



**CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
OF VICTORIA**

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IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE:

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10 October 2002

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Education and Training
R1 116
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary,

**Re: House of Representatives Inquiry into Vocational Education
in Schools**

On behalf of the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV), I am pleased to make this submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools.

This inquiry is most timely given the extensive development of vocational education in schools, and the support that education systems and schools require to maintain and expand this development. The attached submission shows the commitment of Catholic schools in Victoria to vocational education, and the various issues and concerns about the sustainability of these programs in schools.

If you have any queries about this submission, please contact Mr Peter Devery at this Office, phone 03 9267 0228. I thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to the inquiry.

With every best wish,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Annett', written in a cursive style.

(P. Annett)

ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The House of Representatives Education and Training Committee on the *Inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools*

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1 Introduction

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) welcomes the opportunity to make submission to the House of Representatives Education and Training Committee Inquiry into vocational education in schools. The CECV has responsibility for 489 Catholic primary, secondary and special schools in Victoria, representing over 180,000 student enrolments.

The development of vocational education initiatives and programs in schools has provided opportunities for a large number of students to experience success and to access a broad range of pathway options. This development has also stimulated significant change in school policies, partnerships and operations, particularly through the engagement with federal and state policies and funding programs.

It is timely for such an inquiry into vocational education in schools, as the growth and sustainability of programs and initiatives hinge upon adequate support and funding.

2 Background

The Catholic sector in Victoria has a successful history in the development of Vocational Education and Training (VET). In 2002, there are nearly 5,500 enrolments in VET in the VCE programs, involving 89 secondary schools. VET in schools has helped to provide an impetus for school reorganisation in order to meet the needs of a wider range of students, particularly those with different learning styles, and to provide them with more suitable pathways for their successful transition to further education, training or employment.

The CECV has given high priority to the development of VET in Schools. This is exemplified in terms of:

- ❑ Staffing – 3.4 equivalent full-time staff to support schools directly
- ❑ Central Professional Development – a number of centrally run Professional Development opportunities are provided for teachers and school leaders
- ❑ Policy – a significant policy statement, *Pathways and Transition in the Post-compulsory Years*, has been developed to assist schools to meet the challenge of providing suitable programs for all their students
- ❑ Collaborative partnerships - a number of strong partnerships have been forged with government and industry bodies, for example, in Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLEN) and the Victorian Certificate in Applied Learning (VCAL) development
- ❑ Extensive Communication and advice strategies to support schools.

This submission has been developed through a consultation process, involving key members of the four Victorian diocesan education offices and selected school representatives, and endorsed by the Directors of Catholic Education. Each Term of Reference is examined, outlining key issues and concerns, with suggested strategies for further development. Finally, 5 recommendations are provided for the House of Representatives Education and Training Committee to consider.

3 Term of Reference 1

(the range, structure, resourcing and delivery of vocational education programs in schools, including teacher training and the impact of vocational education on other programs)

a. Issues and concerns

A number of issues and concerns about the delivery of vocational education programs in schools need to be highlighted in order to explore the complexity of challenges for this delivery. The major issues for delivery in Catholic schools in Victoria follow.

Developing a systemic approach to VET provision in Catholic schools.

The New Framework for vocational education in schools requires systems to strategically support VET in schools. Key elements of this support are in terms of:

- ❑ Coordinating policy development in schools
- ❑ Determining funding arrangements
- ❑ Encouraging participation
- ❑ Providing Professional Development
- ❑ Brokering partnerships
- ❑ Liaison with key government, industry and community bodies
- ❑ Collecting and providing enrolment, completion and other data
- ❑ Assisting with tracking of destinations.

Systems require commitment and extensive resources in order to perform these functions. Being multifaceted and quite varied, these functions will demand staffing, funding and other resources to enable our sector to more effectively meet the requirements of the Framework.

These requirements raise two key issues for the Catholic sector:

- I. The organisational and resource capacity of Catholic Education Offices to perform these tasks.
- II. The resolve and ability of schools to make the necessary re-organisation in order to effectively provide VET in Schools.

Funding

The provision of VET in schools programs by schools requires the outlay of substantial funds. The current Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) investigation into the cost of delivery of VET provision in schools, building upon the Ernst and Young Report (1999), is examining the cost drivers for this provision. These costs include: the type of program; mode of training delivery; coordination requirements; staffing and infrastructure requirements; RTO costs; AQTF compliance costs; numbers of students; and access to suitable facilities.

With this complexity of factors that impact upon the cost of VET delivery arises some crucial concerns –

- The inadequacy of present levels of funding especially with the rising cost associated with VET delivery. RTO costs to schools for program delivery have risen sharply, partly to meet 'cost-recovery' levels and partly due to the impact of the AQTF. The following table gives a stark example of the inadequacy of the funding to meet RTO costs.

| Program | TAFE Cost rate/hr | School examples – delivery of program for one year | | | |
|---|-------------------|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | | Number of students | RTO Charges | ANTA funding to school for program | Additional cost to school |
| Cert II in Office (Business) Administration | \$4.40 | 22 | \$2,700 (auspiced) | \$1,232 | \$1,468 |
| | | 13 | \$10,400 (full delivery) | \$728 | \$9,672 |
| Cert II Hospitality | \$6.60 | 38 | \$22,800 (full delivery at school) | \$9,880 | \$12,920 |
| | | 34 | \$36,855 (full delivery) | \$8,840 | \$28,015 |
| Cert II Community Services | \$6.00 | 14 | \$13,418 (full delivery) | \$784 | \$12,634 |

Note: some TAFEs demand negotiations of costs over a two year program. After an initial decision period, if any student withdraws from a program, the school must still pay the full two-year cost.

- The uncertainty of the continuance and extent of future funding models has meant some schools are less than willing to fully commit to VET provision.
- There are some incidences of schools winding back VET offerings due to the rising costs.
- Most schools will need extensive support and resources in embedding VET into their structures and operations.
- The development of new pathways, as with the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) will provide more pressure on the limited ANTA funds for program delivery, as greater enrolments in these pathways increase.

Federal and state structural and funding arrangements

Funding and support for schools need to be integrated and coordinated so as to provide more flexible and cost-effective arrangements for school delivery. This is exemplified in the various federal programs (JPP, ECEF, CATS) meshing with local partnerships and structures like the Victorian Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs), to provide a holistic platform for funding arrangements. In order to achieve this end, government funding bodies must arrive at consistent sets of standards and guidelines. These will need to recognise that non-government sectors do not receive additional state funds to support VET program delivery.

Data collection – AVETMISS

School systems need to provide data that is AVETMISS compliant. This will demand some reorganisation of processes and allocation of resources.

ANTA guidelines for funding

There needs to be qualitative aspects to evaluating the effectiveness of VET as well as the quantitative data presently used. This has implications for which guidelines are adopted and the funding model(s) used in determining sector allocations within Victoria. It is necessary to maintain the current formula based upon senior secondary enrolments. Furthermore, to increase participation in VET within non-government sectors in Victoria, will require additional Commonwealth funding.

AQTF compliance

The demands for conformity with the AQTF standards add further costs and time to management of VET in individual schools.

RTO costs and arrangements

Increase in RTO costs have made it more difficult for schools to provide VET in schools programs. For some schools this has meant not offering programs because of prohibitive costs. The current funding allocation from ANTA to the Catholic sector in Victoria is sufficient only to support schools to a maximum of \$260 per student enrolment. In a number of programs, many RTOs charge over \$1,000 per enrolment, up to \$1,700 for the most expensive programs. For many schools, this added burden is most difficult to sustain. Some schools are able to absorb such costs, while others pass on some or all to the students. However, some schools have indicated the need to withdraw from the more costly programs.

Particular issues for rural and remote schools

For many rural and remote schools, limited access to RTOs and training facilities pose major problems. There are often added travel costs, and particularly in schools with small enrolments, program viability is tested with low numbers for any particular program. This means students do not have access to a suitable range of VET programs.

Factors that influence schools to take on VET in a sustainable way

Schools need information, models and support to bring about change. For schools to be most effective in delivering VET they must make decisive moves to accommodate and integrate VET fully within their operations, with strong leadership guiding the process.

There is a need to promote a strong vocational program as part of a comprehensive range of pathways for students. Flexible arrangements, for example, with timetabling, enable students to access programs without substantial disruption to their other studies. Students with special needs also must be catered for, requiring additional support arrangements.

There is an impact of VET delivery upon other programs, with the rationalisation of the number of programs, and restructuring of school processes needed. Substantial coordination time and costs are involved, and parental, community and industry support must be forthcoming.

The funding/costs arrangements that schools make to sustain delivery are vital for the strong continuance of programs. This will be dependent upon adequate funding levels being maintained to allow schools to continue to build towards sustainability.

Pre-service training of teachers

Many teachers have had little exposure to the notion of competency-based training and the development of post-compulsory options. Opportunities need to be developed in teacher training programs allowing new teachers to understand the place of vocational education in schools.

b. Strategies for further development

Flexible arrangements and structures need to be provided to increase the options for modes of delivery for VET in schools. This is particularly needed in the movement of students between programs, and in the delivery of programs themselves.

Partnerships are needed to maintain and sustain the initiatives and programs that offer effective pathways and transition for all students. Local level support for the development of these partnerships is vital. The ongoing support of VET in schools by the Commonwealth will be acknowledged by the wider community as an indicator of the importance of this agenda.

Teacher Professional Development needs to be able to:

- Reinforce a professional learning policy so teachers can access further training to provide for the needs of all students.
- Involve all members of school communities in continuous and lifelong learning.
- Incorporate the ICT developments that are in industry and that will impact upon student future employment.
- Encourage more teachers to look beyond their areas of expertise and embrace the thinking and advancements in the post-compulsory years.

Finally, adequate funding levels for VET in schools must be maintained in order for the current growth to be consolidated, and increased to enable the sustainable further development of programs and initiatives.

4 Term of Reference 2

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

a. Issues and concerns

There is a need to engage industry on its understanding and acceptance of school based training. Does industry believe that schools have the expertise, resources and quality to deliver training, and that the students are mature enough to participate effectively at Certificate II and III levels?

Industry can confuse work experience with Structured Workplace Learning and therefore undervalue credentialed VETIS programs.

b. Strategies for further development

There is the need for more investigation of formal recognition of part-time work within senior secondary credentials. The skills that students attain in part-time work need to be incorporated in other aspects of their school learning. Further engagement in the recently released “Employability Skills for the Future” report by both school education sectors and industry will need to occur.

5 Term of Reference 3

(vocational education in new and emerging industries)

a. Issues and concerns

A more global question is ‘How well are we equipping young people to engage in the world of new and emerging industries with specific skill development as well as with generic employability and other skills?’ The interface between schools and industry, especially in regard to emerging technologies, needs to fully explore the implications of this question. Not only will students need to be exposed to the new technologies, but also teachers in the application of these technologies in learning. Consequently, schools will need access to programs and up-to-date facilities that provide training in new technologies and industries.

b. Strategies for further development

The MCEETYA Transition taskforce will need to investigate this question fully, along with other groups, in determining more effective ways for schools and industry to dialogue and forge vibrant partnerships.

6 Term of Reference 4

(the accessibility and effectiveness of vocational education for indigenous students)

a. Issues and concerns

Indigenous students need access to programs early in their schooling in order to maximise opportunities for their ongoing needs in relation to further education and training. Additional support for indigenous students in pathways planning, counselling etc. will also be needed.

b. Strategies for further development

Appropriately targeted curriculum and resources for indigenous students should be provided which will:

- Extend the range of nationally recognised curriculum dealing with indigenous culture and activities,
- Support indigenous students with individual pathways planning and career counselling, and
- Involve the wisdom and resources of local indigenous communities.

7 Conclusion

Vocational education in Catholic schools in Victoria has enjoyed remarkable success in providing a wide range of pathway options that have met the needs of significant numbers of young people. It is widely recognised that for a large number of students in Years 9 and 10, the availability of VET programs has been most beneficial in assisting them to continue their school education. It must be noted that VET programs in the compulsory years have increased with limited funding support. Intervention at this level with targeted VET programs will promote successful transition to the post-compulsory years. The expansion of options via vocational education is providing pathways that meet the needs of many students, and highlighting initiatives that all students should have access to.

In order to maintain and increase these successes continued support and development by government and systems will be crucial. Seed funding over the last few years has stimulated the growth. Now is the time for consolidation and integration within the fabric of secondary education.

Recommendations

1. VET in schools requires higher levels of funding for post-compulsory education than for most other programs. Funding must increase to support and consolidate growth, and a new recurrent funding formula should be determined to account for this need.
2. Funding authorities need to design flexible guidelines and arrangements that further stimulate growth in VET in schools.
3. Further development is needed for vocational education to occur in the compulsory years. This should include pathways and career development programs.
4. VET in schools and other initiatives, such as drug education and life-long learning, are seriously challenging schools to fully review their services for young people. An extensive research program is needed to ascertain the “effective face” of school education for the future.
5. School leaders and teachers will need extensive training and resources in order to fully understand and accommodate vocational education and pathways for all students.