other programs.**

our comments are as follows:

**Supporting comments:**

👤 improved student satisfaction with school and increased retention rates. Assists in moving the relationships between students and teachers from a hierarchical one to a ‘teacher as facilitator’ supporting role.

👤 VET adds value to the traditional core curriculum adding breadth and relevance to the post school options.

👤 opportunity for schools and industry to interface and delivery quality training programs meeting local employment needs.

**Barriers to delivery**

👤 pressure on traditional subjects and lack of continuity for long term planning impacts on individual school’s planning and provisioning.

👤 the distinct lack of understanding in schools about the difference between vocational learning and VET, often confusing the two and using VET provision to satisfy the needs of vocational learning for all students.

👤 the inability of schools to offer vocational learning programs in the crucial years 7 to 9, as all resources have been tagged for the post compulsory years. Little to no funding by the education systems for formal vocational learning programs in Year 9 and 10.

Our comments in relation to the second term of reference

- **the differences between school-based and other vocational education programs and the resulting qualifications, and the pattern of industry acceptance of school-based programs;**

are as follows:

Our member’s reported that many students ‘taste’ a VET program, rather than assume it is their one lifelong vocational decision. On the other hand, a significant number of students obtain ongoing employment as a result of meeting employers through a VET in schools program.

As previously indicated, those ‘outside’ of schools, and often even teachers not involved in VET delivery, school management and parents erroneously assume all ‘work education’ issues are resolved by completing a VET study. Our members indicate that success in the real world of work is often dependent on a far broader range of knowledge about work, work readiness skills, job seeking skills, transferable skills and other factors than VET alone provides. We want to see much broader work education programs mandated across the country, to pick up on these

broader topics, and to reinforce with all young people the generic skills and employability competencies sought by employers such as:

1. Information management
2. Literacy and numeracy
3. Attitude and enthusiasm
4. Team work
5. Information technology 'literacy' etc.

Our comments in relation to the third term of reference

- **vocational education in new and emerging industries;**

Whilst the vast range of VET programs available for schools to deliver do include many programs on the cutting edge of new industries, such as multimedia and seafood industry aquaculture, the CEAV notes that much within the existing school curriculum is just as relevant. That in fact being prepared for the future world of work is as much about the generic and attitudinal attributes as about technical skills.

The downgrading of career guidance and work education programs, based on the mistaken view that VET programs solve the problem, contributes to many of our members' inability to empower young people for the future.

For example, the new national website, *myfuture.edu.au*, cannot be powerfully brought to young people in schools whilst there is no classroom time for formal career/work education. It is a highly sophisticated website that requires initial guidance and support to fully support and facilitate student access. Current school practices, and the underlying lack of online computer facilities for students and for career education in particular, exacerbate this.

Many emerging industries are far too specialised and localised for students in the transition years to be considered. Often the message given to students in Years 10 and 11 by industry is that they want older students with completed qualifications in specific areas and school based entry level training does not provide this. Organising alternative and customised programs with TAFE to suit industry needs is financially prohibitive for most schools. There are often mixed messages being given out to students from different industries who only target students in secondary schools when they are in 'crisis employment' mode, giving little to no thought about future training needs.

Linda Baron

*On behalf of the CEAV*