A SUBMISSION BY THE AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION UNION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

October 2002

Contents

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:

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;

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;

3.   vocational education in new and emerging industries; and

4.   the accessibility and effectiveness of vocational education for Indigenous students.

Introduction

The Australian Education Union (AEU) welcomes the opportunity to provide a written submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training Inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools. This submission is based on AEU policies, a review of various reports and research literature and a research project into vocational education and training (VET) in public schools commissioned by the AEU and carried out in mid-2002, *Vocational Education and Training in Public Schools: Enhancing Student Career Options*, referred to as 'the AEU project'.

VET in schools is an important issue in that the number of students undertaking VET in schools has increased dramatically over the last decade with current estimates of over 200,000 students enrolled in some form of VET in a school setting, the vast majority of whom are in public schools. Policy and practice in this area impinge on debates about the youth labour market, senior secondary curriculum reform, pathways to further education and training, life-long learning and students at risk. Furthermore, they have implications for school budgets, timetabling, working conditions and workloads.

VET in Schools is a complex area where there has been and continues to be considerable debate and change. This submission has been organised around a number of key issues identified in the AEU project. The submission covers issues related to all the terms of reference, but particularly to 1, 2 and 4. Sections of the submission identify and discuss each issue in turn and provide recommendations arising from the discussion. Included in the recommendations are policies and practices that already exist in some states and territories. A summary of the recommendations is included at p. 5.

About the AEU

The Australian Education Union represents 155,000 educators employed in public pre-schools, schools and colleges throughout Australia. AEU members work as teachers, principals, administrators and allied educational staff in schools, preschools, kindergartens and TAFE.

The AEU believes that VET courses/subjects should be available to all secondary students so as to contribute to diversity of curriculum choice for students.

The AEU supports additional resources for VET courses in public schools so that teachers can provide a quality learning environment contributing to benefits for students through:

- completion of qualifications or part thereof;
- allowing students to undertake useful training and work experience to improve their workplace skills and improve their employment possibilities;
- generating information about career opportunities in the workplace that students can take into account when choosing their subjects and undertaking career planning;
- allowing flexibility to obtain both VET and school level qualifications; and
- tailoring of VET with other school requirements to generate better all-round education outcomes.

The key to achieving better outcomes for students is the quality of delivery which can only be achieved by adequate public funding.

Recommendations

Note: Included in the recommendations are policies and practices that already exist in some states and territories. The intention is that they apply in all jurisdictions consistently across Australia.

1.   The Nature of VET in Schools

1.1   *Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should endorse the following principles in relation to VET generally and VET in schools in particular:*

- *All Australians should have an equal right of access to and participation in high quality VET irrespective of their location, their capacity to pay or other factors.*
- *Educational disadvantage requires specific redress but must also be tackled within the wider context of socio-economic, employment and other barriers which disadvantage many Australians and lead to marginalisation, poverty and disconnection.*
- *A high quality VET system must be inclusive of and balance the needs of students, industry, educators, local communities and society.*
- *Quality and effectiveness are the key principles underpinning the future development of vocational education and training.*

1.2   *A representative national body (including representatives of Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, industry, unions (including education unions) and public VET providers (both TAFE and Schools) should be established with the responsibility of developing a coherent national policy position that clarifies and prioritises the objectives and expectations for school-based VET. This body must be consulted by, provide advice to, and be involved in decisions made by ANTA and other national bodies developing and implementing the National Training Framework.*

This body underpins many of the other recommendations in this Report, and the AEU regards this is an imperative and fundamental necessity.

1.3   *To inform the deliberations of this body, MCEETYA should commission critical research on the theory and practice of VET in schools and its relationship to the other objectives and expectations that schools are*

expected to achieve to ensure curriculum is diverse enough to cater for all post-school pathways.

1.4 *The vast majority of VET in Schools is at entry-level standard. Requirements and standards for provision of VET courses ought to reflect this. While consistency in the criteria and processes for RTO registration should be maintained, modification of AQTF compliance standards and of national training package requirements in relation to entry-level VET should be considered.*

2. The Quality of VET in Schools

2.1 *Quality assurance processes relating to VET in schools should take account of the complexity of the roles that schools play receives full consideration.*

2.2 *A quality improvement program should be jointly funded by the Commonwealth and states and territories to provide for quality improvement strategies including:*

- *staff development, teacher training, return to industry and acquisition of vocational qualifications*
- *curriculum development that is broad-based and meets the needs of a competency-based system*
- *innovation projects*
- *initiatives to increase flexible provision and cooperation with other VET TAFE providers*
- *improved planning and consultation with local communities and stakeholders,*
- *increased cooperation between TAFE and schools in delivery of VET.*

2.3 *Empirical research (informed by a critical analysis of the purposes of VET in schools) should be undertaken on the quality of VET programs in schools.*

3. Planning and Governance

3.1 *New representative consultative and advisory bodies should be established at the state/territory level to allow for the participation and representation of all stakeholders in the shaping of VET directions. These bodies should include representatives of each education sector – TAFE, universities and schools and include education union representatives.*

3.2 *Representative state/regional/area bodies should be established to work cooperatively on the development of a whole of Commonwealth, State and Territory government approach to industry planning, employment related issues, education and training, and community welfare and support services. A key term of reference for these bodies should be the facilitation of local/regional partnership models of VET provision involving schools, TAFE institutes, local business and industry, and community groups.*

3.3 *School VET needs must inform State Training Plans along with industry and community strategic plans and should be informed by local schools and TAFE institutes, as well as by Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, industry, enterprises and the community. Overall planning processes should facilitate the identification at the regional and local level of existing and emerging industry/labour market needs and articulation arrangements that meet this need.*

3.4 *All education systems should ensure that their senior management group includes someone with direct knowledge of and responsibility for oversight and co-ordination of VET in schools policy and implementation.*

4. Funding/Resourcing

4.1 *Funding for VET in schools should be ongoing and recurrent and based on per capita grants for the number of VET in schools students. The funds should be additional to ANTA funding.*

4.2 *Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments must also make an enhanced and ongoing commitment to appropriately funding VET in Schools. This must not be at the expense of funding to TAFE colleges or other programs in schools.*

4.3 *Current funding levels and allocation models for VET in schools should be reviewed as a matter of urgency in every State and Territory. This review should include consideration of the impact of funding models on the quality of programs, general and specific services and on student and community access. The outcomes of such reviews should be aggregated nationally and form the basis of a national review of policy directions, including the appropriate level of contribution from States/Territories.*

4.4 *The provision of VET to secondary school students should avoid wasteful duplication of public funds and should be underpinned by cooperative arrangements between schools and TAFE.*

4.5   *Base (profile) funding for TAFE must be increased and allocated in order to support services provided to schools so that schools and students are not denied access to these services due to their cost.*

4.6   *Access to Commonwealth, State and Territory funding for VET programs should not be submission based. Schools/teachers do not have the resources for constant and lengthy submission writing.*

5.   Organisational/Workload Issues

5.1   *Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should urgently consider ways to deal with the excessive workload of VET teachers and administrators in schools, including, for example, staffing buffers, improved clerical assistance, reappraisal of RTO registration.*

5.2   *Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments need to refine the interpretation and implementation of VET in Schools compliance with the AQTF standards. Adequate resourcing should be provided to alleviate the workload of teachers and ensure that their professional and industrial rights are guaranteed.*

5.3   *System and national data should be collected and reported on the workload and staffing implications of the implementation of VET. This data should form the basis of a review of the impact on teaching and learning conditions with a view to developing guidelines on funding and on staffing structures which enhance quality, effectiveness and fairness for education workers and students.*

5.4   *Appropriate leadership, co-ordination and support personnel should be deployed at the central, regional/district, and school levels with specific full-time responsibility for VET in schools.*

5.5   *There needs to be an enhancement of career and vocational guidance services in schools*

5.6   *Professional development needs of VET teachers should be better integrated into mainstream professional development arrangements in states and territories. Funding should be available and specifically targeted to schemes to allow VET teachers to meet AQTF standards in relation to technical qualifications, industry experience and programs for teachers to ensure they meet the needs of the full range of students with Indigenous backgrounds and the development and assessment of relevant competencies.*

5.7   *Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should ensure that class sizes for VET in schools do not exceed those for the same course in a TAFE college.*

5.8 *Time spent by teachers supervising and assessing students in the workplace should be recognised as teaching time in industrial instruments. Appropriate compensation for travel time, costs and responsibility in relation to work placements should be negotiated.*

5.9 *AQTF compliance requirements should include compliance with industrial awards and agreements pertaining to staff in the training organisation and the relevant industry areas.*

6. AQTF Compliance Issues

6.1 *A review of AQTF implementation should be undertaken at Commonwealth, state and territory levels with a view to:*

- *the highest standard for delivery and assessment of VET programs;*
- *developing consistent implementation guidelines about interpreting valid requirements;*
- *establishing the validity of various requirements/benchmarks;*
- *eliminating unnecessary paperwork/workload associated with compliance requirements and reducing bureaucratic pressures on schools and TAFE colleges;*
- *providing mechanisms of advice and support, including considerably more professional development, in meeting AQTF standards.*

7. Teacher Qualifications and Experience

7.1 *Systems and teacher education institutions should ensure that professional development (pre- and in-service) for teachers of VET in secondary schools is based on the following:*

- *a broad-base in pedagogy, curriculum and assessment theory and practice (including as a minimum all competencies contained in the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training) linked to recognised general teaching qualifications;*
- *appropriate industry qualifications and experience meeting AQTF compliance and national training package requirements.*

This will require changes to pre-service education courses and the provision of additional funding to schools to facilitate industry placement and training for teachers.

7.2 *As part of the process of defining and prioritising the multiple goals of entry-level VET, the proposed national body, in consultation with the AEU and its state/territory branches and associate bodies, should review requirements to set appropriate criteria for the qualifications of teachers and assessors in terms of industry qualifications and*

experience and teacher education qualifications. In particular, the extent to which teacher qualifications meet the criterion of Certificate IV, Assessment and Workplace Training should be examined and a nationally consistent approach adopted.

7.3 *States and Territories should put in place programs to ensure the adequate supply of appropriately trained and accredited VET school teachers. This should include arrangements to:*

- *encourage and support industry qualified personnel in identified priority areas to undertake teacher education;*
- *strategically release teachers to industry.*

In addition, the problem of ensuring a supply of accredited casual relief teachers who meet the AQTF standards must be addressed at state and territory level.

7.4 *Teachers new to VET, regardless of whether already experienced teachers, should be entitled to an induction process and a mentor.*

7.5 *Return to industry programs and any other requirement of VET teachers in relation to specific VET professional development and/or qualifications, should be recognised within state/territory professional development industrial requirements or recognition processes where these exist. To enhance the flexibility of use of staff across sectors teacher registration authorities should include TAFE teachers.*

8. Curriculum and Assessment

8.1 *In developing a coherent policy that clarifies and prioritises the objectives and expectations for school-based VET, the proposed national body should put curriculum and assessment issues at the centre of their considerations.*

8.2 *The Commonwealth and State governments in collaboration with the states and territories should establish a fund to support development of learning strategies and materials for use in schools and TAFE institutes to support national training packages.*

8.3 *Reviews of national training packages should make more explicit the "underpinning knowledge" in the competency standards and broaden the outcomes of the courses to include those explicitly related to fostering knowledge, understanding and values and to preparing learners for further education and training, employment and full and active participation as citizens.*

8.4 *The review of training packages should also ensure that assessment measures used in training packages are consistent and do not cause barriers to access to further education, training and employment.*

8.5   *In defining and prioritising its multiple goals, the broader educational and generic work-related, as opposed to industry specific, dimensions of entry-level VET should be given greater emphasis in the AQTF and national training packages than is presently the case.*

9.   Tertiary Entrance Articulation

9.1   *States and Territories should continue to explore and develop mechanisms for counting VET for the purpose of tertiary entrance. This should not, however, be achieved by including an increasing number of Certificate III competencies into VET in Schools courses.*

9.2   *State and Commonwealth governments should provide support for school systems to increase and enhance pathways to further education and training for all students, increase knowledge in the community about these alternative pathways and promote acceptance of their legitimacy among secondary school students and their families. In particular, information about the value of TAFE pathways should be highlighted and disseminated to schools and students.*

9.3   *All skills and knowledge should be included in tertiary entrance requirements.*

10.   Relationship between VET and non-VET subjects

10.1   *Following the development of a coherent national policy that clarifies and prioritises the objectives of VET in schools, state education systems should provide resources, support and professional development to schools to allow teachers of all subjects to understand and support the role of VET in schools. Funding for VET should be at a sustainable level to achieve the outcomes expected of schools and reflect its position within the broad aims of schooling.*

11.   Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Issues

11.1   *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decision-making structures should be created within the new bodies proposed in earlier recommendations.*

11.2   *The Commonwealth, States and Territories should work together to ensure that all teachers to be employed in the public education system must have completed a comprehensive sequence of Indigenous Studies in their undergraduate courses as a precondition to their employment. Such studies should include studies of Indigenous histories, languages and cultures, Indigenous teaching and learning processes and practices.*

11.3   *A mapping exercise should be conducted to determine the disparities between the employment, training and career pathway options for*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers (AIEWs) across each State and Territory, and that this mapping should inform the development of a set of competency standards for AIEWs.

11.4   *An urgent investigation should be conducted into the number and levels of post-compulsory school aged Indigenous children accessing the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP), and that VET in schools, or other appropriate programs, should be put in to place to prevent this from occurring.*

12.   Issues of Access and Equity

12.1   *In developing a coherent policy that clarifies and prioritises the objectives and expectations for school-based VET, the complex relationships between cultural assumptions, institutional arrangements and outcomes for individuals and groups must be examined and addressed.*

12.2   *The Commonwealth and States and Territories should ensure that culturally appropriate services, programs and support structures meet the needs of disadvantaged students and local communities. Such a program would best be part of an Education Equity Program (EEP) linked to a Disadvantaged Regional Areas Program (DRAP) which would provide resources for a whole of Commonwealth, State and Territory Government approach combining industry policy, labour market programs, job creation, job placement, education and training and community welfare support and services.*

12.3   *Funding models in the states and territories must recognise that some schools and TAFE institutes face higher costs than others because of their location and/or student profile.*

12.4   *The Commonwealth should contribute additional funds on a dollar for dollar basis to the states and territories to assist schools with VET programs specifically targeted to disadvantaged students.*

12.5   *Access to VET (including to school-based apprenticeships/ traineeships) should be funded and made available to students of compulsory school age where there are sound reasons for doing so.*

13.   Interface between Schools and Other VET Providers

13.1   *Plans for the development of school-industry links and the use of appropriately qualified industry and VET staff in VET in schools programs should be built upon the goal of developing a co-operative model of the provision of programs with other public schools and TAFE institutes.*

13.2　*Schools and clusters of schools should be encouraged to establish links and strategic alliances/partnerships with local industry organisations, community and TAFE as a means of strengthening school-industry-community links.*

13.3　*Arrangements should be put in place to facilitate the use of appropriately trained teachers across the schools and TAFE sectors, with attention being paid to the culture, working conditions, expectations and needs of each sector.*

13.4　*State and territory education and training authorities should encourage the establishment of consultative education groups at local level, with representatives of both TAFE and schools, to determine where and how best to deliver the range of VET in schools courses. These consultative groups should involve classroom teachers and senior managers and have an overall planning role.*

13.5　*The structures and resourcing of the vocational education system should reflect the role of TAFE as a vital public asset that is the predominant provider of VET. State and territory education departments should ensure that public schools do not use private providers unless there is no public provision available.*

13.6　*Steps should be taken to ensure that the VET system is, in fact as well as in theory, a system of nationally recognised qualifications and accreditation. This may mean altering the way national Training Packages are constructed and/or establishing representative bodies, at the level of clusters of schools and TAFE colleges, to co-ordinate accreditation arrangements between schools and TAFE.*

14.　Employer Involvement

14.1　*Funding for the development and continuation of the relationship between schools and employers must be ongoing.*

14.2　*State and territory governments should develop and fund methods of educating employers about the importance and nature of work placements, their role in ensuring successful training of VET in school students, and the expectations they can reasonably have about the students. Peak industry groups, such as The Business Council of Australia, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Australian Industry Group must be persuaded to take greater responsibility for the provision and quality of work placement. They and local Chambers of Commerce should be engaged to reach small businesses.*

14.3　*Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should ensure that where large industry is involved in VET in schools it is on the basis that all students have a right of access to the programs.*

14.4 *Where particular schools and teachers have developed good relationships with local businesses, funding should be made available to the school or district to develop those relationships, expand them and extend them to a wider group of schools and employers.*

15. Student Work Placements

15.1 *Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should support the expansion of structured work placements as a part of VET in schools. Co-ordination of these should be centrally funded with dedicated co-ordinators with experience (wherever possible) in industry, training and schools.*

15.2 *Specific Commonwealth funding for industry links in relation to the organisation of work placements should continue. This funding should be on-going.*

15.3 *The role of the ECEF should be reviewed by MCEETYA after substantial consultation with schools and teachers currently engaged in VET programs with SWL components.*

15.4 *The ECEF Review should include consideration of the structure and composition of the ECEF Board and the appointment of educationalists including an AEU representative to the Board.*

15.5 *State and territory governments should ensure, through appropriate arrangements, that the burden of organisation and supervision of Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) that currently falls to teachers is rewarded or compensated.*

15.6 *State and territory governments should establish arrangements to ensure that extra staffing is available to allow for students absent on work placements to catch up work missed.*

15.7 *The issue of VET teachers being on-call as emergency contacts for work placements out of school hours (including during school vacations) should be dealt with as a matter of urgency.*

16. School-based Apprenticeships/Traineeships

16.1 *The school-based apprenticeship/traineeship program should be reviewed with particular attention to the following issues:*

- *adequacy of funding;*
- *organisational implications for schools and education systems;*
- *inconsistencies in approaches and take-up amongst states and territories;*
- *employer support;*

- *relationship with other VET provision in schools;*
- *industrial arrangements and training agreements;*
- *access and equity issues;*
- *staff and local training and development*

16.2 *State, Territory and local governments should engage further in school-based apprenticeships/traineeships by providing the opportunity for students to train in the public sector and/or publicly funded projects, particularly in rural areas.*

17. Student Protection and Duty of Care Issues

17.1 *In order to ensure that employers provide work placements that deliver meaningful and appropriate work place learning and are not exploitative, systems should:*

- *provide resources to schools to support workplace learning including full-time work placement co-ordinators preferably with appropriate industry experience,*
- *establish and resource mechanisms at the systems level to encourage and monitor appropriate behaviour by employers in the use and treatment of students in structured work placements,*
- *review models of student work placement to define and identify best practice.*

17.2 *Funding for the training of teachers in workplace health and safety and in the nature of their responsibilities in relation to student work placements must be included as a part of the funding for VET in schools.*

Key Issues

1.   The Nature of VET in Schools

The last decade has seen impressive growth in the provision of VET in schools. In 2002 it is estimated that more than 200,000 students in more than 2000 schools are undertaking some form of VET in schools (Maslen, 2002, p. 5).

"VET (vocational education and training)" is defined by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA, 2000, p. 21) as:

> *... appropriately accredited and industry-specific entry level training programs that deliver competencies endorsed within the National Training Framework (NTF) and certification of industry accredited training aligned to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).*

In this submission this is the definition that will apply when the term VET is used. However, as noted by MCEETYA, VET is but one element of "vocational education" and it will also be necessary at points to address issues about vocational education generally or about other elements of it (e.g. enterprise and vocational learning, student support services).

There are three main arrangements for the delivery of VET in schools:

•   stand-alone VET;
•   VET embedded in a course of study;
•   VET included as part of a school-based apprenticeship/traineeship.

Combinations of these arrangements are also possible. For some students, VET in schools is delivered in the form of "taster" courses, which allow students to experience various aspects of the world of work and receive accredited qualifications without necessarily committing to a specific vocational pathway. For other students VET in schools is undertaken for the purpose of opening up a particular vocational pathway.

A VET teacher in Queensland who had worked in both sectors set out what she took to be the differences between VET in TAFE and VET in schools for post-compulsory students:

> *Some students prefer TAFE. They say they don't get treated like a kid. They like not having to go to class if they are bored, etc. They like not having to wear a uniform … and there are more options at TAFE. But other kids need the support. Schools track attendance. They know about the family situation and your personal problems. Teachers are more caring. And the kids have their peer group around for support and friendship. (AEU, 2002, p. 16)*

While there are undeniably students for whom a more adult environment such as TAFE is appropriate and desired, the need some students have for the supportive environment of a school should not be ignored when looking at the success of VET in Schools.

Overall increases in VET participation have masked "unevenness in growth and distribution" and, despite the adoption of a national framework and implementation strategy, "in each state and territory there is a unique set of administrative arrangements, related to registration, accreditation, recognition and quality assurance functions" (BSSSS, 2002b, p. 2) and "policy and funding processes used to generate growth deflect ... critical review away from prevailing structures and goals" (Malley et al.., 2002a, p. 7). There is still a considerable distance to be travelled before the "objectives associated with the provision of vocational education are ... coherently connected or prioritised" (Malley et al.., 2002a, p. 9). Teachers in schools have had to cope with the implications of this policy incoherence.

There are two important points that need to be emphasised:

- VET in schools is but one part of schooling and the schooling reform agenda;

- VET in schools is itself characterised by multiple and not always compatible objectives.

The current phase of growth in VET in schools derives from a push to make secondary schooling more relevant to the world of work. However, vocational education in schools also forms part of a number of other reform agendas relating, for example, to broader concerns about the relevance and effectiveness of the senior secondary school curriculum, the promotion of lifelong learning and the situation of youth who experience difficulties in making transition from school to further education and training, employment and adult life generally.

The role of VET in schools needs to be considered in a perspective that takes into account the wider social and educational responsibilities of schools.

> *AEU policy on VET in schools is based on the belief that all students have a right to a broad, rich, general education and that it is the responsibility of educational institutions to provide equitable access to a quality general education for all students. VET is therefore merely one option provided to students in the context of their general education. (Newcombe, 1999, p. 1)*

VET in schools can contribute to making secondary schooling more relevant and rewarding for students but it is not a panacea for all the challenges and problems faced by schools and students. The links, for example, that are drawn between enhancing the delivery of VET in schools and increasing retention rates and addressing the needs of the youth are often simplistic, ignoring the complex array of social factors which contribute to the alienation of youth from society.

As Schofield (2001) notes in relation to VET generally:

> *Neither economic growth not social equity can be achieved through education and training alone. VET policies are not a substitute for full employment and income distribution policies. VET policies must be part of a larger political package that addresses the question of labour mobility, rising inequality and diminished work and family life.*

Malley et al.. (2002a, p 7) note that the role of VET in schools is itself contested, subject to "multiple ... objectives and expectations imposed ... by separated central agencies". A key point of contention is identified by the Dusseldorp Skills Forum (1997, p. i):

> *In particular confusion exists about whether it is most appropriate for senior school students to take part in a broad generic orientation towards work and employment, or whether it is most appropriate for them to undertake a more focused preparation for particular occupational and industry pathways.*

Despite fears from some employers and RTOs (including TAFE institutes) that there is an agenda for schools to assume responsibility for a wide range of VET at above Certificate level II, the evidence is that the overwhelming majority of VET offered in schools is at Certificate I and Certificate II levels. As Malley et al.. (2002a, p. 8) note there has been a failure in the AQTF to address the specific nature of entry-level training for secondary school students. Rather it is assumed that one training model (based on higher level, industry-specific, post school training) is equally applicable to all levels of vocational education.

In the ACT some teachers interviewed for the AEU project reported that with each revision some National Training Packages are becoming increasingly complex and demanding at Certificate I and II levels. As they do so, their purpose within the school curriculum changes and the opportunity for students to gain a certificate level qualification at school recedes. A co-ordinator interviewed in Tasmania commented that Certificates I and II were once entry-level courses but that the bar had been raised by the National Training Packages and that this was a problem for schools and some students.

Malley et al.. (2002a, p. 9) argue that "the growing set of economic, social and educational objectives associated with the provision of vocational education are not coherently connected or prioritised". They note that VET in schools has been "developed and imposed by hierarchical systems of the federal government and State governments without proper consideration and knowledge of practice at schools or communities" (Malley, 2002a, p 6). Policy makers have not had a knowledge of schools. It appears to have been assumed that a model of VET based on post-employment industry-based training can just seamlessly be slotted into the school curriculum with no attention needing to be paid to its effect on the other roles schools are expected to play or their effect on it. Educational providers in schools (and TAFE) have been excluded from the table when it comes to formulating the national VET framework and are then expected to accept and adopt it holus bolus with no recognition of the problems that might create for them.

There is an urgent need to re-evaluate the specific characteristics, objectives and expectations of entry-level training and how it relates to the general educational needs of secondary school students. This is a process that needs to include governments, industry (employers and unions) and VET providers (in schools and TAFE).

The exclusion of training providers generally and schools specifically from the key decision-making forums that set the VET agenda has also meant that ownership and understanding in schools of the rationale for VET and of the reasons for various requirements of the AQTF is patchy. VET in most schools relies on the (often sorely tested) good will and enthusiasm of a minority of teachers and school administrators; it is rare for the VET agenda to be well understood and supported by all staff.

The Dusseldorp Skills Forum argued in 1997 that "it is now appropriate to reduce unhelpful diversity between the States in the ways that school-industry programs and vocational education in schools are approached" (p. ii). Despite the development by MCEETYA of the "New Framework for Vocational Education in Schools", a "growing list of policy expectations has promoted an unclear and fuzzy perception of what is now the primary goal" (Malley et al.. 2002a, p. 23) of VET in schools and the problem of "unhelpful diversity" remains.

If the federal and state/territory governments are as serious about VET in Schools as they claim, they must take steps to ensure that the appropriate on-going funding, and administrative and industrial arrangements are in place to facilitate its success.

Recommendations:

    1.1   *Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should endorse the following principles in relation to VET generally and VET in schools in particular:*

- *All Australians should have an equal right of access to and participation in high quality VET irrespective of their location, their capacity to pay or other factors.*
- *Educational disadvantage requires specific redress but must also be tackled within the wider context of socio-economic, employment and other barriers which disadvantage many Australians and lead to marginalisation, poverty and disconnection.*
- *A high quality VET system must be inclusive of and balance the needs of students, industry, educators, local communities and society.*
- *Quality and effectiveness are the key principles underpinning the future development of vocational education and training.*

1.2 *A representative national body (including representatives of Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, industry, unions (including education unions) and public VET providers (both TAFE and Schools) should be established with the responsibility of developing a coherent national policy position that clarifies and prioritises the objectives and expectations for school-based VET. This body must be consulted by, provide advice to, and be involved in decisions made by ANTA and other national bodies developing and implementing the National Training Framework.*

   This body underpins many of the other recommendations in this Report, and the AEU regards this is an imperative and fundamental necessity.

1.3 *To inform the deliberations of this body, MCEETYA should commission critical research on the theory and practice of VET in schools and its relationship to the other objectives and expectations that schools are expected to achieve to ensure curriculum is diverse enough to cater for all post-school pathways.*

1.4 *The vast majority of VET in Schools is at entry-level standard. Requirements and standards for provision of VET courses ought to reflect this. While consistency in the criteria and processes for RTO registration should be maintained, modification of AQTF compliance standards and of national training package requirements in relation to entry-level VET should be considered.*

2. The Quality of VET in Schools

A recent report to the National Training Quality Council (BSSSS, 2002b, p. 4) noted that:

   Industry expressed concerns that students undertaking institutionally based VET do not exit with the same skills as those whose training has occurred largely in the workplace. There are perceptions that schools which are offering VET are not meeting the same standards as other RTOs.

Based on interviews conducted for the AEU project, this is a concern shared by some TAFE teachers.

The research undertaken by the BSSSS "was unable to find any concrete evidence to substantiate these concerns in relation to schools" but noted that perceptions were important as "it is critical to the success of VET in schools that employers have confidence in VET delivery in schools" (p. 4).

School administrators and teachers in schools visited as part of the AEU project stated that the employers who were familiar with their programs were very happy with them and that criticisms often came from people who were not in possession of the facts. "I wish they would come down and see what we are doing before making critical comments", stated one Western Australian principal. A Queensland teacher who had experience in both the TAFE and schooling sectors and in industry and who currently works as a liaison person with schools, TAFE institutes and local industry made the following statement:

> *There are some excellent and some poor quality VET courses in schools — but the same is true of TAFE … Some criticisms are valid but others are based on prejudices. For example, a particular employer or TAFE institute may have a preference for a particular system and may not recognise that a student who has learned a different system actually has satisfied all the requirements of the training package.*

There appear to be some legitimate concerns about the availability and quality of student work placements in at least some VET in schools courses. Some TAFE teachers interviewed did not believe that, where student work placement occurred as part of VET in schools, there was the same quality and level of supervision as provided through TAFE programs.

While the goal of incorporating structured workplace learning (SWL) into VET courses is undoubtedly desirable, there should also be some careful thought about and examination of how crucial an issue this is across the various industry areas and levels of VET qualifications (remembering that what is needed in relation to a Certificate III in building and construction may not be needed for a Certificate I in computing). Some schools (e.g. in rural areas) face considerable difficulties in arranging SWL. Nevertheless, where structured work placements occur, they must meet agreed standards both in terms of training and assessment and workplace health and safety.

Some TAFE teachers interviewed for the AEU project claimed that not all VET classes in schools conformed to the class size requirements observed in TAFE colleges. There are pressures on schools in relation to balancing the demands of VET and non-VET subjects, so, in the absence of data, this allegation cannot be dismissed.

Another concern is the degree to which teachers in schools meet AQTF human resource requirements, particularly in regard to relevant industry experience (e.g. "the woodwork teacher teaching construction", BSSSS, 2002b, p. 14). There is a suspicion amongst some employers that, even though the providers of VET in schools are subject to the same AQTF compliance requirements as other RTOs, schools are somehow able to "get around" the requirements. The research conducted for the NQTC (BSSSS, 2002b) found no evidence to support this. Interviews conducted for the AEU project also indicated that, while meeting the AQTF human resource requirements was a major headache for schools, the compliance requirements of the AQTF were being enforced as stringently on schools as on other RTOs.

The VET system is structured around the needs of industry and current quality measures reflect this. However, schools have much wider responsibilities than meeting the needs of industry and the economy. Many critics of the quality of VET provision in schools fail to recognise or acknowledge the legitimacy of the other roles that schools must fulfil or the tensions that arise from meeting these disparate responsibilities.

For example, employers are uncomfortable with embedded models of VET delivery, preferring stand-alone models. Employer concerns relate mainly to their perception that embedding VET makes subjects unnecessarily complicated, that the non-VET elements of subjects can overwhelm the embedded VET, and that non-VET assessment regimes may be used in place of competency-based assessment.

Putting aside for the moment the question of the empirical accuracy of the employers' perceptions of the quality of embedded VET programs, it is clear that their criticism is based on a particular perspective on the goals of VET — one which privileges the obtainment of specific workplace competencies. However, VET in schools is driven by a variety of not always compatible goals. Embedded models of delivery may "muddy the waters" somewhat from an industry perspective but from an educational perspective which seeks to integrate vocational and academic studies, they make very good sense.

Speaking to VET teachers in schools it becomes clear that what they see as the success of a program is often different from the view of industry and government bureaucrats. They talk about the students as individuals, the changes particular programs bring about in motivation for school in general, or finding a job, or the student's self esteem and self awareness, or a sense of achievement many students have never experienced before. These important factors are often not picked up in statistics, but they are what schools are good at. Over and over again the AEU project found that, when asked why young people should do VET at school rather than anywhere else, teachers replied that school provided a familiar, nurturing and supportive environment for students who more often than not are not ready yet for other forms of education, training or work.

A valid judgement about the quality of VET programs in schools would need to consider and weigh up the sometimes competing claims of the various agendas that are driving it. Currently the debate is carried on as if there is an agreed definition of what constitutes a quality program. Until such time as there is a much more thorough theoretical explication of the purposes of VET in schools, such an assumption is unwarranted.

To date, the debate about the relative quality of VET programs in schools compared to other RTOs has been conducted on the basis of anecdotes and perceptions (the reliability of both being unknown). AQTF quality assurance audits provide a basis for addressing some quality concerns. However, AQTF compliance is an incomplete measure of quality that does not adequately reflect the range of objectives and expectations associated with VET in schools. The criteria for measurement of successful outcomes from VET in Schools ought to include a more realistic appraisal of what constitutes success for a range of individuals in a range of contexts and ought to encompass the broad aims of schooling.

Recommendations:

    2.1   *Quality assurance processes relating to VET in schools should take account of the complexity of the roles that schools play receives full consideration.*

    2.2   *A quality improvement program should be jointly funded by the Commonwealth and states and territories to provide for quality improvement strategies including:*

- *staff development, teacher training, return to industry and acquisition of vocational qualifications*
- *curriculum development that is broad-based and meets the needs of a competency-based system*
- *innovation projects*
- *initiatives to increase flexible provision and cooperation with other VET TAFE providers*
- *improved planning and consultation with local communities and stakeholders,*
- *increased cooperation between TAFE and schools in delivery of VET.*

    2.3   *Empirical research (informed by a critical analysis of the purposes of VET in schools) should be undertaken on the quality of VET programs in schools.*

3.   Planning and Governance

Despite VET in schools nominally being an integrated part of a national training framework, there is considerable variation amongst the states and territories in policy and practice with schools being expected to respond to sometimes conflicting agendas (e.g. agendas designed to encourage partnerships versus agendas encouraging competitiveness) being driven by a number of state and federal agencies.

Not only has the VET agenda been hierarchically imposed on schools, but it is an agenda that relies for its success, not on appropriate support and funding, but on rhetoric about successful outcomes and the goodwill and commitment of countless thousands of teachers, for whom the rewards are often measured by individual student success rather than government devised accountability criteria.

"There is too much chopping and changing" said a Western Australian careers and vocational education officer interviewed for the AEU project. "VET co-ordination is like tap dancing on a moving surface", said a Queensland co-ordinator. Similar sentiments were expressed by teachers and administrators in all states and territories and interestingly these views have been reflected by some ITABs and employers providing work placements.

Moreover, differences in interpretation and implementation of the national agenda have led to increasing workloads in specific and different areas for teachers in different state and territories.

A problem in at least some schooling systems is that VET in schools has not been sufficiently integrated into the overall policy and decision-making structure. In Queensland, for example, responsibility for the oversight and co-ordination of VET in schools policy and implementation is assigned to relatively small unit with no direct links to the senior management group.

While local and regional bodies, including government, schools, TAFE and industry, have been formed in some areas to assess emerging vocational education and training needs and plan provision, governments need to pursue more active and widespread development of a whole of government approaches to industry planning, employment related issues, education and training, and community welfare and support services. The view that it is possible for education and training on their own to fix all the employment related issues facing young people and employers needs to be rejected.

Recommendations:

> 3.1 *New representative consultative and advisory bodies should be established at the state/territory level to allow for the participation and representation of all stakeholders in the shaping of VET directions. These bodies should include representatives of each education sector – TAFE, universities and schools and include education union representatives.*

> 3.2 *Representative state/regional/area bodies should be established to work cooperatively on the development of a whole of Commonwealth, State and Territory government approach to industry planning, employment related issues, education and training, and community welfare and support services. A key term of reference for these bodies should be the facilitation of local/regional partnership models of VET provision involving schools, TAFE institutes, local business and industry, and community groups.*

> 3.3 *School VET needs must inform State Training Plans along with industry and community strategic plans and should be informed by local schools and TAFE institutes, as well as by Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, industry, enterprises and the community. Overall planning processes should facilitate the identification at the regional and local level of existing and emerging industry/labour market needs and articulation arrangements that meet this need.*

> 3.4 *All education systems should ensure that their senior management group includes someone with direct knowledge of and responsibility for oversight and co-ordination of VET in schools policy and implementation.*

4.   Funding/Resourcing

A review of the literature conducted by Malley et al.. (2002a, p. 39) revealed that research supported the conclusion that "resourcing is a significant issue for schools". This was borne out by the fact that funding/resourcing issues were raised as key issues at every school visited as part of the AEU project. A deputy principal at a large metropolitan high school in Queensland stated "schools are given no scope in terms of funding to support VET". A VET co-ordinator at a rural Western Australian school stated, "resourcing is barely sufficient to do what we do".

At the meeting of the ANTA Ministerial Council (MINCO) in May 2002, the states and territories requested an additional $40m per year contribution for VET in Schools by the Commonwealth. This would increase its contribution from $20m to $60m per year for the period 2002-2004. This request, along with a request for growth in targeted funding, was not supported by the Commonwealth.

A submission to ANTA MINCO prepared by NSW (2002) on VET in Schools funding, was predicated on three facts:

• 10% of VET provision in Australia was delivered via VET in Schools programs in 2000 and this figure is predicted to rise (in fact, to have risen already).
• There has been no increase in the Commonwealth contribution to the cost of provision since 1997 ($20m per year).
• The costs associated with VET in Schools cannot be absorbed into State and Territory Budgets.

The MCEETYA Framework for Vocational Education in Schools commits systems to achieving sustainability in relation to funding. The NSW paper debates what this means, saying that integration into budgets and sustainability of funding does not mean that existing education budgets should be stretched to resource these programs (p.10).

The NSW paper is blunt: There is an implication that ANTA VET in schools funding may cease after 2004 (p.10). For NSW the real operating costs for VET in Schools in 2001 was $75m (including implementation for government and non-government schools). NSW share of the ANTA funding was $6m (p.11).

It is clear that although the Commonwealth funds provide only a small proportion of NSW's financial commitment, its absence would indeed be felt. Not only is there an argument for the continuation of Commonwealth funding, there is also a strong argument for its enhancement. In addition, if the Commonwealth were to end its financial contribution to VET in Schools, it will have shifted a substantial financial responsibility to the states/territories. Instead of funding TAFE for entry-level training, the states would be funding it via VET in Schools.

Of equal concern is the transfer of resources to VET by states and territories from other activities in order to implement sustainability.

MCEETYA acknowledged in 1999 that "VET in schools is more expensive than general education" (p. v). Important additional costs to schools of VET include the purchase of VET from non-school RTOs, equipment and facilities (set up and maintenance costs can be substantial), co-ordination and supervision of SWL, and staff industry release and training. Schools are being required to devote increasing amounts from other areas of their budgets to sustain VET programs. Some individual teachers personally subsidise the costs of VET through doing professional development and industry renewal in their own time, as well as travelling to and supervising work placements in their own vehicles and in their own time.

It is not uncommon for schools to pass along a proportion of the costs of purchasing VET provision from a non-school RTO to students. Arrangements vary considerably but in at least some cases, courses are being offered on a full-cost recovery basis. This is particularly the case with privately developed and licensed courses such as the Cisco and Aries ICT courses. Where student fees for VET are significant, this is clearly an equity issue.

Emphasis on the creation of a largely artificial training market and on excessive competition and "efficiency" undermines the capacity of public VET providers to fulfill their wider community responsibilities and leads to reduced access, narrowing of programs and objectives and threats to the quality of individual programs and the national system.

Where TAFE colleges are the RTOs for school-based VET, the need for schools in some states to negotiate a price with the local TAFE college leads to the inequitable situation where some schools pay more than others. In some cases purchasing provision and/or auspicing from TAFE is too expensive as the school cannot afford to subsidise the full cost and the families cannot afford to pay.

The provision of VET to secondary school students should avoid wasteful duplication of public funds and should be underpinned by cooperative arrangements between schools and TAFE. These co-operative arrangements are unlikely to occur where schools must enter into purchasing agreements with TAFE Institutes, or where schools suffer staffing reductions as a consequence of such co-operation. State and Territory governments should be encouraged to put in place funding and staffing policies whereby schools are not disadvantaged financially or in terms of staffing by deciding that a TAFE college is a more appropriate place for their students to do a VET in Schools course.

The AEU project discovered that an important theme in some states was the uncertainty of funding for VET in Schools. There was a fear that the ANTA funds would stop and that when they did, VET in Schools would end. None of the teachers interviewed believed their state/territory governments would provide the necessary funds. They were equally certain that schools could not cover the costs themselves. A precedent is seen to be the "seed funding" provided by the Commonwealth for the then ASTF work placement co-ordinators and the subsequent abandonment of these services when schools were unable to absorb the costs of continuing them once the Commonwealth funding ran out.

A number of teachers interviewed in the AEU project, particularly in the Northern Territory, South Australia and the ACT, commented that funding for a range of programs was based on submissions. They commented that a great deal of their time was taken up (more often than not their own time) writing submissions year after year to gain access to funds for programs they believed their students should have an automatic and on-going right to.

While there is an argument for "mainstreaming" VET funding in school budgets, this would only be defensible where a realistic analysis of the costs of VET has been carried out.

Recommendations:

4.1 *Funding for VET in schools should be ongoing and recurrent and based on per capita grants for the number of VET in schools students. The funds should be additional to ANTA funding.*

4.2 *Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments must also make an enhanced and ongoing commitment to appropriately funding VET in Schools. This must not be at the expense of funding to TAFE colleges or other programs in schools.*

4.3 *Current funding levels and allocation models for VET in schools should be reviewed as a matter of urgency in every State and Territory. This review should include consideration of the impact of funding models on the quality of programs, general and specific services and on student and community access. The outcomes of such reviews should be aggregated nationally and form the basis of a national review of policy directions, including the appropriate level of contribution from States/Territories.*

4.4 *The provision of VET to secondary school students should avoid wasteful duplication of public funds and should be underpinned by cooperative arrangements between schools and TAFE.*

4.5 *Base (profile) funding for TAFE must be increased and allocated in order to support services provided to schools so that schools and students are not denied access to these services due to their cost.*

4.6 *Access to Commonwealth, State and Territory funding for VET programs should not be submission based. Schools/teachers do not have the resources for constant and lengthy submission writing.*

5. Organisational/Workload Issues

There is an astonishing array of VET in Schools programs being implemented across Australia, many of which are indeed impressive. But they are operating on a great amount of energy and goodwill from teachers and the workload burden on school teachers is only too obviously affecting their lives to an unacceptable degree.

Running so much of VET in schools on this basis brings into question its long term viability. There is already visible burnout of some of the most committed teachers, and the AEU is becoming increasingly aware and concerned about it as an industrial issue.

Governments, and the advice of the national body, need to refine the interpretation and implementation of VET in Schools compliance with the AQTF standards. State/territory governments must provide adequate resourcing to alleviate the workload of teachers and ensure that their professional and industrial rights are guaranteed.

The VET in Schools agenda is notable for its failure to address funding needs, and to understand the every day work of teachers and schools, the demands on them and the diversity of work they do. There has been no concession to the re-organisation of work patterns, teacher workload, curriculum demands, staffing, physical spaces, hours of school and much more. Furthermore, the bureaucracy that has built up around VET in general and VET in Schools in particular and associated administrative and accountability processes is astounding and wasteful, both in financial terms and in terms of teachers' workloads.

In every state and territory, what was constantly reported during the AEU project was the excessive workload associated with teaching VET courses. Differences in interpretation and implementation of the AQTF standards in different states affect the specific way teachers are under pressure. The workload revolves around the following (some of which vary from state to state):

- Assessment — Inordinate amounts of paperwork are associated with assessing long lists of competencies and validating these assessments. In those states that report VET in grades for the senior school credential, teachers must assess and report in different ways to two different authorities, the school assessment authorities and the VET system. Schools must ensure that student VET attainments are certified.
- Work placements — Tasks include organisation of work placements, supervision of students on work placements, liaising with host employers
- AQTF compliance audits — In some states the accountability processes are onerous and overly bureaucratic.
- RTOs — Where the school is not the RTO, teachers must liaise with the RTO.
- Embedding VET competencies in syllabuses — In some states where embedding occurs, teachers perform this task at school level. In others it is done by taskforces of teachers and then put out for consultation to other schools.
- Timetables — VET courses and SWL must be incorporated into the school timetable.
- Professional development — Professional development needs are specific to teaching VET in Schools, and relate to adult learning (particularly where there are re-entry students), liaison with community and employers, and the nature of the training agenda.
- Industry experience — In some states teachers must meet industry standard competencies and maintain industry currency in their own time.

- Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training — Again, in some states, teachers complete this requirement in varying degrees in their own time.
- Networking — Many teachers attend regular local network meetings.
- Duty of care — Some teacher are required to be on-call as an emergency contact person for out of school hours work placements, in some states including during school holidays. Teachers conduct risk assessments of workplaces, induction of supervisors and assessors of students in workplaces in relation to workplace health and safety issues.
- Post-school destinations — Many schools track and report on students' post-school destinations.

Teachers interviewed for the AEU project expressed their frustration over the workload. Some teachers, across various states and territories, stated that while they recognised the value of VET to many students, they were feeling the effects and did not know how long they could continue to teach VET. Again, it is important to recognise that much of what is occurring in VET in schools is doing so because of inordinate extra effort by teachers which is unsustainable in the long term.

Spark's (1999, p. 8) research team concluded that the VET co-ordinators role was "crucial". The importance of co-ordination and partnerships between providers of VET at local and district levels was illustrated time and again in the research conducted for the AEU project. An important aspect of such arrangements was the existence of an external support including a co-ordinator/facilitator position. It was seen to be important that the co-ordinator be someone with some standing and an understanding of schools, VET and industry — someone who could provide advice and professional development, facilitate networking, negotiate with employers and RTOs, etc., not just someone who carried out clerical and administrative tasks.

However, in many cases there is no cluster or district based co-ordinator. It is not uncommon for the school's VET co-ordinator to have a teaching load and other school responsibilities (such as senior schooling co-ordination or head of department responsibilities) equivalent to a full time load. In some, but not all schools, clerical assistance is provided. Additionally, career, vocational and educational guidance services in schools have been strained severely in recent years as resources for these services have not kept pace with the expansion of vocational education.

To accommodate the demands placed on schools by the inclusion of VET in the curriculum, some schools have had to significantly reorganise their structures around VET, affecting all staff and all subject areas, often detrimentally.. This has occurred to varying degrees in different states/territories and in different types of schools. In some schools, a realistic assessment has been made about the extent to which it is justifiable to re-arrange the entire school organisation to accommodate some students engaged in what is really only one part of a broad curriculum. On the other hand, in NSW a wholesale re-organisation of clusters of schools, generally called "collegiate groups" mainly into senior high schools, usually linked to a TAFE college which may have a presence on site and sometimes linked with a university, with feeder junior high schools has occurred in the past few years. This has been highly contentious and the expansion of the number of such groups has been put on hold by the government.

All rearrangements of timetables, school operating hours and collegiate groups have industrial implications for teachers.

Recommendations:

5.1 *Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should urgently consider ways to deal with the excessive workload of VET teachers and administrators in schools, including, for example, staffing buffers, improved clerical assistance, reappraisal of RTO registration.*

5.2 *Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments need to refine the interpretation and implementation of VET in Schools compliance with the AQTF standards. Adequate resourcing should be provided to alleviate the workload of teachers and ensure that their professional and industrial rights are guaranteed.*

5.3 *System and national data should be collected and reported on the workload and staffing implications of the implementation of VET. This data should form the basis of a review of the impact on teaching and learning conditions with a view to developing guidelines on funding and on staffing structures which enhance quality, effectiveness and fairness for education workers and students.*

5.4 *Appropriate leadership, co-ordination and support personnel should be deployed at the central, regional/district, and school levels with specific full-time responsibility for VET in schools.*

5.5 *There needs to be an enhancement of career and vocational guidance services in schools*

5.6 *Professional development needs of VET teachers should be better integrated into mainstream professional development arrangements in states and territories. Funding should be available and specifically targeted to schemes to allow VET teachers to meet AQTF standards in relation to technical qualifications, industry experience and programs for teachers to ensure they meet the needs of the full range of students with Indigenous backgrounds and the development and assessment of relevant competencies.*

5.7 *Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should ensure that class sizes for VET in schools do not exceed those for the same course in a TAFE college.*

5.8 *Time spent by teachers supervising and assessing students in the workplace should be recognised as teaching time in industrial instruments. Appropriate compensation for travel time, costs and responsibility in relation to work placements should be negotiated.*

5.9 *AQTF compliance requirements should include compliance with industrial awards and agreements pertaining to staff in the training organisation and the relevant industry areas.*

6. AQTF Compliance Requirements

Across Australia there is evidence that schools have been and are taking seriously the task of being AQTF compliant. Knowledge of AQTF requirements and progress towards ensuring compliance has been particularly strong in schools that are RTOs themselves. Where schools are auspiced to provide VET through a TAFE or other RTO or where they rely on an external RTO to provide VET, there was evidence uncovered in the AEU project that teachers in schools were less knowledgeable about AQTF requirements.

Quality control processes have been hierarchically imposed on schools with no input from educators and subsequently the processes take little or no account of the realities of delivery of VET in a school setting. Some benchmark indicators appear arbitrary — they "set conditions without demonstrating how they affect quality or quantity of students outcomes" (Malley et al.., 2002a, p. 8). Furthermore, AQTF compliance requirements do not adequately reflect the range of objectives and expectations associated with VET in schools (particularly those arising from broader social and educational agendas).

Quality control processes are highly bureaucratic and require an excessive amount of time and documentation. This is causing alienation and undermining the commitment of schools and teachers to VET. Differences in interpretation and implementation of the AQTF standards in different states affect the specific way teachers are under pressure. One teacher (not a co-ordinator) reported spending three days in the school vacation period preparing for an internal audit, in addition to work done for the audit during term time. At almost all schools visited as part of the AEU project, teacher and school administrators commented negatively about the processes associated with demonstrating AQTF compliance, which were seen as excessively detailed, time-consuming and unnecessarily bureaucratic.

A clear view emerged from the AEU project that, in terms of quality assurance, far too much effort and expense is devoted to accountability mechanisms in comparison to the effort and expense devoted to professional development, industry release, support, and advice.

Recommendation

6.1 *A review of AQTF implementation should be undertaken at Commonwealth, state and territory levels with a view to:*

- *the highest standard for delivery and assessment of VET programs;*
- *developing consistent implementation guidelines about interpreting valid requirements;*
- *establishing the validity of various requirements/benchmarks;*

- *eliminating unnecessary paperwork/workload associated with compliance requirements and reducing bureaucratic pressures on schools and TAFE colleges;*
- *providing mechanisms of advice and support, including considerably more professional development, in meeting AQTF standards.*

7.   Teacher Qualifications and Experience

There are two dimensions to the teacher requirements for the delivery of VET in schools within the Australian Quality Training Framework: requirements relating to competence in training and assessment, and requirements relating to content (knowledge and skills) and teacher industry experience.

Additionally, in terms of the broader educational role of schools, there are requirements set by individual states and territories relating to general teaching qualifications.

There are differences among the states/territories in regard to how the teacher requirements of the AQTF relating to training and assessment competencies are deemed to be met. In Queensland, subject to production of verified documentation, trained teachers are credited with meeting the standards in relation to facilitation and assessment and are not required to undertake RPL or further training to obtain a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. In all other states and territories, teachers are required to undertake training and/or RPL to receive formal recognition of having met these requirements — though there are differences amongst these states/territories about how this is done and apparently some inconsistencies in the degree to which compliance has been/is occurring (both within and between states).

Given that AQTF standard 7 specifically countenances recognition of "demonstrated equivalent competencies" in relation to the human resource requirements for training and assessment, it is surprising that only one state has made use of this option. This may reflect opposition from industry based on a lack of knowledge of the nature of teacher education and teaching practice.

In those states where teachers were required to undertake further training and/or RPL, there was a nearly unanimous view expressed by teachers interviewed for the AEU project that these processes constituted a poor utilisation of resources. The value added was minimal in relation to the expenses and time incurred. Schools were required to provide funding not only for the training/RPL process but also for replacement teachers. Classes were disrupted. In some cases individual teachers undertook completion of the Certificate IV in their own time and at their own expense. While some teachers and school administrators stated that aspects of the training — relating to competency-based assessment and in particular demands of assessment in actual workplaces — were useful, many commented along the lines that the training was "insulting" or a "waste of time" in that it assumed that trained teachers were unaware of basic issues and techniques in relation to instruction and assessment.

AQTF standard 7 allows for some of the competencies required for assessment and training to be "shared" amongst the persons delivering VET and for deliverers to be "supervised" by someone who has all the competencies. These provisions are relevant where schools deliver VET in co-operation with a TAFE institute or private RTO and should provide a basis for relieving some of the pressure that schools feel regarding AQTF compliance. Unfortunately, it appears that a number of schools in these arrangements are unsure of what is required of them in terms of meeting these requirements of the AQTF.

Another inconsistency between the states relates to whether deliverers of VET in schools are required to be trained teachers. It is ironic that a rigid insistence in some states/territories on possession by teachers of VET of a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training is accompanied by laissez faire approach in relation to teacher qualifications.

While there did not appear to be widespread use of un-teacher-trained personnel to deliver VET in schools where the school was the RTO or was auspiced by an RTO to deliver VET, in some states teacher training is not a requirement.

There are legitimate concerns that the use of cheaper Certificate IV qualified non-teachers to deliver VET in schools could proliferate, driven by the need to contain the costs to schools and schooling systems of the expansion of VET. These concerns include:

• the potential for widespread use of such personnel to undermine the professionalism of teaching;
• the likelihood that such positions would be precarious forms of employment (i.e. fixed term or casual);
• the lack of knowledge on the part of such personnel of broader educational and pastoral responsibilities of schools.

The intersection of these practices and teacher registration is yet to be fully played out and outcomes will affect the ability of schools to use some TAFE teachers. In Tasmania, where a registration system is being established, there is some concern over whether TAFE teachers will be able to teach VET in Schools without registration.

Schools are aware that concerns have been expressed about the quality and recency of industry experience of some teachers delivery VET in schools. Key issues include:

• relevance of experience — Some teachers have training and experience in an allied or related field to the industry area where they are delivering VET (or education/training in an academic context without workplace experience). The degree to which this training and experience should be considered relevant can be a matter of debate.
• recency of experience — In some areas, there have been significant changes in the industry in recent years. Where a teacher's industry experience is not recent, the question of what constitutes sufficient exposure to current practice is often a difficult one.

- provision of industry experience — The degree to which schools have access to funding to support the release of teacher to gain/update their industry experience varies.
- availability and suitability of industry placements — The availability of suitable placements was a particular issue at rural schools but was also commented on in some metropolitan schools visited for the AEU project.

In the AEU project a key concern expressed by schools in relation to VET teacher requirements was the potential difficulties posed by absences (e.g. due to long service leave), transfers or resignations of key VET qualified staff. This problem could be particularly acute in schools that were small, rural, had a high staff turnover, and were RTOs themselves rather than operating in partnership with a TAFE institute.

The loss of a key staff member could effectively put an end to a VET program. "Upskilling teachers" has been an area of "real struggle", according to a Queensland VET co-ordinator, "in one case in our area a school invested in upskilling a teacher only for that teacher to take a job in a private school".

There appears to have been little planning at the central level relating to ensuring a supply of teachers qualified to teach VET in schools. Some schools report that one teacher taking leave, transferring to another school or resigning can threaten the provision of VET. Teachers in most states reported that the absence of accredited casual relief teachers threatened their ability to take leave. This has led to increased anxiety for teachers and administrators as well as moral pressure on VET teachers not to take leave.

Recommendations:

7.1   *Systems and teacher education institutions should ensure that professional development (pre- and in-service) for teachers of VET in secondary schools is based on the following:*

- *a broad-base in pedagogy, curriculum and assessment theory and practice (including as a minimum all competencies contained in the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training) linked to recognised general teaching qualifications;*
- *appropriate industry qualifications and experience meeting AQTF compliance and national training package requirements.*

This will require changes to pre-service education courses and the provision of additional funding to schools to facilitate industry placement and training for teachers.

7.2   *As part of the process of defining and prioritising the multiple goals of entry-level VET, the proposed national body, in consultation with the AEU and its state/territory branches and associate bodies, should review requirements to set appropriate criteria for the qualifications of teachers and assessors in terms of industry qualifications and experience and teacher education qualifications.*

> *In particular, the extent to which teacher qualifications meet the criterion of Certificate IV, Assessment and Workplace Training should be examined and a nationally consistent approach adopted.*

7.3   *States and Territories should put in place programs to ensure the adequate supply of appropriately trained and accredited VET school teachers. This should include arrangements to:*

- *encourage and support industry qualified personnel in identified priority areas to undertake teacher education;*
- *strategically release teachers to industry.*

In addition, the problem of ensuring a supply of accredited casual relief teachers who meet the AQTF standards must be addressed at state and territory level.

7.4   *Teachers new to VET, regardless of whether already experienced teachers, should be entitled to an induction process and a mentor.*

7.5   *Return to industry programs and any other requirement of VET teachers in relation to specific VET professional development and/or qualifications, should be recognised within state/territory professional development industrial requirements or recognition processes where these exist. To enhance the flexibility of use of staff across sectors teacher registration authorities should include TAFE teachers.*

8.   Curriculum and Assessment

The use of national training packages as the basis for VET in schools has been problematic:

> *The term "Training Package" is an unfortunate one, as it implies that the packages are training manuals or curriculum documents. Much of the material written about National Training Packages and their place in the National Training Framework implies that they **were** intended to replace curriculum. Certainly the presence of assessment guidelines and the absence of teaching/learning guidelines in the endorsed components has led to the perception that the Packages have been progressively released, there is a growing understanding in the "VET community" that they are inadequate on their own and that a great deal of resources need to be made available for curriculum materials to support the Training Packages ... Materials produced by the Curriculum Corporation are of a high standard, but they are inadequate in scope and in quantity to meet the needs of teachers and students. (AEU, 1999, pp. 56-57)*

While these concerns are not specific to VET in schools, they are particularly relevant to schools given the broader educational expectations schools are expected to meet.

The "embedding" of VET in general secondary subjects would seem to be an excellent way of addressing these concerns. However, while there is general rhetorical support for integration of general and vocational education in secondary schools, VET policy actually works against this goal. The VET agenda makes no concession to the general educational demands put on schools, that is to say, schools are expected to adapt flexibly to the requirements of the AQTF with no reciprocal flexibility being shown in terms of AQTF requirements — "schools have had to adopt the post-secondary school competency model of vocationalism and embed it [without alteration] within a general education framework" (Malley et al.. 2002a, p. 8).

This means, for example, that it is generally "easier" (e.g. in terms of administrative planning, curriculum and assessment workload, and teacher time) to offer VET separately (i.e. as stand alone) than to embed it into general education courses. This means that students are far more likely to be "streamed" into either VET or traditional academic routes.

> *Separate pathways are attractive as they are administratively easier and are supported by deep prejudices and misconceptions about the way human beings learn. (Boston, quoted in Spark, 1999, p. 18)*

Some in NSW (and to a lesser degree Tasmania and South Australia) believe that integration can occur in ways other than embedding. A balanced curriculum and subject choice, for example, is seen by some as able to achieve a similar outcome. In NSW VET courses are reported as competency based for inclusion in HSC certification. Inclusion of one VET course in calculation of the UAI is accommodated via an optional external criterion based exam. However, two aspects of this contain some conflict. One concerns the purposes of the HSC and the UAI, and the other concerns the different ways the two are calculated or certificated. The issue is not without its controversies.

While some states/territories have provided assistance to schools in embedding a competency-based curriculum and assessment system in general education subjects, the conceptual and practical implications of doing so have generally not been satisfactorily worked through. This has resulted at the system level, for example, in the review timelines for national training packages being out of kilter with the review timelines for subject syllabuses.

At the school level, it has resulted in dual assessments, which in some cases deliver anomalous results. In Queensland, for example, because of the differing natures of criteria versus competency-based curriculum and assessment, in the same student group there can be a student who achieves "limited achievement" in terms of criteria-based curriculum and assessment but "competent" in terms of competency-based assessment and another student who achieves "sound achievement" in terms of criteria-based assessment but who is not adjudged to have met competency requirements. In relation to the effect of dual assessment, a number of classroom VET teachers as well as some co-ordinators interviewed in South Australia and the ACT for the AEU project commented that their workload had more than doubled. A number of them believed there should be a move to stand alone courses, for a variety of reasons. The issue is not clear cut.

A related issue is that of "graded" competency-based assessment. This idea, which has the support of some employers and VET providers in and outside of schools, would bring competency-based assessment more in line with criteria-based assessment. The AEU (1999, p. 56) has observed:

> *There are suggestions that being assessed as merely "competent" or "not competent" can remove a student's motivation to do his/her best, so it has pedagogical implications for teachers in the development of teaching and learning strategies in line with National Training Packages. There are also suggestions that employers want more information about a prospective employee than is provided by a "competent" assessment against standards ... With regard to university entrance, the issue is that the calculation of university entrance scores usually involves assessment that ranks students in order of merit.*

An officer of the former Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies interviewed for the AEU project stated that employers do not support a move to integrate competency and criteria-based assessment. Indeed, schools and education systems receive feedback from employers that they prefer stand alone models of VET to integrated/embedded approaches. Such views can act as disincentive for schools to integrate general and vocational education and as an incentive to "stream" students.

Queensland offers three general education SAS subjects "English Communication", "Literacy and Numeracy" and "Trade and Business Mathematics". These courses exemplify some of the contradictions of the quest for integration of VET and general education. On the one hand, these courses do integrate VET into subjects that are Board-registered and they are popular in terms of the number of schools that offer them and students who enrol in them. On the other hand, the former BSSSS (2002a, p. 11) reports that "there can be no doubt" that these subjects are "creating difficulties in schools". It reports that the "anger and frustration" (idem.) about these subjects is greater than for other subjects with embedded VET. Furthermore, because there is no national training package for the general education and training industry area, the embedded VET is outdated. One Queensland teacher said "why would schools want to jump through all the hoops to be able to offer these subjects with embedded VET when the VET qualifications achieved do not lead to anything?"

Another problem with embedded VET in subjects such as maths or English is that the teacher is likely to be trained as a maths or English teacher with no VET teaching background and little knowledge of a relevant industry context. Sometimes assignment to teach these courses is made on the basis of "filling in" the timetables of those teachers who have "missed out" on teaching academic maths or English.

Despite these problems, there is strong support in at least some schools for an integrated/embedded model of VET delivery in schools. One Queensland deputy interviewed for the AEU project stated that he worried there were moves afoot to "get rid of SASs ... and let schools offer them as stand alone VET". He stated that:

The inherent problem with this is that one of the reasons that VET has been taken up so successfully by schools and students in Queensland is that VET receives subject achievement levels as a Board-registered subject ... the issues may be difficult, but SAS subjects have been very successful because they have given a real legitimacy to senior students doing vocational education at school ... any reduction in the standing of these subjects would do VET students in Queensland schools a great disservice.

On the other hand, there is a view in NSW that the stand-alone VET offered in the HSC, with the requirements of specific National Training Packages built into an Industry Curriculum Framework that is competency based, provide courses that are relevant to many students who find other criterion based senior courses do not meet their needs.

A VET co-ordinator interviewed for the AEU project commented that employability skills that were once a component of the old TAFE courses are now not included in the National Training Packages which are concentrating on industry specific technical skills. Several states have developed non-industry specific work readiness/work education courses. Some of these do not deliver VET competencies/certificates while others do. These courses may also be offered during the compulsory years of schooling. A number of teachers interviewed for the AEU project spoke favourably about these courses and argued that they were often more relevant to the needs of at risk school students than industry specific VET. In some areas, it was stated that the subjects were well regarded by employers. However, other teachers expressed concerns about the over-representation of "low achieving/at risk/special needs/behaviour problem" students in these subjects, fearing that they reinforced a view of VET as a "low status" option. This is discussed further in the section on "Equity Issues".

Recommendations:

8.1 *In developing a coherent policy that clarifies and prioritises the objectives and expectations for school-based VET, the proposed national body should put curriculum and assessment issues at the centre of their considerations.*

8.2 *The Commonwealth and State governments in collaboration with the states and territories should establish a fund to support development of learning strategies and materials for use in schools and TAFE institutes to support national training packages.*

8.3 *Reviews of national training packages should make more explicit the "underpinning knowledge" in the competency standards and broaden the outcomes of the courses to include those explicitly related to fostering knowledge, understanding and values and to preparing learners for further education and training, employment and full and active participation as citizens.*

8.4 *The review of training packages should also ensure that assessment measures used in training packages are consistent and do not cause barriers to access to further education, training and employment.*

8.5 *In defining and prioritising its multiple goals, the broader educational and generic work-related, as opposed to industry specific, dimensions of entry-level VET should be given greater emphasis in the AQTF and national training packages than is presently the case.*

9. Tertiary Entrance Articulation

In a number of states, arrangements are in place for VET to count for university entrance scores (either through embedding it in board of studies courses or through mechanisms for counting stand-alone VET). Further development of pathways to tertiary study through VET in schools is being pursued in most states and territories.

The idea that VET should contribute to university entrance score calculations is one strand of the push to integrate VET and general secondary studies. The allegations that senior secondary school curriculum is unduly dominated by the demands of university entrance and that a higher status accrues to courses that contribute to university entrance are now fairly well accepted by schools and teachers, but whether working out ways to allow achievement in VET courses to count for university entrance is the best way to address this issue remains a legitimate point of debate. On the one hand, a case can be made that such an approach merely re-enforces the hegemony of the tertiary entrance score over secondary curriculum, and the main focus should be on opening up alternative pathways to tertiary study. On the other, a case can also be made that inclusion of VET in the calculation of university entrance scores means that VET in the senior school does not result in "streaming".

There have been discussions recently in NSW, not without debate and dissension, about incorporating more Certificate III competencies into the Frameworks. The proponents of this view are motivated by the attempt to bring more "rigour" into the Frameworks, and to make them more compatible with the demands of the universities in relation to calls for enhanced contribution of VET to the UAI. Opponents view this as a move away from the original intent of incorporating VET into the school curriculum, and ignoring the attempt to move senior schooling away from the control of universities. This debate will not be easily resolved.

The overwhelming majority of students undertaking VET in schools are not seeking immediate post school entrance into a university. Spark (1999, p. 28) reports that only 10 per cent of students doing VET in secondary schools said they were planning to go to university. Fullarton's (2001, p. 55) research indicates that participation in VET in schools is not associated with "a pathway to tertiary entrance". Facilitating the counting of achievement in VET towards tertiary entrance score calculations does create additional options for some students and increases the status of VET courses. It should be supported on this basis. However, this should be only one part of a broader project of not only increasing pathways to further education and training for all students but also increasing knowledge in the community about these alternative pathways and acceptance of their legitimacy among secondary school students and their families.

Recommendations:

9.1 *States and Territories should continue to explore and develop mechanisms for counting VET for the purpose of tertiary entrance. This should not, however, be achieved by including an increasing number of Certificate III competencies into VET in Schools courses.*

9.2 *State and Commonwealth governments should provide support for school systems to increase and enhance pathways to further education and training for all students, increase knowledge in the community about these alternative pathways and promote acceptance of their legitimacy among secondary school students and their families. In particular, information about the value of TAFE pathways should be highlighted and disseminated to schools and students.*

9.3 *All skills and knowledge should be included in tertiary entrance requirements.*

10. Relationship between VET and non-VET subjects

Cumming and Carbines (1997, p. 22) reported that in the schools that they studied there was a "tension" between vocational and traditional school subjects. Based on interviews conducted for the AEU project, tensions between VET and non-VET subject areas remain in 2002. Teachers cited having larger class sizes in non-VET subjects, having to build the timetable around VET requirements, and having to provide "make up" work for students doing SWL as examples of issues which could grate on teachers teaching non-VET subjects.. Some of those teachers interviewed believe that their working lives have been turned up-side-down to accommodate VET and that the subject choices of their students have been unduly influenced by what they see as the mistaken view that VET will help them get a job.

Amongst many teachers not teaching VET (and some teaching it), the jury is still out about the place of industry-specific VET in schools. Some remain unconvinced about its value. Conversely, others interviewed for the AEU project pointed to specific examples in their direct experience where VET provided the only positive experience in some students' entire school lives. The latter teachers are able to recount numerous examples of students who were heading for failure, finding self assurance, self-esteem through VET and gaining skills that led to rewarding and satisfying jobs.

A VET teacher in a NSW school (interviewed for the AEU project) was concerned about the amount of money being spent on VET. When asked to clarify, she was not suggesting that schools and teachers did not need the VET resources they received, but that better use could be made of the money on general education needs. In another NSW school, there was resentment about the amount of the school's general resources devoted to VET from teachers in other curriculum areas that saw that their subject needs were not being met.

This situation is likely to be exacerbated if the non-sustaining of funding and integration policies of ANTA MINCO are adhered to by both the federal and state/territory governments.

A Queensland VET teacher who works as a facilitator across a group of government and non-government schools felt that some schools had failed to "make the case" for VET and "bring everyone on board". She felt that "support structures in schools" were "crucial" in determining the level of support for VET amongst teaching staff.

Recommendation:

10.1 *Following the development of a coherent national policy that clarifies and prioritises the objectives of VET in schools, state education systems should provide resources, support and professional development to schools to allow teachers of all subjects to understand and support the role of VET in schools. Funding for VET should be at a sustainable level to achieve the outcomes expected of schools and reflect its position within the broad aims of schooling.*

11. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Issues

Professor Marcia Langton, in her recent Dr Charles Perkins Memorial Oration (2002) outlined what she called the 'impending social crisis' confronting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the next decade. This crisis, she stated, will be brought about due to rapid population increases, and continued "inadequate government responses to the present status of Indigenous people in relation to their health, housing, education and employment conditions" (p.14). She further goes on to argue that "fresh strategic policy thinking is required to identify and establish the arrangements that would enable effective dealings by all stakeholders to minimize the impact of the predicted crisis in Indigenous socio-economic conditions", and flags the notion of a "framework agreement and national partnership arrangement aimed at settling matters in contention between Indigenous and settler Australians" (p.14).

Effective development of policies and programs must, in all senses reinforce and reaffirm the fundamental rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to determine their own futures. As Behrendt (2001, p.47) states:

Without a rights framework, there is not ability to create and protect the rights to economic self-sufficiency and Indigenous peoples, families, and communities will only be dependent on welfare. Even worse, they will remain dependent on the benevolence of Government.

Discussions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers have revealed that this type of "benevolent" policy development and delivery acts to subtly reinforce the notion of powerlessness and deficiency within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, where participants see themselves as on the receiving end of a policy approach designed to relieve them of their incapacities, and further perpetuate their invisibility, rather than a model which promotes the recovery of basic and fundamental human rights.

In relation to VET in schools, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers have cautiously welcomed some of the recent policy developments, particularly those that foster local-level partnerships through the process of agreement-making. This, however needs to be tempered with an awareness of the hegemonic relationship between education systems and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and further, that the continuation of hegemonic practices which perpetuate educational disadvantage must be challenged and overcome.

Since 1989, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy has been the foundation of successive Federal Government's approaches to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. The four broad goals of the policy (see McRae et al. 2000, pp. 165-166) are applicable to VET in schools:

- Involvement of Indigenous people in education decision-making;
- Equality of access to educational services;
- Equity of educational participation;
- Equitable and appropriate educational outcomes.

Whilst there have been significant improvements in Indigenous education and training since the advent of the policy (Robinson and Bamblett, 1998), Indigenous students continue to be Australia's most educationally disadvantaged group with lower participation/retention rates to Year 12, lower levels of academic achievement, higher rates of absenteeism and higher levels of disciplinary suspension than non-Indigenous students (Bourke et al. 2000).

In recognition of the roles that schools play in perpetuating educational disadvantage for Indigenous students, the AEU has determined Indigenous education and training to be a key strategic priority, and thus a focal point for work across the Union.

Schwab (2001, p. 1) points out:

> *Research shows a persistent and troubling drop in retention as Indigenous students move toward the post-compulsory years, and a relative over-representation of Indigenous students in vocationally oriented school courses. While some have expressed concern at what appears to be a lack of engagement with academic courses, there is no doubt that many young Indigenous people are purposefully pursuing the practical, hands-on learning VET-in-School courses can provide ... While vocational education is increasingly popular with Indigenous students, not all forms provide the appropriate cultural "fit".*

Schwab (p. 6) defines "cultural fit" as "the alignment of curriculum, delivery and pedagogy with local Indigenous cultural assumptions, perceptions, values and needs" and argues that for VET programs in schools for Indigenous students to succeed, "this alignment is essential".

Ownership of VET in Schools programs by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is crucial to ensuring that this alignment occurs. As ATSIPTAC (1998, p. 8) has stated:

> *Research on educational disadvantage has consistently pointed towards the importance of local solutions, with high degrees of community participation and direction. This is of even greater importance in the case Indigenous communities because of our high degree of education and economic disadvantage, the relative isolation of many of our communities, and our identified need for cultural sensitivity and identity within education programs.*

Schwab (pp. 7-8) further goes on to identify six key factors that can facilitate cultural fit and promote local community ownership. These have some similarity to the four successful strategies identified by McRae et al. (2000, pp. 111-112) in schools that provided VET to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The headings below are taken from Schwab but the descriptions include material taken from McRae et al:

- Community-based education and training — Provision of VET in a community setting can be an important factor for Indigenous students who have experienced little success in "mainstream" education. Alternatively, schools can make effective use of Indigenous mentors to build a sense of group and cultural identity.
- Community relevance — At the basic level this refers to the VET course delivering skills to the students which are useable in the local community, but it also refers to a broader goal of community capacity building.
- Commitment to Indigenous employment — Articulation of VET programs to labour market outcomes is a key issue. Schools need to work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other stakeholders to identify employment and further education and training options. Provision of workplace experience and career information and advice is important.
- Balancing the expectations from two cultures — Programs should reflect Indigenous culture, local circumstances and Indigenous learning styles and also be implicit in the incorporation of western cultural mores and circumstances, such as the meeting of mandated industry standards, employee/employer relationships and set out mutually agreed parameters.
- Pushing the boundaries — Schools must be willing to challenge existing assumptions (including racial stereotypes) and be innovative to develop and deliver flexible courses.
- Leadership and committed, competent staff — Leadership is needed so that there are clear directions set in terms of engaging with the local community and being "independent, efficient and innovative". Teachers must have high expectations for Indigenous students.

How these factors play out in schools is influenced by local context. Where, for example, a school is located in a remote Aboriginal community, identification of community leaders may be straightforward but the development of links to jobs may be quite difficult. On the other hand, a city school may be able to readily identify job opportunities but may have more difficulty establishing links with the Indigenous community.

It is clear that many of the complexities faced by VETIS teachers in schools are further magnified by the complexities of developing and delivering VETIS programs which are relevant to, and meet the needs of, Indigenous students and their communities.

Teachers working with Indigenous students and their communities must have a high level of skill in communicating in a cross-cultural setting and producing effective pedagogical practices, along with the range of skills required to effectively implement VETIS.

To be a teacher in contemporary Australia, one must know about Indigenous students, their communities, their needs, their heritage, and have the ability to develop appropriate pedagogical approaches to meet these needs. There is ample research which signifies our failure as a nation to provide teachers with the professional skills and knowledge required to work effectively with Indigenous students. Further, lack of access to this sort of training contributes to the low level of learning outcomes achieved by Indigenous students. Evidence gathered from teachers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has consistently pointed to the need for adequate pre-service and in-service training in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Numerous policy positions have also argued for this. Governments should therefore ensure that all undergraduate teacher education programs, within an agreed time-frame, build in significant and assessable mandatory Indigenous studies units.

Comments from teachers with experience in Indigenous community schools in Queensland (interviewed for the AEU project) were generally supportive of the view that the factors identified previously in the report by Schwab and McRae et al. did enhance the chances of VET in schools programs delivering valuable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. They did, however, point out a number of practical difficulties:

- Articulation of VET in schools programs with labour market outcomes presents a real and considerable challenge in communities where few employment opportunities exist and where the jobs that do exist can attract wages that are less than the amount paid through the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme. (No training is required to obtain CDEP employment.) One teacher interviewed was at a remote school that had made effective use of opportunities provided by the local mine — but many other remote Indigenous communities do not have access to a viable locally-based industry.
- Work placements are difficult to find in some communities.
- There are difficulties in accessing long-term funding arrangements.
- In some locations it is particularly difficult to recruit teaching staff who had *both* the appropriate qualifications and experience to deliver VET in schools *and* the ability to teach effectively in an Indigenous community. Given the high teaching staff turn-over rate in some communities, sustaining a VET in schools program over a number of years is a big ask.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the local area often do not have the qualifications required to deliver programs.

- Current arrangements and requirements for the delivery of VET in schools did not encourage schools to be innovative or to incorporate culturally appropriate pedagogy and curriculum.
- Establishing community-based programs was hampered by the "red tape" involved in working with other government departments and agencies in the community.
- Low English literacy and numeracy levels amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and a high drop-out rate prior to senior secondary schooling limit the capacity of these students to benefit from VET in schools.

The former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training Advisory Council (ARSIPTAC, 1998, p.7) goes further in the classification of these practical difficulties, defining them as barriers, which can be classified as cultural, pedagogical, structural and economic. Further, they argue for a range of changes, including:

- Greater variety in the areas of knowledge in the secondary curriculum;
- More diverse and culturally appropriate forms of assessment;
- Structural changes in the school certificate to incorporate appropriate forms of learning;
- Development of structured links between employment outcomes and education and training.

Whilst these suggestions were not discussed with AEU members during the development of the AEU research report, it is clear from the broader issues identified by teachers, that there is more work to be done in identifying the cultural, pedagogical, structural and economic barriers to VETIS implementation in Indigenous communities in order to develop effective solutions.

Australia's national strategy for vocational education and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 2000 – 2005, *Partners in a Learning Culture* (ANTA, 2000b), has identified a *"focus on participation and outcomes for Indigenous students in VET in Schools programs"* as a key strategy in its *Blueprint for Implementation*. Identification of barriers impacting on Indigenous students' access and participation in VETIS programs is noted in strategy 4.1. This has resulted in a range of project-based activities developed the Wadu strategy, funded through ANTA and project managed by the Education Career and Enterprise Foundation (ECEF). This strategy resulted in the development of a teaching resource, designed to assist teachers to better implement VET in Schools for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Additionally, the Commonwealth Government (DEST, 2002) has released the *Working Together for Indigenous Youth Framework* (2002-2004), in which Key Element Number 3 requires the identification and removal of "barriers inhibiting dramatic and sustained improvements in the opportunities for Indigenous students beyond the compulsory years of education" (p. 5).

Ironically, the development and implementation of these strategies designed to identify and reduce barriers, quite possibly create additional barriers, or exacerbate existing ones. Although these strategies have worthy intentions, and many have produced worthwhile outcomes, it still remains that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, along with their communities and their teachers often feel burdened by the complexity of arrangements originally designed to assist them.

The *Working Together for Indigenous Youth Framework* is an interesting case in point.

Whilst the development of a national framework aimed at the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the post-compulsory years should be seen as positive, the effectiveness of a framework which covers a 2 year period must be questioned, particularly when there is a mere $6million allocated to redress what must be one of the most appalling social indicators of the inequity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians – the fact that the retention rate for Indigenous students in the post-compulsory years is just under half the rate for non-Indigenous students. It is further perplexing when you consider the clear correlation between education, employment and the reduction of economic disadvantage, and the potential amelioration of future imprisonment.

This framework also states: "…that sufficient funds already exist for committed people to make a difference" (p. 6), and that:

> *"Just as the commitment of Government and business to support the intervention strategies is critical, so too is the commitment of the local Indigenous people to fully participate in the strategies and actively contribute to the partnership. In many cases the contribution may also be financial"* (p. 5).

Yet, a recent Inquiry into Indigenous funding by the Commonwealth Grants Commission clearly refutes the notion of 'sufficient funds'. They state: *"While the level of funding made available for programs to address specific Indigenous disadvantage has increased since the mid 1990s, it remains small in comparison with the level of disadvantage"* (CGC, 2001, p.217).

Teachers also express their frustration at levels of funding, particularly those projects funded through the National Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NEILNS), where funds are being reduced annually by the Commonwealth. There is also concern with an over reliance on Commonwealth funding, particularly where the salaries of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers (AIEWs) are funded through the Commonwealth. One AIEW indicated that he has been working as a contract worker for the past five years. This means that he does not receive holiday pay, or sick pay.

The importance of the role of the AIEW has been cited in numerous reports, including Mc Rae, et al, and a Seafood Training South Australia (2000), report that states:

> *"One of the critical components of the project is the ability of AEW's to support the project, both within the schools and at a community level"* (p .4).

Given the role that these workers play in providing support to teachers and students, along with developing local community linkages, it is essential that their employment conditions are improved. Additionally, appropriate training needs to be developed and provided through the National Training Framework to ensure that AIEWs are adequately prepared to take on new roles, such as coordinating VET in schools projects

At the local level, teachers stressed the importance of having a co-ordinator, such as an AIEW, who had credibility with teachers, the local community, other government agencies and local employers. At the systemic level, *The Review of Education and Employment Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (Education Queensland, 2000a, p. 19) noted that in Queensland there was no specific consideration of the needs of Indigenous students in the Department of Education's approach to VET in schools. While the subsequently produced *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000b) strategy (for improving the education and employment outcomes of Indigenous students) does address matters relevant to the delivery of VET in schools for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the degree to which this strategy has been integrated into the overall approach to VET in schools is debateable.

For teachers in remote schools in the Northern Territory, continuity of funding appears to be a problem. Teachers reported to the AEU researchers that "funding guidelines" had "changed without adequate consultation". Teachers stated that VET for Indigenous students "should be a priority" but the uncertainty about funding ("endless submissions") made it difficult to sustain programs. Comments from teachers working with VET equity in South Australia included that "Aboriginal communities need time to establish programs and the programs need time to develop credibility, yet the sources of funding are constantly shifting".

Within the AQTF Standards, the Access and Equity Standard must be more specifically and demonstrably applied to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. For example, in "oana mallacka" (Tasmanian Department of Education, 2002, p.15) Strategy 2, Action 2.6 states that "the Institute of TAFE Tasmania and other smaller RTOs [should be encouraged] to provide appropriate/designated identifiable spaces for Aboriginal people". Other recommended actions include providing information to RTOs about how to meet the Access and Equity Standard, as well as information to auditors on how to support a rigorous state auditing process in relation to this standard.

"Oana mallacka" also contains Strategy 4 to "focus on participation and outcomes for Indigenous students in VET in Schools programs" by:

> Action 4.1 — Including Aboriginal issues on the agenda of the VET in Schools Framework Policy Committee.
> Action 4.2 — Actioning initiatives in relation to increasing Aboriginal students' access to VET in Schools Framework Policy Committee.

Objective 3 (pp.21-22) relates to "achieving increased, culturally appropriate, and flexibly delivered training, including use of IT, for Indigenous people "by establishing training centres, supporting provision of formal and informal Aboriginal training, identifying sources of funding for delivery of IT, supporting its delivery in culturally appropriate ways…"

One example of the ways these recommendations might be achieved is occurring in one rural area in South Australia where work has begun on a steering committee involving members of the local Aboriginal community, and an Area Consultative Committee and there is a move towards linking a grant for employment of young Aboriginal students with VET in schools.

The Tasmanian Aboriginal community is particularly concerned that VET in Schools programs target Year 11 and 12 students, while many Aboriginal students have already left school by this stage. Access to Year 11 and 12 is particularly difficult for Aboriginal students in rural and remote communities in Tasmania (p.17). It is the view of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community that VET opportunities should be available for Aboriginal students at a younger age. A Queensland principal, interviewed for this AEU project, who works with Indigenous community schools, held a similar view.

Tattum (1999, p. 16) quotes Tony Dreise, the former national executive officer of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Training Advisory Council, as stating that Indigenous youth could benefit from VET in schools in Years 9 and 10:

> *Indigenous youth are voting with their feet, early and in high numbers, with 70 per cent leaving before Year 12. It is still early days for VET in School for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and we don't have strong statistical evidence, but anecdotes from schools in the Northern Territory indicate that VET improves retention rates and employment prospects for indigenous youth. Forty-eight per cent of the indigenous population is under the age of 19 and over 40 per cent is under 15. We cannot persist with current educational outcomes and extremely high levels of unemployment.*

One possible cause of students leaving school prior to the completion of year twelve, is their ability in some areas to access the Community Development and Employment Program (CDEP), which Langton (2002) cites as "the principal poverty trap for Aboriginal individuals, families and communities" (p 11). Students as young as fifteen are able to earn an insubstantial wage for what substantially amounts to working for the dole (Seafood Training SA, 2000; Long et al, 1998). ATSIPTAC and Boughton (cited in Long, et al, 1998) argue strongly for the creation of School based apprenticeships and traineeships, and research in to ways of linking education and training programs in to CDEP schemes respectively. Langton argues that the "CDEP scheme requires radical transformation into a genuine labour market strategy that brings Aboriginal people into the workforce in sufficient numbers to enable them to escape the poverty trap" (p. 15).

An example of a successful VET program with strong links to industry in South Australia involving students in the compulsory years is the Indulkana Anangu School Radio Program which began in 1999 with Year 10-12 students. 5UV Radio Adelaide provided training and assessment on site in the far north west of South Australia to students who undertook modules from Certificate II in Community Radio, while also gaining credit toward SACE. The program was extended in 2000 to include students in Years 8-10. Further pathways were offered through Bachelor College in Alice Springs. The courses are being aligned with the new Film, Radio, TV and Multimedia Training Package.

> *The interest generated by this project among students who were not regular attendees resulted in improved attendance rates in both the junior and senior schools. Most students were able to achieve positive outcomes in this program, not only those who were academically successful.* (Bennett and Edwards, 2002, p.20)

An Anangu Education Worker at the school was first trained and then, to integrate the program better into the community, members of the Anangu community are being trained through 5NPY media.

There are currently no AQF VET courses available in NSW specifically for Indigenous students in the compulsory years. Other programs which are vocational in nature, but fall rather into the category of career and vocational learning are in place, including the Aboriginal Career Aspiration Program and Learning Works. The former is a Commonwealth funded program for Years 6-8, based on a Board of Studies program developed for Years 7-10. Funding extends only to the program being run in ten of the NSW 40 Districts.

The latter is aimed at 14-19 year olds and is a Vocational Education and Enterprise Education program, funded by DEST ($750,000) under the Vocational and Education Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme (VEGAS). There are 24 projects in NSW, which vary from eight students at Ivanhoe Central School whose project entails refurbishment of the local swimming pool, to a group of 180 students with an IT project on the Central Coast. Funding is for 12 months, but may be extended for three years. The department is encouraging long term programs rather than band-aid solutions, but for the approval to continue, the DEST requires their outcomes, which are stringent key performance indicators, to be achieved. The programs are not overly prescriptive, with the program managers, NSWDET's Aboriginal Programs Unit, wanting strategies for ways to achieve the outcomes to come from the communities themselves.

One of its aims is to foster "enrolling in and completing TAFE programs and modules (between the ages of 15-19 years)". This is among the core performance indicators determined by the Commonwealth as the basis for funding agreements with the states and territories. They also include outcomes relating to attendance, retention rates, traineeships etc. (NSW DET 2002 p.3). These indicators are particularly optimistic and some concern has been expressed in the states and territories about the reality of being able to achieve them in the short term in return for continued funding.

The NSW Board of Studies does not recognise VET subjects as satisfying the requirements for the award of the School Certificate (Year 10 credential) and has been supported in this policy by most stakeholders. There is one exception relating to students "at risk" but this is confined to Country Area Program (CAP) schools, and inclusion is thus based on isolation rather than any other criteria for "at risk". In addition VET in the compulsory years is approved in Juvenile Justice Centres (JJC). The only Aboriginal students who might be doing VET in the compulsory years would be those attending a CAP school or a JJC. These courses are generally approved, after being submitted to the Department of Education and Training and then to the Board of Studies for endorsement, for a whole class or a small cohort of students and usually involve TAFE courses. There has been much debate in NSW about the use of VET as a retention strategy for Aboriginal students and whether these programs should be identified as specifically for Aboriginal students.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and education workers in South Australia suggested that VET programs need to be designed to provide skills and knowledge that is geographically specific and relevant to areas in which the course is being undertaken in the first instance, and should incorporate a more general VET focus. Further, they stated that VET programs should be relevant, and should match employment in the local area. New enterprises and initiatives that are suitable for the area should be also be explored. They expressed the concern that programs are not being designed to produce meaningful life skills that give them real opportunities to become gainfully employed.

The issue of provision of VET for compulsory-aged students (and, in particular, for Indigenous students) poses some difficult questions for policy makers and practitioners. On the one hand, while VET in Schools programs target Year 11 and 12 students, many Aboriginal students will miss out on the opportunities provided since they have already left school by this stage. Furthermore, currently existing VET programs for compulsory-aged Indigenous students appear to improve both school retention rates and employment outcomes for these students. On the other hand, education and training providers and industry generally oppose the extension of VET to the compulsory years of schooling believing it locks students into a particular pathway at an inappropriately early age and exacerbates the split between general and vocational education, with those pursuing the latter seen as pursuing a "second-class" pathway.

A range of views was provided to the AEU researchers, among which was the view that what might be needed is a change in pedagogy in the compulsory years rather than the expansion of VET. Data collected by the NCVER (2002a, p. 6) provides some support for this position, as it indicates that completion of Year 12 by Indigenous students *prior to* undertaking VET is associated with higher levels of success in VET subjects. The NCVER concludes that "it would … appear that improving the success rate for Indigenous students in VET would depend, at least partially, upon a corresponding improvement in Year 12 retention rates".

Several Indigenous teachers expressed concern about an overemphasis on VET in schools for Indigenous students. One stated "it is already far too easy for Aboriginal students who could do university entrance subjects to take the VET pathway". Another stated that VET was seen as the "pathway for Indigenous behaviour problems". However, another Indigenous teacher said that he supported making VET available for some students in Years 9 and 10. He stated "it is a question of properly valuing VET in the school curriculum and matching students to appropriate courses".

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and Education Workers from South Australia stated that a possible solution might be the development of an integrated academic/VET where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are encouraged to continue academic studies alongside the VET course as a component of the courses. Through this process, students should be given support with academic studies (perhaps at a reduced load) and achievements in VET course components would count towards an overall combined SACE/VET qualification. They suggested that teachers and educators should be mandated to challenge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students academically and exhaust academic options before they are ushered into VET courses.

They felt that it was important to value academic achievement and qualifications as VET courses do not always deliver skills that lead to jobs. They additionally outlined that serious consideration should be given to a pre-VET induction course designed to inform participants about a range of issues like: first impressions, personal grooming and presentation for a job interview, industrial rights and entitlements, work ethic, attention to detail in presentation of assignments. Such a course should incorporate both successful and unsuccessful VET participants/graduates who can give their own personal experiences (as peers) to new course participants.

Does the provision of VET to Indigenous students in the compulsory years open or close off opportunities for these students? The answer is not straightforward. It is clear that in a number of individual cases where this has occurred, it has opened up opportunities for students that would not have otherwise been available. On the other hand, its long-term effect might be the opposite, channelling Indigenous students into a "second class" vocational stream and absolving teachers and schools from the responsibility of engaging these students in education in the ways that other students are being engaged. Furthermore, its effect could be different in different settings, opening up opportunities in some places but closing them off in others.

On the evidence considered for this AEU research project, it appears that a strong case exists for the extension of VET to the compulsory years of schooling for some Indigenous students in some localities.

Recommendations:

> 11.1 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decision-making structures should be created within the new bodies proposed in earlier recommendations.*

> 11.2 *The Commonwealth, States and Territories should work together to ensure that all teachers to be employed in the public education system must have completed a comprehensive sequence of Indigenous Studies in their undergraduate courses as a precondition to their employment. Such studies should include studies of Indigenous histories, languages and cultures, Indigenous teaching and learning processes and practices.*

> 11.3 *A mapping exercise should be conducted to determine the disparities between the employment, training and career pathway options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers (AIEWs) across each State and Territory, and that this mapping should inform the development of a set of competency standards for AIEWs.*

> 11.4 *An urgent investigation should be conducted into the number and levels of post-compulsory school aged Indigenous children accessing the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP), and that VET in schools, or other appropriate programs, should be put in to place to prevent this from occurring.*

12.   Issues of Access and Equity

Access to VET by students has not been equally distributed throughout the student population. However, as Butler and Ferrier (1999) point out, equity issues in VET encompass much more than levels of access and participation by so-called disadvantaged groups, though there has been an unfortunate tendency to restrict equity discussion to these matters. In Butler and Ferrier's view equity discussions are mainly reactive and piecemeal and largely take for granted existing social structures, institutional frameworks and cultural assumptions. Moving beyond this level of critique to make equity a core issue in VET by examining the complex relationships between cultural assumptions, institutional arrangements, and individual/group outcomes is a task still largely ignored.

This is not to say that increasing the participation and improving the outcomes of disadvantaged groups is not an important task. Several states have sought to ensure that there are specific elaborations of the AQTF Access and Equity Standard for specific groups. Examples include Queensland's Fair Go in Training for People with a Disability and Tasmania's *oona mallacka* strategy for Indigenous students.

Provision for "At Risk" Students

Based on empirical research, Fullarton (2001, p. 55) reports that for students in the lowest achievement quartiles ("those most at risk of ending up in economically precarious positions") participation in VET does appear to be providing improved pathways to employment and, to a lesser extent, further training.

Malley et al.. (2002a, p. 25) note, however, that massive enrolment growth in VET in schools has not coincided with any significant increase in overall Year 10-12 retention rates. They surmise that VET "enrolment growth came from 'continuers' who switched preferences from general education subjects to vocational ones" rather than from any decrease in the numbers of early school leavers. Interviews with school teachers undertaken as part of the AEU project tended to confirm this conclusion. Collins, Kenway and McLeod (2000a, p. 134) note:

> *VET in schools has been promoted as a means of ensuring that "students at risk" receive the sorts of education that will connect them to improved post-school opportunities in either work or education and training. However, the work of Angwin et al.. (1998) raises questions about the extent to which VET in schools is serving the needs of students most at risk of not completing school. They imply that for the most disadvantaged students, VET is too demanding and comes too late. They observe that the problems such students have with school arise much earlier and require earlier attention.*

Malley et al.. (2002a, p. 24) suggest that the nature of the VET currently being offered (i.e. based on a higher level, industry-specific, post school training model) may need to change if early school leavers are to be attracted to VET in schools as an option.

This suggests that exploration of the role of non-industry specific work readiness/work education courses is warranted. Some of these types of courses have been developed and implemented in various states. Some do not deliver VET competencies/certificates while others do. These courses may also be offered during the compulsory years of schooling.

A Western Australian VET co-ordinator interviewed for the AEU project worried that his colleagues saw "VET as a dumping ground" and that this meant it was "not seen as valuable". Fullarton (2001, p. 3) puts the position as follows:

> *If VET in schools programs are seen as a way of managing a more diverse student body, rather than as a means of improving student outcomes then there is potential for such programs to be viewed and treated as second-class.*

However, two points need to be made in relation to this observation. First, the locus of this problem is not necessarily at the school level. Government policies themselves often portray VET as a key element in strategies to increase retention rates and address the needs of "at risk" students. Second, achieving a balance between enhancing the status of vocational courses by offering high-status, rigorous VET and meeting the needs of at risk students is not easy (and schools are expected to achieve *both* goals). While, on the one hand, the status of VET can be undermined by a view that VET courses are for less able students, it is the case that high status VET courses can be as exclusionary of the needs of these students as traditional academic subjects have been.

From talking to teachers in a range of different settings, it does appear that despite the difficulties schools are having a great deal of success with some "at risk" students. At one Victorian high school in a depressed socio-economic area, students and teachers have embraced VET. The school has a substantial number of Aboriginal students. It has recently applied for funding as a Skill Centre and works closely with employers and Industry Training Accreditation Boards (ITABs) for the provision of support. This support has enabled the school to offer a range of courses the students might not otherwise have access to.

Success for "at risk" students is not necessarily apparent from retention and completion rates. In fact, in the school mentioned above, the aim often is to lead students into jobs, whether they actually complete Year 12 or not. In fact, finding a job is one of the criteria for success the school uses.

This school is also part of the trial of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning. Of particular concern has been the fact that many students find Certificate II level courses tough going and too difficult. For some students doing VCAL has been the means to getting a job rather than for the VCAL certificate itself. If students find a job and leave, the school is adamant that this does not mean that VCAL has been unsuccessful. For others the certificate is a pathway to further training.

Gender Issues

VET has, of course, traditionally been associated with a "masculinised culture, reflecting the association of VET with trade-related courses for predominantly male-dominated trades" (Butler and Ferrier, 1999, p. 2). VET in schools appears to be an equally appealing option for male and female students. However, "there are long-term and entrenched gender stereotyped patterns of participation" (VETiSD, 2001, p. 6).

Collins, Kenway and McLeod (2000b, p. 38) caution that "it is not sufficient to simply observe that there are differences between girls and boys … such descriptions do not amount to explanations". They argue that "a full understanding of gender justice in education requires a consideration of both the influences on and the consequences of school retention, participation, performance and outcomes". In regard to outcomes, Collins, Kenway and McLeod (2000a, p. 131) note, "if we look at patterns of participation in all of the tertiary sector and the labour market, then in terms of post-school rewards in general, females are worse off than males".

Collins and her colleagues (2000b, pp. 45-47) make particular note of labour market outcomes associated with choices made by male and female students in high school. These choices (in relation to both VET and non-VET subjects) are associated with far greater incidence of full-time employment by age 24 for males than for females. These gender differences in full-time labour market participation significantly widen for at risk students.

One example of the complex interplay of gender, subject choice, subject content and post-school outcomes is the tendency of boys to make more "utilitarian" subject choices than do girls (Collins, Kenway, and McLeod, 2000a, pp132-133). This has a "pay off" for boys in terms of enhanced labour market opportunities but at a cost of lost opportunities to develop their social and cultural capital (opportunities that society rightfully expects schools to provide). Girls subject choices, on the other hand, tend to develop these social and cultural skills but to articulate less well with labour market opportunities. Neither pathway fully meets the needs of society.

Similarly, Boulden (2000, p. 12) describes school/work/education programs as reinforcing a view that the only "real work" is "paid work" and:

> *… have not enabled students to investigate the ways in which both paid and unpaid work is patterned along the lines of gender, class, ethnicity, disability and geographical location. As a result, students have not been well prepared to understand and negotiate the structural impediments to 'free choice', not to develop the attitudes, skills and behaviours they will need to manage in a world where change impacts on personal relationships and arrangements, as well as the nature and organisation of paid employment.*

These analyses provide a rationale based in gender equity for integrating vocational and general studies.

Students with Disabilities

Statistics cited by ANTA (2000a, p. 5) include:

- While 80 per cent of the general population are participating in the workforce only 53 per cent of people with a disability are.
- The proportion of the Australian working age population with a disability who currently participate in VET is estimated at less than 2.5 per cent, yet the proportion of all working age Australians who currently participate in VET was 11 per cent in 1998 and is expected to rise to 12 per cent by 2005.
- The proportion of the Australian working age population who have a disability is currently 16.7 per cent, yet the proportion of the VET population who has a disability is currently 3.6 per cent.

In relation to schooling, Harrison and Barnett (2001, p.1) note the "low levels of participation in structured workplace learning … evident among students with disabilities" and "the high rates of early school leaving" by these students.

Problems facing schools in the provision of VET to students with disabilities include:

- Students with disabilities are more likely to leave school prior to Years 11-12.
- There has traditionally been poor communication and co-ordination between the schooling sector and disability agencies.
- Harrison and Barnett (2001, p. 5) note that in addition to schools, RTOs and employers, in the case of students with disabilities doing SWL or school-based apprenticeships/traineeships, "a fourth partner is required — one with a specialised understanding of the needs of people with a disability. CEPT [Community Employment Placement and Training] or open employment placement agencies are ideally placed to become this fourth partner, but … CEPT agencies have traditionally received funding from the Commonwealth … and are not supported to become involved within schools as this is seen as a state responsibility" (Harrison and Barnett, 2001, p. 5).
- Employers need more encouragement and support to provide work placements for students with disabilities than for non-disabled students.
- Suitable work placements for students with certain categories of disability are difficult to find.
- Many schools do not have the human resources to provide the additional levels of adequate supervision in the workplace that are required for students with disabilities.
- Definitions of "disability" used by schooling systems are generally much narrower than the Commonwealth definition (as expressed, for example, in the Disability Discrimination Act) and are not necessarily the same from state to state. This creates problems in terms of communication and data collection.

Teachers interviewed for the AEU project described three types of vocational education courses provided to students with disabilities. Some schools offered non-VET work education subjects. The attraction of these was that they were far easier to organise and provide than VET courses. However, teachers were critical of these programs.

Besides failing to provide accredited qualifications and links to employment these programs were not seen to provide students with the same amount of satisfaction and self-respect as VET courses. The second type of course was a generic VET course such as "work readiness" or "workplace practices". Most teachers saw these courses as providing useful and marketable skills to students, particularly if they were provided prior to or alongside of industry-specific VET. However, some other teachers expressed concerns about these courses. "I have a concern" said one high school VET co-ordinator, "about the over-representation of students with special needs in the groups undertaking these courses". Another teacher expressed the view that generic VET certificates are "pointless".

The third type of VET offered to students with disabilities was industry-specific VET, including school-based apprenticeships/traineeships. One special needs teacher interviewed for the AEU project argued strongly for benefits of apprenticeships/traineeships for students with disabilities: "it enhances their chances of meaningful employment … [and] allows them to move away from expectations of a lifestyle based upon the disability pension". The problem with industry-specific VET is that, for students with certain types and levels of disability (e.g. intellectual impairment, autism spectrum disorder), it is difficult to arrange, and it is difficult to provide the appropriate level of support and supervision. As the special needs teacher pointed out:

> Students [with disabilities] who are placed in … [school-based] traineeship programs require frequent monitoring — duty of care — to continue to achieve in traineeships. Tasks for teachers … include: ensuring punctual student work arrival time, organisation of the student, the employer and the tasks, workplace survival with CEPT support, [securing] Commonwealth funds to modify the workplace, appropriate use of adaptive technology.

This teacher went on to state that he felt it was "almost impossible for one high school to go it alone" in providing the level of support for these students. He argued for an "aggregated" model of VET provision in which students with disabilities from various schools are placed in suitable programs "conducted by a TAFE/RTO but managed by a high school".

Rural and Remote Students

TAFE colleges often do not have a presence in rural areas. As Boylan (2002 p.34) has pointed out, VET in schools can fill this gap. Boylan points to examples in Western Australia, Tasmania and NSW where local communities work with schools to provide access to VET for rural students. Boylan also points to the usefulness of telematics and videoconferencing that are already being used (Boylan, 2002 p.35). Issues however in relation to rural VET in schools include teachers' workloads, staffing, technology provision. Boylan says (p35):

> A challenge for education authorities [is] to acknowledge [that] the financial costs of operating a remote rural school are different and will be higher than operating similar schools in provincial rural and urban places. Accessing telecommunications, gaining school resources, providing opportunities for excursions and workplace experiences are just some of the differential costs associated with providing quality education in rural places.

The particular issues facing the delivery of VET in rural and remote areas include:

- Finding work placements for students — This is a particularly pressing difficulty in states where work placements are mandatory.
- Providing professional development for VET teachers — This includes gaining relevant industry experience and maintaining currency of industry competencies. Because of the travel time required, participation in these activities can require huge resources or massive amounts of teacher goodwill.
- Finding AQTF accredited casual relief teachers.
- Networking — Teachers are often unable, because of distance, to attend network meetings, which, for example in NSW, can be considered part of the requirement to maintain industry currency.
- Supervision of students on work placements — Large distances often need to be travelled, for example, to students on remote properties.
- Validation of competency assessments through workshopping with VET teachers in other schools — Because of the difficulties faced in this respect, one small rural central school in NSW was judged in its audit as only "working towards" this particular AQTF standard.

Tasmania, in particular, has explored ways in which VET in schools might be used to encourage rural students to stay on at school. It was found that among the students who moved to regional centres to attend a senior college, many dropped out after three months and returned to their homes despite the high unemployment levels. The Tasmanian government has used VET as a means to open district high schools to Years 11 and 12, and to make provision for students to continue their education while remaining at home, through their Rural Retention Program. There are three officers with the role of supervising and co-ordinating VET in schools in rural districts and currently 22 of the 30 district high schools have implemented a Year 11 and 12 program.

There is some on-line delivery of VET in Tasmania and schools receive a .2 staffing allocation if they are actually delivering the program. This provision is to help overcome the problems associated with providing VET courses to small numbers of students.

Notwithstanding the moves to introduce Years 11 and 12 into district high schools, many of the young students (continuers) are still encouraged to go away to college. At many of the schools a large number of the senior students are in fact re-entry adults. At one school, where the program only began two years ago, there are now 75 senior students, most of whom are people from the community. At another there are 50 people spanning three generations. The department speaks of the role of these programs in rural "community renewal."

Much of Tasmania's $350,000 share of Federal funds for Skills Centres has been devoted to rural schools. The funds have been used, for example, to provide community continuing education and training centres. Skills Centre money is for physical resources. It cannot be used for costs of teachers. There is discussion of applying a fee-for-service basis, for use of these centres.

District schools' share of ANTA funds is used in these rural areas mainly for professional development with much of it going on travel costs.

NESB and Cultural Issues

The lack of recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity in the content and delivery of training is reported as a barrier in learning environments in a paper produced by the NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training (NSW BVET date unclear p4). For example, one school in NSW pointed out to an AEU researcher the difficulty of altering tasks in courses in courses based on NTP requirements to take account of linguistic and cultural differences.

Some schools in NSW with large NESB enrolments have made the decision that the only VET they provide is delivered at the school so that linguistic and cultural differences are addressed. Other reasons relate to the cultural barriers to sending students off the school site for program delivery. Such schools are using every means available to them to ensure that quality VET programs can be delivered by the school.

Some issues have arisen in NSW in relation to the mandatory work placements. In some schools, families of Islamic female students will not allow them to attend workplaces unsupervised. On occasions, schools have been able to discuss the issues with the families and successfully resolve these matters, but in others they have not. If the students don't do the work placements, they may gain the VET credential, but may not receive the HSC.

Recommendations:

12.1 *In developing a coherent policy that clarifies and prioritises the objectives and expectations for school-based VET, the complex relationships between cultural assumptions, institutional arrangements and outcomes for individuals and groups must be examined and addressed.*

12.2 *The Commonwealth and States and Territories should ensure that culturally appropriate services, programs and support structures meet the needs of disadvantaged students and local communities. Such a program would best be part of an Education Equity Program (EEP) linked to a Disadvantaged Regional Areas Program (DRAP) which would provide resources for a whole of Commonwealth, State and Territory Government approach combining industry policy, labour market programs, job creation, job placement, education and training and community welfare support and services.*

12.3 *Funding models in the states and territories must recognise that some schools and TAFE institutes face higher costs than others because of their location and/or student profile.*

12.4 *The Commonwealth should contribute additional funds on a dollar for dollar basis to the states and territories to assist schools with VET programs specifically targeted to disadvantaged students.*

12.5 *Access to VET (including to school-based apprenticeships/ traineeships) should be funded and made available to students of compulsory school age where there are sound reasons for doing so.*

13. Interface between Schools and Other VET Providers

TAFE

There is an urgent need to improve co-operation between public providers of VET. This is more than a matter of differing agendas and poor communication. Indeed, there is evidence of hostile relationships between school and TAFE providers.

This is exacerbated in states where responsibilities for TAFE and schools sit in different ministries and departments and by policies such as competitive tendering which encourage institutions that should be natural partners to behave as competitors in a training "market".

Unfortunately the AEU project found that there was often competition between TAFE colleges and schools and between schools in relation to VET funding, resources and staffing. Some schools have to some extent become possessive of their links with local industry, usually because they have put a lot of work into these relationships. This operates to the detriment of collaborative and co-operative working relations between schools and TAFE institutes and therefore not always in the best interests of the students.

In Victoria, it was stated that, despite widespread use of TAFE to provide or auspice VET in schools, TAFE institutes were not able to use profile funding to deliver VET in schools. When TAFE institutes charge for the delivery of VET in schools on a cost recovery (or for profit basis), often their charges are at the higher end of the market due to their higher overheads than private RTOs. This causes resentment in schools and discourages the use of TAFE as a partner. In Western Australia, a school principal said "too much of our VET funding goes to auspicing (i.e. to purchasing courses from TAFE)." Some TAFE institutes are genuinely interested in partnerships with schools and charge "reduced" rates. Rather than being seen as educationally desirable and beneficial to students, this is likely to be construed as inappropriate (or unethical) in the context of a competitive training market.

There are, however, some fine examples of partnerships between schools and TAFE. A district high school in Tasmania has TAFE representation on the management committee of its Skills Centre, which was jointly established. This collaboration has allowed the school to provide Office Administration. In NSW, the only on-line learning in schools is delivered through TAFE, by TAFE teachers.

In Queensland, TAFE institutes are not supposed to use profile funding to provide VET to school students (although it does occur in come cases). This is based on the government's view that schools accessing profile-funded VET through local TAFE institutes would constitute "double-dipping", that is, that it would be inappropriate for a school that had already itself been funded to provide VET to have access to resources provided to deliver VET in a TAFE institute.

The outcome is that schools are discouraged from using TAFE as a VET provider, as TAFE will only provide the courses on a user pays basis usually at market rates. A Queensland VET teacher interviewed for the AEU project commented:

> *The idea that schools shouldn't be able to get a second bite at VET resourcing is fine in principle. I understand that the government is considering proposals to facilitate resourcing "following the student" for joint school/TAFE programs. The problem is that these policies are based on an assumption that schools are sufficiently funded to provide VET programs — and that isn't the case.*

In Queensland and Western Australia, school teachers of VET commented on TAFE institutes refusing to recognise VET qualifications obtained by students through schools.

One reason offered by school teachers in a number of states and territories for TAFE not accepting Certificates delivered by schools is that TAFE colleges organise their certificate courses with a different choice of units from those chosen by schools. This means that the VET undertaken in a school does not articulate with further and higher certificate level courses at a TAFE college. If this is the case, it suggests that further examination is warranted of the national recognition and accreditation system on which the whole national training agenda rests. It also suggests the need for far greater co-ordination of accreditation arrangements between schools and TAFE.

Private RTOs

The use by schools of private providers varies from state to state. In most states there is no restriction on schools using private providers. The one confining factor is cost, which must be borne by the school or the students. In some instances, schools endeavour to subsidise such costs in the interests of equity, but in others the students are expected to pay. For example in some schools in Victoria the costs for enrolling in the Cisco course are passed on to the students.

The AEU research found that some schools had no philosophical problem with using private providers when they could have used a TAFE college.

In NSW there are tight restrictions on the use of private providers. Schools must fill in appropriate paper work that explains their use of these providers. They must show that the school itself is unable to deliver the course. They must also provide proof that the local TAFE college cannot provide the course.

The one exception to this provision in NSW is in relation to school-based trainees. Because of user choice regulations, when a student is a trainee, the student and employer have the unfettered right to choose the training provider.

Governments already have a strong moral obligation to the maintenance of a strong public TAFE system. If they accept, as they need to, greater responsibility for the planning and provision of VET in schools, economic and common sense planning would see the use of the already existing and publicly funded TAFEs as core sites and resources for the provision of much VET in schools.

Recommendations:

13.1 *Plans for the development of school-industry links and the use of appropriately qualified industry and VET staff in VET in schools programs should be built upon the goal of developing a co-operative model of the provision of programs with other public schools and TAFE institutes.*

13.2 *Schools and clusters of schools should be encouraged to establish links and strategic alliances/partnerships with local industry organisations, community and TAFE as a means of strengthening school-industry-community links.*

13.3 *Arrangements should be put in place to facilitate the use of appropriately trained teachers across the schools and TAFE sectors, with attention being paid to the culture, working conditions, expectations and needs of each sector.*

13.4 *State and territory education and training authorities should encourage the establishment of consultative education groups at local level, with representatives of both TAFE and schools, to determine where and how best to deliver the range of VET in schools courses. These consultative groups should involve classroom teachers and senior managers and have an overall planning role.*

13.5 *The structures and resourcing of the vocational education system should reflect the role of TAFE as a vital public asset that is the predominant provider of VET. State and territory education departments should ensure that public schools do not use private providers unless there is no public provision available.*

13.6 *Steps should be taken to ensure that the VET system is, in fact as well as in theory, a system of nationally recognised qualifications and accreditation. This may mean altering the way national Training Packages are constructed and/or establishing representative bodies, at the level of clusters of schools and TAFE colleges, to co-ordinate accreditation arrangements between schools and TAFE.*

14. Employer Involvement

Employers tend to have specific expectations in relation to VET in schools and the range of purposes, complexity of policy and variety of programs that typify VET in schools can lead to distrust by employers of school programs.

Furthermore, Spark (1999, p. 54) found that "lack of understanding by enterprises of the training reform agenda, training packages or competency standards" was an area identified by teachers as one of the "barriers to continued VET provision at their own schools".

There are also some systemic disincentives to employers and students. For example, under the current system, students who obtain a VET qualification while at school are ineligible when they enter the workforce to attract a training subsidy for an employer. Employers therefore may give preference in employment to school leavers without a VET qualification. Students may exit school with a VET qualification which may not be sufficient to gain them employment and be locked out of further training opportunities because the opportunity for them to enter a subsidised training arrangement with an employer has been removed.

Commitment by employers can make or break a VET program, but that commitment is patchy. Some schools have developed excellent partnerships with local employers. However, in some areas employers are reluctant to become involved and the burden of enticing employers to become involved in VET in schools, and sustaining that involvement, can present a significant task for a school, particularly a smaller school. This is a task that could be undertaken by school systems and training councils at the state level and by a district or school cluster based VET co-ordination at the local level.

This is already occurring in some districts and states. The extent to which the organisation of these partnerships is formal varies. In South Australia, there are twenty regional partnerships in each district. These partnerships are state funded and involve more than just Structured Workplace Learning, but include learning about work, community involvement, career education and "enterprise" skills.

Funding for the development of these relationships is also variable. In Tasmania, one district high school's establishment of strong links with local employers as well as bigger state employers in forestry and the meat processing industry has been assisted by funding through ANTA's "Framing the Future" project. However, this funding is not on-going and is submission based, adding to teachers' work.

Some interesting models of partnership arrangements exist and are working well, for example, with Mitsubishi in Adelaide. However, the Mitsubishi program centres on a large industry, car manufacturing. This tends to be the case with other similar programs elsewhere, particularly in relation to school-based apprenticeships/traineeships. Where there is no large industry schools and co-ordinators are attempting to develop other models that offer real opportunities. Concern has also been expressed (particularly, the AEU research found, in South Australia) about the fact that links between some schools and large industries are exclusive and lock out students from other schools (even those in the local area) from participating in programs.

Recommendations:

14.1   *Funding for the development and continuation of the relationship between schools and employers must be ongoing.*

14.2   *State and territory governments should develop and fund methods of educating employers about the importance and nature of work placements, their role in ensuring successful training of VET in school students, and the expectations they can reasonably have about the students.*

Peak industry groups, such as The Business Council of Australia, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Australian Industry Group must be persuaded to take greater responsibility for the provision and quality of work placement. They and local Chambers of Commerce should be engaged to reach small businesses.

14.3 *Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should ensure that where large industry is involved in VET in schools it is on the basis that all students have a right of access to the programs.*

14.4 *Where particular schools and teachers have developed good relationships with local businesses, funding should be made available to the school or district to develop those relationships, expand them and extend them to a wider group of schools and employers.*

15. Student Work Placements

The research literature generally supports the view that integrating structured workplace learning into VET programs in schools is desirable (e.g. Harris et al. 1998; Hawke, 1995; Sweet, 1995). Spark (1999, p. 55) stated that in her research "all schools involved in work placements cited them as a great strength of their program". However, Spark's research also showed that "there are numerous issues surrounding work placements for senior secondary schools" (p. 9).

Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) does not form part of the agreed MCEETYA definition of VET in schools and the degree to which states/territories see this as an important part of VET varies. From 1997 - 2000, for example, Western Australian schools were required to have a SWL (on-the-job) component in their VET programs. While the Western Australian Department of Education now adopts the MCEETYA definition of VET, there continues to be a strong emphasis on SWL in Western Australian schools. In Queensland, on the other hand, structured work placements are not generally incorporated into VET courses.

The quality of student work placements appear to vary along a continuum from experiences not too different to "work experience" programs — where little structured learning or assessment takes place and having in some cases little direct connection to the VET course being undertaken — to structured experiences of work including specific on-the-job training and assessment which is fully integrated into the VET course.

The SDA (2002, p. 5) asserts that due to timetabling pressures schools often encourage students to undertake work placements at night, on weekends, or during school holidays and identifies a potential problem with such work placements: "In industries such as retail there is little opportunity for … structured learning if the student is rostered to work during peak trading periods".

A deputy principal in a Queensland rural school, interviewed for the AEU project, identified student work placement as "worrying" and an "equity issue" for rural schools. He stated "while it may be desirable to offer appropriate work placement ... many schools outside metropolitan and provincial Queensland will find this impossible ... what do students do when they are doing four to six subjects in differing VET areas?" Peter Noonan, former acting CEO of ANTA stated in 1998 that there would not be enough work placements to sustain the expansion of workplace learning for all (cited in Spark, 1999, p. 21).

This is certainly an issue that has been debated in NSW. The Board of Studies conducted a review of the availability of work placements. This review found that there are indeed problems, which are identified in particular geographic areas and in particular industries. With work placements being mandatory in Industry Curriculum Frameworks, this is clearly an equity issue. To overcome some of the difficulties a percentage of the work placement that can be done in a simulated workplace environment is specified in some of the frameworks. Without the workplace component, students will gain their VET certificate if it is not mandated in the National Training Package, but the VET course will not contribute to their HSC.

Spark (1999, p. 9) reported that the "finding and organising work placements" was time consuming and that schools "repeatedly" mentioned that they had difficulties in finding suitable employers. Cumming and Carbines (1997, p. 19) note significant issues for schools in terms of their organisation and timetabling. Of specific concern was the missing by students on structured work placements of non-vocational classes and the need for schools to provide "catch up" arrangements. One Western Australian VET co-ordinator interviewed for the AEU project described how his school had "solved" this problem by scheduling all SWL "off the grid" (i.e. having a separate program and timetable for SWL students). This also presents problems, however, as students doing SWL were segregated from the rest of the senior school.

Cumming and Carbines (1997, pp. 16-17) identified the role of a workplace co-ordinator as a key enabling factor in the success of structured workplace learning but noted that "establishing a position of full-time co-ordinator and providing the administrative support required to implement these programs were major cost items". The ASTF provided funding for workplace co-ordinator positions but this no longer occurs. Its withdrawal raises yet another major consideration in the sustainability of VET in schools as it currently exists.

The Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) was funded by the Commonwealth Government to promote links between schools and industry, with a particular role in the funding of workplacement co-ordination. It was replaced in 2001 with the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEF) which has a broader role reflecting the broadening of MCEETYA's *Framework for VET in Schools* to place a greater emphasis on enterprise and career education. The ECEF fulfils its role in diverse ways including, toolbox supplier, knowledge broker, funding provider, relationships and alliances manager, awareness raiser, change agent. (ECEF, 2002a).

While the participation figures for students in Australia engaged in structured workplace learning (SWL) have increased, the Commonwealth funding directed to SWL has fallen from $12.5m in 1998-99 to $10.9m in 2001-02.

The Commonwealth provision to the ASTF/ECEF specifically for SWL increased from $10m in 1997-98 to $10.9m in 2001-02. However, in 1998-99 the ASTF contributed a further $2.5m to SWL co-ordination from its core funding, while in 2001-02 there was no contribution from this source (now the ECEF). Total amounts of ASTF/ECEF funding devoted to SWL each year from 1996-97 are contained in the following table.

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02
C'wth Prov ($m)	7.5	10	10	10	10	10.9
ASTF/ECEF Funding ($m)	10.8	11.5	12.5	10.5	10.3	10.9

Analysis of this table demonstrates the withdrawal of the ECEF from the funding of SWL co-ordination. The ECEF itself notes that *Essentially, 2002 is viewed as a transitional year while the ECEF Board reviews its strategic plan and explores the most appropriate business model for the future in line with its broader mandate.* (ECEF, 2002a).

Given the difficulties experienced by schools, teachers and systems in relation to the co-ordination of SWL as was identified by the research conducted by the AEU, the future role of the ECEF should be reviewed, not merely by the ECEF Board itself, but by MCEETYA in broad consultation with schools whose students are engaged in SWL. In some states, such as NSW, state governments have contributed considerable funding to facilitate workplacement co-ordination and strategies to draw employers into the training network. Commonwealth funding for the co-ordination of SWL must not be withdrawn.

Recommendations:

15.1 *Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should support the expansion of structured work placements as a part of VET in schools. Co-ordination of these should be centrally funded with dedicated co-ordinators with experience (wherever possible) in industry, training and schools.*

15.2 *Specific Commonwealth funding for industry links in relation to the organisation of work placements should continue. This funding should be on-going.*

15.3 *The role of the ECEF should be reviewed by MCEETYA after substantial consultation with schools and teachers currently engaged in VET programs with SWL components.*

15.4 *The ECEF Review should include consideration of the structure and composition of the ECEF Board and the appointment of educationalists including an AEU representative to the Board.*

15.5 *State and territory governments should ensure, through appropriate arrangements, that the burden of organisation and supervision of Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) that currently falls to teachers is rewarded or compensated.*

15.6 *State and territory governments should establish arrangements to ensure that extra staffing is available to allow for students absent on work placements to catch up work missed.*

15.7 *The issue of VET teachers being on-call as emergency contacts for work placements out of school hours (including during school vacations) should be dealt with as a matter of urgency.*

16. School-Based Apprenticeships/Traineeships

A Victorian Education Department review project in 2001 found that reasons for the low participation rate in school based apprenticeships/traineeships in Victoria include the fact that "schools do not actively offer or facilitate this pathway as their fundamental structure and [the school's] orientation is academic" (DEET 2001, p.2).

Queensland has the highest take up of school-based apprenticeships/traineeships accounting for approximately half of the Australia-wide total. Andrews et al. (2000 p2) note that the Queensland program has good outcomes including lower cancellation rates than ordinary apprenticeships/traineeships and improved school retention rates. Interestingly it appeared that many apprenticeship/traineeship positions were 'created' by the program rather than 'filled' by the program. The program, according to Andrews et al, was "highly valued" by stakeholders, including participants, parents, teachers and employers."

Teachers interviewed for the AEU project said that school-based apprenticeship/traineeship arrangements require a lot from students in terms of organisation, commitment and determination to complete the three requirements: paid work and on-the-job training, off-the-job training, and completion of the rest of their VCE courses. While the Victorian DEET report (p.6) suggests that school-based apprenticeships/traineeships are a viable pathway for students at risk of not completing Years 11 & 12, teachers in most states believe that the disparate and demanding nature of the requirements often put meeting those requirements beyond the reach of those very students. Student motivation, readiness and commitment are real issues.

Another key issue is organisational. Schools must often reorganise timetables and other structures and offer support programs to accommodate a very small number of students participating in school-based apprenticeships/traineeships and this is often hard to justify.

While funding is provided to schools to support school-based apprenticeships/traineeships, the problems schools have identified are not so easily addressed by funding unless that funding is directed towards the necessary staffing both for school re-organisation purposes, preparation of training plans, and student guidance and support.

Government subsidies are provided on a per student basis so a school needs to have a "critical mass" of participants in school-based apprenticeships/traineeships before the funding can be put to effective use.

The DEET report notes the barriers that the inflexibility of schools (and industry) throw up, but it also notes that "overall it is the lack of strategy and support to schools that underlies Victoria's low participation rates," (p.7) and calls for "dedicated funding to schools".

In much the same way as the DEET report (p.10) calls for a redefinition of "completions" that encompasses a broader range of useful outcomes, so the AEU project found that VET in schools teachers in most states believe that the definition of a successful outcome of VET in schools is too narrow and should include students who leave school before completion to take up, for example, a job offer.

The speed with which states and territories have dealt with the industrial barriers to part-time school-based apprenticeships/traineeships varies. In Queensland these issues were finalised early while in Victoria they were not. It appears that these differences have had quite an effect on the participation rate in each state/territory.

Another factor apparently affecting participation rates in school based apprenticeships/traineeships is the extent to which other VET in schools subjects include a period of structured workplace learning. In Queensland, where the take-up of these apprenticeships/traineeships has been by far the greatest, there is no requirement for structured workplace learning in other VET courses, while in NSW, completion of VET courses as part of an Industry Curriculum Framework for the Higher School Certificate has a mandatory work placement component, so there is an alternative VET pathway to the more complex school-based apprenticeship/traineeship, that incorporates structured workplace learning. This is also the case in Tasmania, where school-based apprenticeships/traineeships did not occur until very recently, and are only now being offered as a pilot in a limited number of industry areas and in extremely small numbers.

Equally important in terms of participation is the commitment of local industry. A large proportion of school-based trainees work in "big industry". Tasmania, for example has no big industry to speak of and there is a view there that this helps explain their low participation rates.

Another issue impacting on participation rates is the flexibility with which education authorities in each state/territory allow students to begin studies for their final credential at Year 10. Where this occurs, it is possible for a school-based trainee to begin either the apprenticeship/traineeship or final credential early rather than add a year on to the end of Year 12 to meet the requirements.

The conflict between the requirements of school-based apprenticeships/traineeships and the need for a tertiary entrance score is compounded by the time a school-based apprenticeship/traineeship takes students away from other subjects. The extent to which this is an issue depends very much on individual students' aims and expectations for the future.

The opportunity to undertake the employment component of the school-based apprenticeship/traineeship is virtually non-existent in many rural and remote areas. Special programs need to be established with the employment component provided by government.

Even in Queensland, where SBAs have been hailed as a success story (see, for example Grace, 2002), Andrews and his colleagues (2000, pp.3-6) identified a number of problems with the program:

- the program had not been well integrated into schools – systems had a "laissez faire" approach to the programs, schools had timetabling difficulties, students were disadvantaged by heavy workloads and the need to "make up" missed school work;
- resourcing for the program was inadequate and funding "lagged" activity;
- funding did not encourage "experimentation and learning about the labour market" but assumed that all students were committed to a specific vocational outcome;
- marketing was ad hoc and disjointed – employers find themselves approached by various agencies, programs such as the [then] ASTF promoted structured work placements "compete" with school-based apprenticeships/traineeships;
- user choice was causing inefficiencies in curriculum delivery;
- one day per week models of on-the-job training are inadequate for skill formation;
- not all students who should have access to the program are able to access it.

The MCEETYA target of 20,000 part time school-based trainees by 2004 is not only unlikely to be met, but is unlikely even to be approached. The appropriateness of this target should be reviewed, given that seeking to attain it will likely divert funds from other areas of education and training budgets.

Recommendations:

16.1 *The school-based apprenticeship/traineeship program should be reviewed with particular attention to the following issues:*

- *adequacy of funding;*
- *organisational implications for schools and education systems;*
- *inconsistencies in approaches and take-up amongst states and territories;*
- *employer support;*
- *relationship with other VET provision in schools;*
- *industrial arrangements and training agreements;*
- *access and equity issues;*
- *staff and local training and development*

16.2 *State, Territory and local governments should engage further in school-based apprenticeships/traineeships by providing the opportunity for students to train in the public sector and/or publicly funded projects, particularly in rural areas.*

17.   Student Protection and Duty of Care Issues

As the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA, 2002, p.6) points out:

> *All students undergoing a part-time new apprenticeship while at school are covered by a signed training agreement but that is not the case for VET in school students on the unpaid pathway.*

Where schools have difficulties finding places for students and teachers are expected to oversee work placements with little or no support (e.g. time, compensation for expenses, provision of travel), the chances that there will be inadequate supervision and learning at the work site increase dramatically.

Where this is the case, work placements can become "indistinguishable from normal work … exercises in providing cheap and exploited labour" (SDA, 2002, p. 8). Unions have expressed concerns that in some cases VET students are displacing existing workers.

Schools have a role to play in ensuring that employers provide work placements that deliver meaningful and appropriate work place learning. Three ways of enhancing the ability of schools to do this would be to provide resources to schools to support workplace learning including full-time work placement co-ordinators with appropriate industry experience, to establish and resource mechanisms at the systems level to encourage and monitor appropriate behaviour by employers in the use and treatment of students in structured work placements and to review models of student work placement to define and identify best practice.

In the course of interviews for the AEU project, a VET co-ordinator in Western Australia admitted being "worried" about duty of care and workplace health and safety issues in relation to structured workplace learning for students. Another stated that "you just can't visit all the work sites before students are placed on site".

Teachers are being required to complete risk assessments of workplaces where students are engaged in work placements, a role they are not trained for nor given time to perform. There are serious legal implications involved in risk assessments, not to mention workload issues. However, it appears that in many schools, such risk assessments are being left to the host employers. One Victorian school says they have no time allocated to do this and so rely on the employer with respect to these aspects of students' work placements.

In a number of states and territories, teachers have been required or felt obliged to be on call as an emergency contact for students/host employers on work placements out-of-school hours. These hours are not confined to a few hours at the end of the school day. In some states VET teachers are on-call at night, at the week-end and during school vacations. In the ACT as a general rule, work placements are not organised out-of-school hours, however in South Australia and Tasmania teachers reported giving students and host employers their home and mobile phone numbers, and being on call at any time.

Legal advice was obtained by the NSW Teachers Federation to the effect that teachers' normal duty-of-care does not extend to these lengths but that by agreeing to place one's name and contact details on emergency cards, teachers were by their own agency extending their duty-of-care. Teachers were advised not to take on this role. However, it remains the case that teachers in NSW and in other states and territories are doing so.

Recommendations:

17.1 *In order to ensure that employers provide work placements that deliver meaningful and appropriate work place learning and are not exploitative, systems should:*

- *provide resources to schools to support workplace learning including full-time work placement co-ordinators preferably with appropriate industry experience,*
- *establish and resource mechanisms at the systems level to encourage and monitor appropriate behaviour by employers in the use and treatment of students in structured work placements,*
- *review models of student work placement to define and identify best practice.*

17.2 *Funding for the training of teachers in workplace health and safety and in the nature of their responsibilities in relation to student work placements must be included as a part of the funding for VET in schools.*

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACCI   Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

ACTU   Australian Council of Trade Unions

AEU   Australian Education Union

AEW   Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Worker

AIEW   Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Worker

AIG   Australian Industry Group

ANTA   Australian National Training Authority

AQF   Australian Qualifications Framework

AQTF   Australian Quality Training Framework

ARC   Accreditation and Registration Council (ACT)

ARF   Australian Recognition Framework *(replaced by AQTF)*

ASCH   Annual Student Contact Hours

ASTF   Australian Student Traineeship Foundation *(replaced by ECEF)*

ATSIPTAC   Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training Advisory Council *(replaced by ARSIPTAC)*

AVETRA   Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association

AWA   Australian Workplace Agreement

BCA   Business Council of Australia

BEN   Business Enterprise Network

BOS   Board of Studies (NSW)

BSSS   Board of Senior Secondary Studies (ACT)

BSSSS   Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (Qld)

BVET   Board of Vocational Education and Training (NSW & ACT)

CAC   Curriculum Advisory Committee (Qld)

CAP   Country Area Program (NSW)

CDEP	Community Development Employment Projects
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEPT	Community Employment Placement and Training
CGC	Commonwealth Grants Commission
CIT	Canberra Institute of TAFE
DECS	Department of Education and Community Services (ACT)
DEET	Department of Education, Employment and Training (Vic)
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training *(Commonwealth)*
DET	Department of Employment and Training (Qld)
DET	Department of Education and Training (NSW)
DRAP	Disadvantaged Regional Areas Program
ECEF	Enterprise and Career Education Foundation
ED/BD	Emotional Disabilities/Behaviour Disorders
EEP	Education Equity Program
ENTER	Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank
EVE	Enterprise and Vocational Education
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GTC	Group Training Company
GTO	Group Training Organization
HEBTP	Hobart Education Business Training Partnership
HECS	Higher Education Contributions Scheme
HSC	Higher School Certificate
ICF	Industry Curriculum Framework (NSW)
IT	Information Technology
ITAB	Industry Training Advisory Body
JJC	Juvenile Justice Centre (NSW)

LLENS	Local Learning and Education Networks *(Victoria)*
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
MINCO	ANTA Ministerial Council
MLC	Manufacturing Learning Centre
NAC	New Apprenticeship Centre
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NEILNS	National Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Strategy
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
NSWTF	New South Wales Teachers Federation
NTCE	Northern Territory Certificate of Education
NTETA	Northern Territory Employment and Training Authority
NTF	National Training Framework
NTP	National Training Package
NTQC	National Training Quality Council
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
OP	Overall Position *(tertiary entrance rank - Queensland)*
OPCET	Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training (Tas)
OTAE	Office of Training and Adult Education (ACT)
OTTE	Office of Training and Tertiary Education (Vic)
PAS	Publicly Assessed Subject (SA)
PES	Publicly Examined Subject (SA)
QSA	Queensland Studies Authority
QTU	Queensland Teachers Union
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RTO	Registered Training Organisation

SAC	Subject Advisory Committee *(Queensland)*
SACE	South Australian Certificate of Education
SAS	School Assessed Subject *(South Australia)*
SAS	Study Area Specification *(Queensland)*
SAT	School-based Apprenticeship/Traineeship
SBA	School-based Apprenticeships/Traineeship
SBNA	School-based New Apprenticeship
SDA	Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association
SIPS	Schools in Industry Placement Scheme
SOSE	Studies of Society and the Environment
SSABSA	Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia
SWL	Structured Workplace Learning
TAC	Training Accreditation Council *(Western Australia)*
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TAReC	Tasmanian Accreditation and Recognition Committee
TASSAB	Tasmanian Secondary Assessment Board
TASTA	Tasmanian State Training Authority
TCE	Tasmanian Certificate of Education
TER	Tertiary Entrance Rank
TTAC	Tasmanian Training Agreements Committee
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TAFE-school) *(NSW)*
UAI	University Admission Index
VCAA	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education

VEGAS   Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme

VET   Vocational Education and Training

VETAB   Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board *(NSW)*

VETIS   Vocational Education and Training in Schools

VETiSD   Vocational Education in Schools Directorate, NSW DET

VTAC   Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre

WACE   Western Australian Certificate of Education