

**SUBMISSION OF THE WESTERN  
AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF  
TRAINING TO THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES STANDING  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING INQUIRY INTO  
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING IN SCHOOLS**

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## Introduction

As the Western Australian Government instrumentality responsible for the provision of vocational education and training (VET), the Department of Training monitors the skill requirements of industry closely and supports the changing educational needs of the State's workforce.

The Department's vision is "the best trained, most employable people in the world" which is underpinned by a mission to "work with its partners on behalf of the State Government, to ensure the provision of quality vocational education, training and employment programs, products and services that meet the needs of its clients".

In order to achieve this vision, the Department of Training has identified six strategic priorities for the training and employment sector in Western Australia, namely:

- *Job Growth* – Support the creation of new and sustainable jobs through the provision of employment and vocational education and training services targeted to the current and future needs of industry and local communities;
- *Young People* – Increase the participation of 15-19 year olds in post-compulsory education and training and improve the transition of young people from education into the workforce;
- *Community and Industry Participation* – Increase broad-based community and industry participation in decision-making and priority setting for vocational education and training and employment;
- *Quality and Value* – Improve client confidence in the quality, effectiveness and value of vocational education and training;
- *Lifelong Learning and Employability for All* – Increase access and pathways in education, training, retraining and employment for all and raise community awareness of the importance of lifelong learning; and
- *Indigenous Employment and Training* – Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve employment and training outcomes equal to the wider community.

Strong industry linkages are essential to all facets of the Department's operations and include collaboration in relation to industry's future training and employment needs and business occurrences affecting their staff, suppliers and local communities.

## Context

In Western Australia, delivery of VET in Schools is primarily the responsibility of the Department of Education. The Department of Training acts as a conduit for ANTA funding of VET in Schools programs, but does not exercise direct control over the use of those funds. That responsibility rests with the Department of Education, the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools.

A Ministerial Review of the Interface Between Education and Training in Western Australia is currently under way. Chaired by Dr Peter Tannock, Vice Chancellor, Notre Dame University the Review is seeking to investigate the relationship between Education and Training with a view to improving the effectiveness of the respective systems with respect to delivery of services to the 15-19 year old cohort.

Specifically, the Review will address:

- the clarification of the purpose of VET in Schools and the respective roles of each sector;
- the optimal use of public education and training resources;
- quality assurance arrangements, including assessment and recognition;
- articulation arrangements between sectors;
- resourcing; and
- agreed statistical measurement and reporting.

The Review is expected to publish its findings towards the end of 2002. Consequently, the opinions expressed in this submission are made in the context of the current Western Australian environment and are not intended to pre-empt any findings of the Ministerial Review.

## **Background**

For up to a third of youth (aged 15-19 years) the transition from school to work may be detrimental to their future economic and social wellbeing. There is overwhelming evidence that those who leave school early with no further post-compulsory education face a significantly higher risk of longer and more frequent episodes of unemployment.

Strategies which focus on keeping young people in a learning environment are more effective and less costly than post-school intervention strategies. In this context, it should be noted that key educational issues such as literacy and numeracy need to be better addressed before the age of 15. Low literacy and numeracy achievement in middle schooling is a strong influence on subsequent school non-completion. (Early School Leavers: Who Are They, Why Do They Leave, and What Are the Consequences, Marks, G and McMillan J, 2001)

In its policy document *Investing in our Children*, the Western Australian Government has established a target retention rate of 90 per cent or above for year 12. It is clear that vocational education and training will play an increasingly important role in ensuring that this target is met. VET in Schools programs have played an important role in ensuring 'at risk' students remain within the school system and offer diversity in study options.

The VET sector has its own qualities and identity that contribute significantly to its broad appeal. VET offers an effective means of assisting the transition from school to work and is an important addition to the range of options available to students. However, the complementary role of the sectors with respect to 15-19 year olds should not mean a dilution of the identity of each as, in many ways, the differences between the sectors are fundamental to meeting the needs of different student groups.

The VET sector can be differentiated by the following factors:

- its direct relevance to industry and contemporary work practices including competency based training, vocational outcomes and assessment to industry standards;
- the importance of industry investment in training;
- the breadth of the needs it serves and diversity of the circumstances of its students;
- its accessibility to the adult population;
- an adult learning environment;
- the importance of non-classroom based learning environments; and
- that it is an effective vehicle for facilitating successful school to work transition through relevant vocational training.

Future developments with respect to VET in Schools should build on the individual strengths of the sectors to ensure that a comprehensive range of learning experiences are offered to students, whatever their current level of achievement or future aspirations.

#### **Term 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.*

The Curriculum Council of Western Australia indicates that students in 157 schools across all school/sector systems had access to VET programs in 2001. The number of school students who successfully completed at least one unit of competency has risen from approximately 7000 in 1999 to nearly 10,000. In total, 70% of students had access to post-compulsory VET programs delivered by schools in partnership with Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). This group included 20% in partnerships where the RTO was responsible for all delivery and assessment (largely in non-government schools) and 50% in partnerships where the school was responsible for assessment and delivery and the RTO responsible for quality assurance. The remaining 30% of students had access to delivery in schools that had gained RTO status. (Curriculum Council: Future Directions for VET in Schools p7)

VET in Schools in Western Australia is exclusively at Certificate I and II level, although there is a feasibility study being undertaken with a view to allow the delivery of a Certificate III in Information Technology.

In 2002, 30 qualifications across 14 industry areas have been identified for delivery as part of the VET in Schools Program. These are listed at Appendix 1.

An alternative to 'traditional' VET in Schools is the School-Based New Apprenticeship. In 1997, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) endorsed the *Principles and Framework for New Apprenticeships for School Students*. This established arrangements for New Apprenticeships in schools with guidelines that clearly determine the links between apprenticeships/traineeships, employers and schools. The key features of these arrangements are that they:

- are employment based;
- involve a Training Agreement, linked to an industrial award or agreement and signed by the employer and the person in training;
- have the training component delivered by an RTO;
- include the attainment of the senior secondary certificate and a VET qualification; and
- require attendance at school and work.

In its 2002-3 Budget, the Commonwealth included additional incentives for employers who participate in the School Based New Apprenticeships program.

In Western Australia, 306 students commenced School-Based New Apprenticeships in 2001.

The 2000 review of VET in Schools by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) found that there is considerable variety across jurisdictions as to what constitutes VET in Schools, with significant variations between States and Territories. In Western Australia, 80% of VET in Schools delivery in Western Australia is embedded in Board of Studies (Curriculum Council) general education subjects with the remainder delivered as stand-alone units of competency or Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualifications. This is comparable to South Australia, for example, which has 79% of its courses embedded in Board of Studies subjects. Other States have an opposite mix such as Queensland which recorded 17% embedded and 83% stand-alone. New South Wales and Victoria do not embed any VET in Schools qualifications in Board of Studies subjects.

VET in Schools is an important initiative in the context of a broad based general education and should provide students with the opportunity to work towards VET qualifications and/or opportunities to discover the world of work utilising transition arrangements that are both structured and safe.

Students must also be able to gain real workplace skills, discover their learning strengths and interests, find opportunities to apply skills learned in formal educational environments and make informed decisions about their learning goals.

In 2001, enrolled students in the VET sector (including fee for service activities) represented 9.7% of the adult population aged 15-64. Over a three year period it is estimated that around 20% of the adult population has enrolled in such training. The 15-19 year old cohort is a significant focus of the sector which is estimated to represent 28% of the total client cohort for VET in Western Australia in 2001.

The Department of Training and the Department of Education are working closely to ensure that, where appropriate, students are able to draw on the particular skills and expertise available within the TAFE sector to provide students with the VET experience most suited to their needs.

With respect to the section of this Term of Reference relating to teacher training, Department of Training comments on this matter have been included at Term of Reference 2.

#### **Term of Reference 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.*

In 2001, at the request of the National Training Quality Council (NTQC) of ANTA, the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary Schools Studies (QBSSSS) undertook a study into the introduction of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) for VET in Schools programs.

The resulting report contained an analysis of industry perspectives on VET in Schools programs and noted that feedback from employers had been difficult to obtain and contained significant variances.

The report observes that concern has been expressed by industry that the quality of VET delivered in schools is not comparable with that delivered by other training organisations.

This evidence is anecdotal, however, and there is no quantitative data available to offer a definitive answer to this question. Indeed, the authors note that *“it has been impossible to locate an employer capable of directly comparing a student with a training package qualification gained through a school which is an RTO, with a student who has gained the same qualification through another institution (for example, TAFE), or through workplace delivery arrangements”*. (The AQTF and VET in Schools: A Report to the National Training Quality Council, p 20)

The report does not therefore draw any conclusions with respect to the quality of training provided by schools compared with that provided by TAFE or RTOs due to:

- the relative newness of VET in Schools
- a lack of knowledge relating to VET in Schools by many employers;
- training packages in the school curriculum not having been in existence for long enough for employers to make comparisons;
- a student with a VET qualification not necessarily seeking employment in the related industry, further reducing opportunities for comparison; and
- problems associated with tracking post-compulsory students once they leave school.

In 2000, the Department of Training sought feedback from industry and TAFE colleges with respect to VET in Schools delivery. The [then] Industry Training Councils made a number of observations which simultaneously recognised the importance of the program because of the advantages it gives school-leavers entering the job market yet stressed the importance of teachers having industry experience being crucial to successful delivery.

Of course, one of the great strengths of the VET system is its close linkages with industry. This enables TAFE colleges to deliver graduates with skills and qualifications directly relevant to industry needs. In its research into VET in Schools, the Department of Training found that views as expressed in the extract below were not uncommon.

*Good liaison between schools and employers within particular regions may well provide springboards to employment for students. It is essential that employers receive clear, thorough information from schools regarding VET in Schools programs and the opportunities which are opened up for employers. However...there is a great variety in the amount and level of information and contact between schools and employer groups within communities or regions. Some of this must relate to the degree of knowledge of VET possessed by the staff and administration responsible for coordinating VET in Schools.*  
*[Department of Training, Unpublished Research]*

This sentiment was echoed in the 2000/01 Integrated Monitoring Report which documented monitoring activities against the AQF in RTO schools. The monitoring activities were undertaken by the Department of Training on behalf of the Training Accreditation Council and cited by the Curriculum Council in *Future Directions for VET in Schools*. That report noted the commitment of teachers to their students in all schools, very good linkages with local community/industry in some schools and poor linkages in others.

The Department of Training is now working closely with the Department of Education to address these and other concerns and is engaged in a number of collaborative activities designed to strengthen VET in Schools delivery.

These include:

- development of protocols between the Department of Training and the Department of Education on reciprocal use of TAFE facilities by schools;
- increased VET in Schools delivery by TAFE colleges through the expansion of profile funded delivery;
- expanding access to VET professional development for teachers in Government schools;
- Information and Communications Technology (ICT) professional development for teachers;
- an accelerated process for school-based Skill Centres in areas of strategic priority;
- delivery of the training component of school-based traineeships in Government schools by VET providers under User Choice arrangements; and
- *Return to Learn* program delivered by regional TAFE colleges in cooperation with local schools.

In addition, the Department of Training has proposed the establishment of four Local Learning and Employment Partnership (LLEP) pilot programs, jointly with the Department of Education. These are designed to engage education, training, community, employers, industry, regional development and local government to achieve the best possible learning and employment outcomes for young people in a region.

Based on similar structures in Victoria and the United Kingdom, the key function of each LLEP will be to provide local input into policy, planning and delivery of training and employment services which will assist young people in their transition from school to further education, training and employment.

This will be achieved by identifying gaps, planning the development and delivery of educational programs for young people, creating pathways for young people, especially those at risk of dropping out and monitoring these pathways and outcomes to ensure that they are beneficial to young people. Local support, advice and guidance to a Local Learning and Employment Coordinator for each LLEP will be provided by a representative local committee of management. Depending on the evaluation of the initial pilots



and subject to resource constraints, the Department of Training is keen to extend this initiative across the State.

### **Term of Reference 3:**

*Vocational education in new and emerging industries.*

The Department of Training undertakes forecasting of future training needs. Changes in demand for VET are addressed through shifts in resource allocation in the State Training Profile. However, when considering competing needs in a limited resource environment, prioritisation of publicly funded vocational education and training is crucial.

To ensure that the State Training Profile reflects future demands, it is developed through an extensive consultation process with stakeholders throughout Western Australia and incorporates a diverse range of inputs, including:

- Industry training and employment requirements – including industry training plans developed by the Industry Training Advisory Bodies;
- Regional and community needs;
- VET infrastructure and training provider intelligence;
- Structure of the Western Australian economy – exports, regional economies;
- Labour market trends and projections – casualisation, skill priorities;
- Demographic factors – population trends and projections;
- Distribution of education qualifications;
- State Government priorities – regional development, technology, industry policy; and
- The needs and characteristics of equity groups.

Information on industry needs is collected from industry via the Department of Training-funded Industry Training Advisory Body (ITAB) network, peak employer and employee bodies, enterprises, individuals and other State and Federal government departments.

At a regional level, there are local versions of these mechanisms, as well as Regional Development Commissions, Area Consultative Committees, and regionally-based community and industry associations.

The Department also employs Regional Employment Coordinators (RECs) who undertake consultation at a local level daily in each region of Western Australia.

The Department of Training undertakes industry and employment forecasting to determine potential growth areas over time. New and emerging industries are identified and incorporated into the State Training Profile, as required.

As noted elsewhere in this document, VET in Schools units of competency and qualifications focus on areas of relevance to young people. Larger industries are, by definition, more likely to employ greater numbers of young

people hence the dominance of VET subjects in Business, Agriculture, Hospitality, Automotive, Information Technology and Metals and Engineering.

In considering new and emerging industries, a balance must be sought between preparing young people for employment and the likely demand for young people with VET qualifications within new industries. It is a high risk proposal for a school, or cluster of schools to undertake delivery of a subject for which there may be no significant employer demand. Additionally, there are considerable resource implications for schools seeking to attract or train teachers with suitable qualifications and industry experience in existing VET subjects. The task would be significantly more complex if applied to new and emerging industries.

In order to enhance schools' ability to service employment demands in new industries, initiatives such as the Local Learning and Employment Partnerships may assist in better informing schools as to local business requirements and result in a better overall qualification mix offered to students in specific areas.

In addition, the recent increase in TAFE College profile funding for VET in Schools delivery will better enable the VET in Schools program to access the expertise available in TAFE colleges, including those areas determined to be new and emerging industries as part of the State Training Profile planning process.

#### **Term of Reference 4:**

*The accessibility and effectiveness of vocational education for Indigenous students.*

VET in Schools courses are available through 157 schools across Western Australia. VET in Schools is proving successful in improving the retention rates for young Aboriginal students beyond Year 10.

To supplement the traditional VET in Schools subjects, the Department of Training also coordinates the Aboriginal School Based Traineeship (ASBT) program with the assistance of the VET Branch of the Western Australian Department of Education.

The only program of its kind in Australia, the program aims to address poor retention rates in schools and the low completion of mainstream traineeships by Indigenous youth in Western Australia.

A central element is the involvement of the Indigenous community through parents, Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) management organisations and community consultation.

Its objectives are to:

- improve the school to work conversion rates for young Indigenous people;

- address the low retention rates of Indigenous students in years 11 and 12 by creating more attractive in-school options;
- provide post-compulsory Indigenous students with access to a broad range of vocational competencies; and
- increase the relevance of education and training to Indigenous young people.

The program was developed to meet the specific needs of young Indigenous people in post-compulsory education. Many have witnessed three or four generations of unemployment within their families. Through the ASBT program, young people are afforded the opportunity to reach their goals through the provision of education linked to training and tangible paid employment. Upon graduation, they are then in a better position to compete for a job in the wider community.

The program has been running throughout Western Australia since 1999 and is based on the concept of providing Indigenous post-compulsory students with a certificate of secondary education, VET qualification and paid employment. As such it mirrors the mainstream model of school based traineeships made possible through New Apprenticeships.

Anecdotal evidence shows that in most regions where the program has been operating, there has been an increase of Indigenous students in Year 10 wanting to stay on at school. For example, in the Swan District region, there are more than 50 students who have expressed an interest in participating while in the Peel region there is a reported 300% increase in expressions of interest.

The program has been very successful. From a total of 260 traineeships offered, there has been a commencement rate of 70.5% with an overall retention rate of 89.3% and may point the way for its further expansion. Western Australia has already been approached by other States and Territories keen to improve participation and retention rates for young Indigenous students beyond Year 10.

## **Conclusion**

As widely acknowledged in the literature, VET in Schools is a relatively new addition to the general education mix. As such, it is inevitable that some period of adjustment is required before it can mature and achieve its full potential.

As VET in Schools matures, students will be offered a greater breadth and depth of vocational education and training. This will involve the provision of courses by schools and by TAFE colleges and will reflect the particular needs of the student and of the course itself. For some students, delivery of vocational education embedded in general education courses may be the most appropriate method of delivery. For others, there may be a mix of delivery modes designed to better reflect real workplace conditions.

The Western Australian Department of Training is actively pursuing the further improvement of VET in Schools and is working closely with the Department of Education to ensure that the system remains vibrant, relevant and continues to provide opportunities for young people to contribute to the economic and social future of the State.

**APPENDIX 1****APPROVED VET IN SCHOOLS QUALIFICATIONS FOR 2002**

<b>Vocational Training Area</b>	<b>Qualification Code</b>	<b>Qualification Name</b>
Administration	BSB10101 BSB20101	Certificate I in Business Certificate II in Business
Agriculture	RUA10198 RUA10298 RUA11398 RUA20298 RUA21398	Certificate I in Agriculture (General) Certificate I in Agriculture (Beef Cattle Production) Certificate I in Agriculture (Sheep and Wool) Certificate II in Agriculture (Beef Cattle Production) Certificate II in Agriculture (Sheep and Wool)
Automotive	AUR10199 AUR21799	Certificate I in Automotive Certificate II in Automotive (Mechanical – Vehicle Servicing)
Community Services	CHC20399 CHC20199 CHC20499	Certificate II in Community Services (Children's Services) Certificate II in Community Services (Aged Care Work) Certificate II in Community Services (Community Work)
General Construction	BCG10198 BCG20198	Certificate I in Construction Certificate II in General Construction
Horticulture	RUH10198 RUH20198	Certificate I in Horticulture Certificate II in Horticulture
Hospitality	THH11097 THH11197 THH21897	Certificate I in Hospitality (Operations) Certificate I in Hospitality (Kitchen Operations) Certificate II in Hospitality (Operations)
Information Technology	ICA20199	Certificate II in Information Technology
Metals & Engineering	MEM10198 MEM20198	Certificate I in Engineering Certificate II in Engineering (Production)
National Outdoor Recreation	SRO20299	Certificate II in Outdoor Recreation
Printing & Graphic Arts	ICP20299 ICP26199	Certificate I in Printing & Graphic Arts (Print Design) Certificate II in Printing and Graphic Art (General)
Retail	WRR10197 WRR20197	Certificate I in Retail Operations Certificate II in Retail Operations
Sport	SRO10199 SRS20199	Certificate I in Sport and Recreation Certificate II in Sport and Recreation
Tourism	THT20198	Certificate II in Tourism (Sales/Office Operations)

Source: Future Directions for VET in Schools, Curriculum Council of WA