INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNION OF AUSTRALIA
Ground Floor, 120 Clarendon Street, Southbank, Victoria 3006
PO Box 1301, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205
Ph: (03) 9254 1830
Fax: (03) 9254 1835
Email: ieu@ieu.org.au

22 October 2002

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

By email: edt.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find attached the Independent Education Union's submission to the Standing
Committee on Education and Training – Inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools.

Many thanks for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Rolley
<u>Federal Secretary</u>

INDEPENDENT EDUCATION UNION OF AUSTRALIA

SUBMISSION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING –

INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

October 2002

RECOMMENDATIONS

Terms of inquiry

The IEU believes that the Inquiry must also take into its scope of examination, the current political and economic imperatives of federal and state governments in the area of vocational education in schools, the actual cost implications, and the urgent need for both increases in funding and improved models of funding for vocational education and training across the school and TAFE sectors.

Federal government funding

The IEU calls on the federal government to continue to support the delivery of VET in schools as a national priority and to accept its responsibility for ensuring that student learning outcomes in the VET area are not compromised by inadequate funding levels to the VET in schools program.

The federal government needs to adopt a long term, costed plan for vocational education that ensures that effective forward planning at both state/territory and school levels can occur. As a matter of urgency, a targeted funding strategy must be adopted to underpin the goals and objectives of the National Framework for Vocational Education in Schools

There are currently few formal arrangements to support the work of either vocational education teachers, Vocational Education Coordinators, and Careers Education Coordinators. The IEU recommends that additional funding be specifically committed to provide for workload (i.e. funded FTE staffing positions) and training support of these staff.

Indigenous Students and VET

The IEU believes that any strategy for dealing with improved VET outcomes for indigenous students is reliant on a much stronger commitment by the federal government overall to the needs of young indigenous people. At the very least, however, the IEU urges the government to ensure that the numbers of appropriately VET qualified Aboriginal support and teaching staff be dramatically increased in the secondary years of schooling. This would enable targeted support in the years that students are coping with curriculum choice, and possibly struggling the most without support structures such as specialist and culturally sensitive assistance.

Specifically the IEU recommends:

- the provision of cross cultural professional development and the promotion of the use of resources and teaching strategies which are culturally appropriate and inclusive of Indigenous perspectives.;
- improved access for Indigenous people to training and employment in education. Such employment provides the opportunity for Indigenous educators to be mentors and role models to non Indigenous teachers and support staff (and vice versa), to encourage and support Indigenous students through the schooling process and to do important liaising between the school and the community.

Strategic support for achievement of goals

Strategic support must be provided to underpin the achievement of the six key elements articulated in the Framework for Vocational Education in Schools (as outlined in section 4.2.2 of this submission).

Specifically, the IEU calls on the federal government to give strategic support to the following specific goals of vocational education as outlined in policy:

(i)   ensuring up to date understanding and awareness of changing work and careers, particularly through the development and resourcing of a comprehensive career education strategy;

(ii)   provision of wider, beyond the classroom learning opportunities;

(iii)   support in making transitions/developing pathways;

(iv)   provision of targeted teacher training and professional development funding programs to ensure that teachers are equipped with up to date knowledge and skills. This program should include an element for access to industry experience.

The funding of ITABS

The work of ITABs should continue to be supported through government funding to ensure that national standards continue to be met and portability arrangements maintained. There is a need, however, to examine the role of ITABs in the school sector.

Supporting partnership

The IEU calls on the federal government and MCEETYA to develop, as a matter of urgency, a strategy which includes funding strategies, to :

- **improve mechanisms for coordinating policy, program and resource management across the broad area of vocational education in schools, and**
- **progress more coordinated and integrated approaches in this area, with particular attention to streamlining diverse funding initiatives.**

A well-funded strategy is necessary to support the achievement of both the National Goals for Schooling and the Framework for Vocational Education in Schools.

Support for National Training Framework Compliance

The IEU calls on the federal government and MCEETYA to examine ways in which to streamline and reduce the costs of compliance for schools with the requirements of the National Training Framework. This must include a re-examination of the costs and administrative workloads required in relation to schools as Registered Training Organisations.

1.0   Introduction

1.1   The Independent Education Union of Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into School Delivered Vocational Education on behalf of its members. The IEU represents over 55,000 staff in non-government schools and other education organisations.

1.2   Education is an enterprise on a massive scale, the largest industry in Australia in terms of both budget and workforce. It involves a very large number of key stakeholders, ranging across both the public and private sectors and involves policy making at both federal and state government levels. There are approximately 2,600 (27%) non-government schools across the country, with the sector also comprising early childhood centres, pre-schools, long day care centres, English Language Colleges and private training providers.

1.3   The 1999 ABS publication 'Schools in Australia 1999' reports that 978,976 (30%) full time students attend non-government schools, with the gender distribution across the ages (5 and under to 20 and over) being 50.2 % male and 49.7% female.

2.0   The Role of the Union

2.1   The subject of the review requires extensive consultation with all sections of the educational community. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders to contribute to the dialogue and no one group can claim to speak definitively on the issue of vocational education. However it must be noted that the teacher unions have a joint membership in excess of 200,000 and can claim a significant degree of authority on both industrial and professional issues in the education arena.

2.2   The IEU has a known and understood mandate under its constitution to advance and defend the industrial and professional rights and interests of teachers and other education staff in the non-government sector. The IEU has also undertaken extensive research into the work of teachers and how the changing nature of the workplace has impacted on the professional lives of teachers.

In the preparation of this submission, the state and territory branches of the union have undertaken specific and detailed consultation on the inquiry's terms of reference with VET and Careers Co-ordinators in non-government schools across the country. The implementation of VET programs in schools has been an increasingly significant area of research and consultation by the IEU.

2.3   The union's members strongly support the union taking a leadership role in education policy debate and development, recognising the strength, independence, commitment and resources that the union brings with its advocacy.

3.0   Focus of the Inquiry

3.1   On 18 July 2002, the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Hon Dr Brendan Nelson asked the Standing Committee on Education and Training 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 :

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

(ii)   the difference between school-based and other vocational programs and the resulting qualifications, and the pattern of industry acceptance of school-based programs;

(iii)   vocational education in new and emerging industries; and

(iv)   the accessibility and effectiveness of vocational education for Indigenous students.

3.2   The IEU believes that the inquiry must also take into its scope of examination the current political and economic policy imperatives of federal and state governments in the area of Vocational Education in Schools, the actual cost implications, and the urgent need for both increases in funding and improved models of funding for Vocational Education across the school and TAFE sectors.

4.0   Background

4.1   National labour market, school retention and training trends

Over the last decade the need to improve education and training opportunities and pathways for young people has been the subject of numerous studies and policy documents.

School and further education and training structures have been required to meet the challenges of trends such as the decline in school retention rates, the decline in the full-time labour market for teenagers and an adult labour market increasingly characterised by job mobility, career change and part-time casualisation.

These trends have had a significant impact on the role and purpose of schooling, on the need for the curriculum to serve the interests and abilities of a broader group of students not intending to go to university, and on the nature, complexity and quality of teachers' work.

A key issue for teachers and schools generally has been how to design educational programs in line with students' interests and aptitudes while at the same time raising overall levels of attainment.

The need for schools to be incorporated into the National Training Framework to ensure seamless articulation to further training and increased pathways for their students, has been well documented in studies and federal and state/territory policy documents.

4.2   National Policy Directions

4.2.1   The Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in the

Twenty-first Century

These goals were endorsed at the April meeting 1999 of MCEETYA and contain a range of references to elements of vocational education and training (VET) in schools and linkages between education and the training sector. The preamble to these goals indicates that

"The achievement of these common and agreed national goals entails a commitment to collaboration for the purposes : of further strengthening schools as learning communities where teachers, students and their families work in partnership with business, industry and the wider community."

As outlined in the introduction of the **New Framework for Vocational Education in Schools – Policy Directions (MCEETYA)**, *"these goals outline the destination towards which school systems, schools, students, teachers and parents are being asked to direct their efforts. They also seek to broaden traditional approaches to include the wider community, and, in the case of vocational education and training, require productive partnerships to be developed with industry."*

4.2.2   New Framework for Vocational Education in Schools

In response to the national goals, the MYCEETYA Taskforce on Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools proposed to Ministers of Education and Training in March 2000 the new framework for vocational education in schools. At its heart lies the

"imperative for improving the transition of all young people from school to work and further study. This signals the broadening of the agenda beyond senior secondary to include expanded roles for community partnerships, the centrality of life long learning, Key Competencies, enterprise education and integrated career information and guidance services".

State and federal ministers agreed to further develop the new Framework and asked the Taskforce to prepare an implementation strategy with a view to the framework's implementation in the 2001 school year.

At the same time ministers noted the *"need to improve mechanisms for co-ordinating policy, program and resource management across the broad area of vocational education in schools"* and asked the taskforce *"to progress more co-ordinated and integrated approaches in this area, with particular attention to streamlining diverse funding initiatives and focusing on outcomes driven arrangements".*

The Framework contains a number of very significant elements which it says will *"assist schools to fulfil their responsibility to their students in providing them with a broader range of skills and qualifications resulting in wider opportunities and choices of multiple pathways and transitions to the workforce"*

The elements of the Framework are:

(i) Vocational education and training

Appropriately accredited industry-specific training based on AQF qualifications and competencies endorsed within the National Training Framework.

(ii) Enterprise and vocational learning

Enterprise and vocational perspectives incorporated into general learning that is appropriate for all years of schooling.

(iii) Student support services

Services that guide and support young people in their transition from compulsory schooling to post-compulsory schooling options and post-school destinations, especially the inclusion of explicit career education programs in school curriculum. Services will allow for local discretion over delivery and relate to participation and attainment in education, training and work.

(iv) Community and business partnerships

Mechanisms that foster close co-operation between all levels of government, business, community organisations, education and labour market authorities.

(v) Effective institutional and funding arrangements

Policy coherence and effective program implementation through institutional arrangements for the organised and continuous involvement of all relevant players at the national, state/territory and local levels.

(vi) Monitoring and Evaluation

Data collection processes to provide information that will enable the effectiveness of current and future arrangements to be measured.

4.2.3 Report of The Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce

There is now a clear social necessity and political expectation that what is required is a systematic co-ordinated and partnership model in the delivery of and support for enhanced education, training and employment pathways for young people.

The issue which is not adequately tackled is that this is not the sole responsibility of the school sector, and most particularly not of individual schools alone. Without properly set up and resourced

structures of co-ordination and partnership, such an integrated model cannot be developed and sustained.

The report of the Prime Minister's Youth Action Plan Taskforce 2001 (*The Eldridge Report*) concluded that based on the evidence put before the Taskforce and through its consultations *"many of our current approaches to community support, education, training and work need to change to respond more effectively to the needs of young people and their families"* (pp.94).

In addition the report considered that *"in order to create opportunities for real and measurable change in the lives of young Australians, governments, the corporate sector, educational institutions, the community at large, families and young people must move beyond the comfort and familiarity of existing operational paradigms"* (pp94).

The report advances the concept of an 'integrated youth pathways action plan' *"that engages all relevant agencies together in partnership to achieve real change and strong futures for all young Australians"* (pp 95). Recommendations of the report focus on the need to provide young people with a range of opportunities which require:

- cultural and paradigm shifts in many of our community institutions and systems;
- all levels of government to work together
- integrated support networks which create opportunities and respond to the diversity of challenges faced by young people
- focused and collaborative partnerships at the local level involving schools, industry, business, governments and non-government agencies, communities, young people and families;
- the development of learning pathways plans for each young person, transition follow-up mechanisms and transition indicators; and
- the development of employability and life skills learning programs.

4.3 State and Territory Policy Imperatives

In addition to the National Framework, many state and territory governments have recently released Vocational Education policy documents which overlay specific state and territory requirements and timelines which schools are expected to meet.

The policies documents include:

- Knowledge and Skills for the Innovative Economy - Victoria (2002)
- The Review of Pathways Articulation Through Post-compulsory Years of School to Further Education, Training and Labour Market Participation – Queensland (2002)
- The Senior Certificate: A New Deal – Queensland (2002)
- NSW Strategic plan for Vocational Education and Training 2002 to 2004
- Beyond Flexibility : Skills and Work in the Future NSW 2002

5.0   Participation of Non-government School Students in VET

    5.1   The Number of Students enrolled in VET in Schools Programs in Australia 1996-2001

The number of students undertaking VET in schools has increased dramatically. The 2002 Report from the MCEETYA Taskforce on Transition for School details an increase in the number of students enrolled in VET in schools from 16% of all students in 1996 to 41% in 2001.

Sector	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Govern-Ment	NA	53 258	66 366	83 367	97 982	109 900
Catholic	NA	12 165	17 825	22 202	25 778	28 925
Independ-Ent	NA	5 043	8 300	11 035	14 252	15 721
TAFE	NA	23 600	24 500	22 803	15 604	15 263
TOTAL	60 000	94 066	116 991	139 407	153 616	169 809

Note:
*   Students in TAFE-delivered courses are drawn from all school sectors. The TAFE-delivered total in 2001 includes 12 833 government students, 1473 Catholic sector students and 814 Independent sector students

*   The report indicates that the data is incorrect in some years in some states and territories (essentially underreporting)

    5.2   Access to and participation of Indigenous Students in VET programs

It is urgent that culturally appropriate and relevant education, including employment-related skill paths, and general VET, is accessible to all Indigenous students. There is a crisis in general school completion rates of Indigenous students compared to other Australian students. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reveal that completion rates for year 12 in 2001 were 36.2% for Indigenous students and 74.5% for non Indigenous students; for year 10 it was 86% for Indigenous students and 98.2% non Indigenous students. This is unacceptable.

While the issues of access, remote location, relevance of VET remain significant for all students, it is clear that the current education system is simply failing more Indigenous students that it is non-Indigenous students. Those students not completing their secondary years of schooling are unlikely to have already been safeguarded by a vocational career path. They are falling out of the system.

The IEU believes that any strategy for dealing with improved VET outcomes for Indigenous students requires a much stronger commitment by the federal government overall to the needs of young Indigenous people. At the very least, however, the IEU urges the government to ensure that the numbers of appropriately VET qualified Indigenous teaching and support staff be

dramatically increased in the secondary years of schooling. This would enable targeted support in the years that students are coping with curriculum choice, and possibly struggling the most without support structures such as specialist and culturally sensitive assistance.

Specifically the IEU recommends:

- the provision of cross cultural professional development and the promotion of the use of resources and teaching strategies which are culturally appropriate and inclusive of Indigenous perspectives.

- Improved access for Indigenous people to training and employment in education. Such employment provides the opportunity for Indigenous educators to be mentors and role models to non Indigenous teachers and support staff (and vice versa), to encourage and support Indigenous students through the schooling process and to do important liaising between the school and the community.

6.0 Range, Impact and Effectiveness of Vocational Education Programs in Schools

6.1 Range of Vocational Education Programs

In all states and territories, many schools are now offering extensive VET programs and other vocational education programs, including career education programs to students from Years 7 to 12.

In Years 11 and 12, students are able to undertake Certificate I, II, and III in a number of programs, including:

Hospitality	Horse Studies
Sport and Recreation	Furnishing
Horticulture	Engineering
General Construction	Workplace Skills
Music	Tourism
Automotive	Business
Industry and Enterprise Aviation	Information Technology
Music Industry Studies	Transport and Distribution
Agriculture	Multi media
Building and Construction	Employment Skills
Metal and Engineering modules	Child Studies
Office Admin	Electro Technology
Hairdressing	Racing
Clothing Production	Community Services

These students also undertake School-based Traineeships, Jobs Pathways, Career Education etc.

In Year 10, students are also undertaking Certificate I and II in many of the above mentioned courses, and Students at Risk VET work placement programs, work experience programs and Jobpathways programs.

6.2 Industry, Group training Companies and Community Acceptance

The IEU's survey of VET Co-ordinators found that there was a consistent rating of importance given to VET and other vocational education programs. It was also clear from specific comments made about employers that there is generally a positive perception of the value of student placements, the quality of schools' preparation of students, and the enhanced employment opportunities for students that participate in VET courses. For example:

- On the whole the response has been positive in regard to the level of training students have received;
- One Queensland school has a data base of 400 employers for structured workplace learning and have positive feedback from them:
- Great support from Group Training Companies accessing employment opportunities;
- Industry support for Internal Quality Reviews and Industry Management Committees;
- Generally positive across a whole range of industry areas for structured workplace learning work experience and school-based Traineeships and Apprenticeships;
- Positive hands-on experience, good training for future employment;
- Support for work experience/work placement usually very good;
- Employer comments that courses are well run and that students are developing appropriate industry skills;
- Many schools comment that students are securing employment or going on to further training at the end of the course;
- The evaluation of work experience employers in most cases has been very positive;
- Some schools reported that employers are phoning in respect to filling vacancies for casual and part-time staff;
- Direct recruitment from programs by local companies;
- Excellent feedback on preparation of students and work in structured workplace learning situations.

However, it was equally clear that there are still considerable issues faced by our members in continuing to achieve high quality vocational outcomes for their students. These include reaching saturation point with good employers, the difficulty of finding suitable work placements, particularly in rural areas, and the considerable workload pressures associated with running VET programs. These are explored in more detail in Sections 6.4 (ii) and 7.3.1.

6.3 Feedback from Local TAFEs and Universities

In most states and territories the comments of VET Co-ordinators surveyed indicated positive feedback and ongoing working relationships with TAFEs. Many schools have partnership arrangements with TAFEs and students in schools have a much better understanding of TAFE as a viable pathway.

 Some comments in respect to TAFE-provided courses indicated inconsistent responses from TAFEs, particularly in relation to a lack of flexibility in the costs of courses, and a lack of ongoing support in the school program. The TAFE sector, experiencing severe funding shortfalls, has been forced to recover real costs from schools. Auspicing support from TAFE is often minimal despite national requirements. TAFE staff are overworked generally and cannot find time

to visit and support staff in schools.

Of concern was the fact that the majority of survey respondents indicated that there has been little change in the academic/vocational divide, with many comments in respect to the lack of recognition from universities for VET courses in terms of articulated pathways.

6.4 Effectiveness and Impact on Other Curriculum

The comments of VET Co-ordinators in schools across the states and territories are very similar in respect to the positive and negative impacts of VET programs on students and other curriculum offerings in schools

(i)   Positive aspects commented on include :

- Many students enrolling in VET programs have previously been unfocused and uncooperative. VET can give them a focus;
- VET students do become more organised and responsible over the period of the program. Their interactions with real workplaces is of enormous benefit to them. Also the relevance of what they are learning assists many students. Students now fit well into other (Tasmanian) Certificate of Education courses;
- VET gives students who are not academically minded another career pathway;
- Gives students dual qualifications, work-related skills, work ethic and employment related skills;
- VET has been offered for 5 years in our school. It is a growing area and has become important in keeping students at risk in school longer and improves student morale;
- VET provides alternatives for students not bound for a more traditional academic pathway;
- More relevant curriculum for students. Opportunities for all students to develop vocational skills and gain an appreciation of the world of work;
- Aids student retention and we have happier students;
- The provision of VET courses has allowed students to do what they are interested in … more motivated generally;
- VET has strengthened the position of Certificate of Education Tech Studies;
- Our school tries to provide those VET students who are aiming to obtain an apprenticeship with a package of subjects that will complement their VET and give them a competitive edge;
- Workplace learning has led to greater community acceptance of students in the workplace. Students prepare for the world of work while still at school.;
- Work experience has a positive impact on the attitudes of Year 10 students;
- VET has broadened the curriculum and made it more accessible for some students. Long term there may be a flow-on effect to other traditional subjects offered;
- Our school has a new careers program this year. It has strong links to interests, abilities, careers and consequently subject selection and pathways;
- Partnership arrangements are in place to support special needs students;

- Contacts with outside agencies provide current information and valuable outcomes for students;
- Increased retention rates in years 11 and 12.

(ii)   Comments on the negative impact include :

- There is a negative response to VET from some staff because students are out of school for work placements;
- Structured work placements put enormous stress on school because there is no time release for supervising teachers;
- Some teachers find it difficult to deal with the necessity for flexibility in learning when students are undertaking VET outside the school. This time does impinge on the contact time of staff with students in other courses;
- There is still a pervasive view that vocational education is for the "at risk" students, early school leavers etc and that there is little room in 7-12 mainstream curriculum for inclusion;
- At junior levels 8-10 it is very difficult to schedule vocational programs;
- There has been some impact on some "academic" subject offerings because we now have a sizeable group of students choosing vocational options. Therefore there are probably less students studying some "academic" subjects, such as History etc;
- Our school still has a large group of students who are not up to the standard of VET accredited courses which have a degree of rigour and theory. In a way the existence of these courses gives students and parents a false hope of success. Our Workplace Skills course has addressed this problem a little;
- VET has increased the workload for students and staff – enormous requirements for reporting and administration;
- There is a need to educate employers about the time/resource implications of learning assessment and reporting required in VET;
- Insufficient case management of special needs students in a VET setting;
- Teachers have difficulty engaging pedagogical change to suit VET delivery (especially as a result of insufficient time allowance for appropriate professional development).

7.0   Crisis in Adequate Funding

7.1 The IEU believes that it is essential and indeed in the national interest, that education policy, particularly in relation to vocational education and training, should not only reflect increasing community expectations on the role and outcome delivery of schools but also provide the necessary resources, support and structural assets to ensure that the needs of students, teachers, support staff and the community are adequately met.

Indeed the report of the Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (The Eldridge Report) concluded with a clear recommendation in this respect.

"Australia cannot afford not to invest in its young people …. We need to commit substantial effort to provide a wide range of opportunities which can build their emotional, intellectual, vocational and ethical capacities …. Only rich and diverse partnerships involving all sectors of the community can achieve this vision". (pp95)

7.2   At the national level

7.2.1   The National Framework

While the new National Framework provides a comprehensive approach to the implementation of all of the elements outlined above, most notable in its specific Implementation strategy document, however, is the lack of clear commitment and action in respect to properly examining and meeting the enormous resource implications involved in delivering the outcomes expected of the policy in respect to schools.

For example, the policy's implementation framework simply gives examples of key actions in respect to the articulated outcomes which do not inspire confidence in anything more than rejigging the mechanisms for allocating the existing resources distributed to schools.

7.2.2   The Requirements of the National Training Framework

In all states and territories, the national framework has impacted significantly on secondary schools across all sectors – in the breadth of program offerings and organisational challenges of schools, on expenditure on plant and equipment, on the state and territory secondary education credentialing systems, on teacher training and professional development and, significantly on teacher workloads.

Under the National Training Framework, secondary schools need to take one or other of a range of options for the provision of VET programs. The options are non-exclusive and at any one point schools may adopt a range of models. These models are:

(a) the school in partnership with a Registered Training Authority (RTO) such as TAFE or private provider, and in some states such as NSW, the education system authority i.e. the Diocesan Catholic Education Office.

These partnership models include –
- total delivery by an RTO
- partial delivery by an RTO; partial delivery by school auspiced by an RTO
- total delivery within a school under the auspices of an RTO

(b) the school as RTO

The school may apply to OTTE to become an RTO for the provision of specified VET qualifications. The school needs to satisfy the AQTF Standards for Registered Training Organisations. When registered the school becomes responsible for the provision of delivery, assessment, maintenance of student records and the certification of the training credential.

The particular model adopted by a school is dependent on a number of factors including:

- the school's ability to meet the resource requirements outlined in the Training Package;
- availability of professionally trained and experienced staff in the specific industry area;
- cost-effectiveness of delivery for off the job training;
- availability to conduct workplace or simulated environment assessment of competencies in a cost-effective manner;
- potential to expose students to a wide range of training forums.

The resourcing implications

The resourcing implications of either model are as follows:

(i)   the administrative costs of offering VET Programs in schools far outweighs those required in traditional mainstream curriculum – this dollar gap has to be met;

(ii)   curriculum and training packages development costs are extensive, particularly to both bring them to national compliance and to make them suitable for school delivery;

(iii)   staffing costs include updating teacher/trainer (Cert IV Workplace Training and Assessment) for national compliance. Industry experience of staff needs to be updated via industry placements/ release from schools;

(iv)   on the job workplace assessments, placements, evaluation also cost schools in terms of staffing for administration of workplace monitoring and assessment.

The IEU urges proper examination and addressing of the financial shortfalls schools experience in trying to deliver these models.

7.2.3   At the state and territory policy level

For the non-government school sector, almost all state and territory government policy frameworks and implementation strategies include very little or no resource support to this sector. Often, for example, this funding is limited to the inclusion of several non-government schools in short trial projects. Usually, no government resource support is provided for the actual implementation of policy directions.

7.3   Resourcing of Vocational Education in Schools

The IEU believes that the development of the vocational education and training agenda in schools has provided students with a range of educational experiences and opportunities that greatly enhance the quality of their school experiences. However in the absence of adequate resourcing, such provision is dependent to a significant degree on the goodwill and professionalism of teachers. Without exception, this has been noted as a matter requiring urgent government attention.

7.3.1   Cost in Staff workload

Unfortunately across all states and territories the message from staff in

schools is that these opportunities have come at an excessive cost to the staff in schools who have had to commit considerable additional hours and expertise to:

(i) gain additional qualifications because of the dual system of qualifications for teachers of VET and general school education,;

(ii) complete excessive administrative requirements;

(iii) construct and maintain new courses and develop, set up and monitor workplace learning and assessment opportunities, and sustain new relationships with VET partners, all of which have required well beyond the normal hours of work and general workload of teachers.

There can be no disputing the fact that the workload impact of the VET agenda has been high for all partners across all levels of its implementation, but this has been felt most intensely by the school sector. The workload for the VET teacher/Co-ordinator in non-government schools occurs within the context of already intense pressures experienced by the demands of mainstream curricula. In addition, they must grapple with the organisation and the supervision of work placements, the administrative requirements of VET which are many, and bureaucratic RTO arrangements, qualifications frameworks, co-ordinating with TAFE and other providers, sustaining and generating employer networks, and juggling resources to provide effective delivery of VET.

The skill and expertise required of VET teachers/Co-ordinators is considerable, yet this is often not appropriately recognised in terms of remuneration, professional development needs, or appropriate time allocation. ACT non-government school VET teachers highlighted, for example, that there is no formal recognition by the employing authorities of numerous reporting and administrative tasks being undertaken by teachers delivering vocational education. This is echoed in all states and territories. At the same time, the numbers of students participating in vocational education has more than quadrupled in the last five years.

This situation is exacerbated by the lack of appropriate funding of VET.

7.3.2 Program funding and course costs

In the non-government sector, Catholic schools receive a per capita grant for each vocational student from federal monies usually via the Catholic Education Office in the particular diocese. However, the level of funding allocated to VET programs does not match the cost of delivering the programs. This is particularly the case where schools are working in partnership with a TAFE/private RTO and they are being charged either the market rate (100%) or a reduced cost (80%), but receive funding at a level as low as 50% with the stated requirement to become self reliant.

This then creates two difficult issues for schools:

(i) How do they make up the shortfall in funding especially where costs for various VET programs are significantly different? Do they share the overall cost burden between all students who are participating in VET programs or is it based on a user-pay principle? This then creates issues of equity of access to programs between schools and between individual students within schools. Thus the fundamental purpose of VET programs being introduced to schools to improve the retention rates of students (often considered to be at risk) is defeated/compromised by the economic status of either their school or their family.

(ii) If schools are to become self funded on VET programs, they must often consider what to eliminate from their existing programs to allow very expensive VET programs to be introduced into the curriculum as their global budget is not being increased. Schools often have to make a decision relating to a small cohort of students in programs which are expensive to establish. This is often viewed with scepticism by the majority of staff involved in 'traditional' offerings within the school curriculum.

Schools in the non-government sector also face the issue that the central body (e.g Catholic Education Office) distributes some funding on a standard level where courses are bracketed together on a scale, rather than on an individual basis which reflects the true costs of each VET program. Schools thus receive funding which is not an accurate reflection of the true delivery costs.

In both Catholic and independent schools, bridging the gap, particularly where there are costs such as expensive equipment and materials, means asking the parents whose children are doing that course to pay some of the cost.

The theory often espoused by policy makers that the running of VET programs means that there will be a reduction in other course offerings at the school and a subsequent shift in staffing costs to the VET course, is not in reality the case.

7.3.3 Specific Resource/Cost Drivers

The resourcing of vocational education is a major ongoing issue for schools and there are a significant number of cost drivers. The key cost drivers consistently identified by schools, VET Coordinators and teachers were as follows:

(i)   Type of course

A number of courses (eg commercial cooking, engineering, multimedia) are particularly expensive to run due to the standards of equipment required.

(ii)   Class size

Schools are finding that they cannot afford the costs of running courses without 15 or more students, so that if there are no opportunities for partnerships with other schools, interested students cannot take up the course.

Small class size, however is necessary in most courses to ensure adequate supervision and access to equipment.

(iii)   Outsourcing of training provision

A major problem is the need for many schools to purchase training from providers. Many courses cannot be offered within the school and are either accessed through TAFE or through a private provider. VET coordinators complain of the inconsistency between providers in the costs charge. Teachers are calling for consistency between providers, stating that some TAFEs will do better "deals" depending on the number of students.

Schools have complained that the costs of courses purchased off campus should not be more than about one-fifth or one-sixth of the total school fees paid by students. All coordinators expressed significant concern over the inequitable requirement for VET students to pay additional fees and other course costs.

The cost of additional transport is also significant, particularly in rural areas

(iv)   Auspicing and enrolment fees at RTOs

Where schools work in partnership with an RTO in delivering a VET program, they are faced with an auspicing fee which is paid to the RTO which audits and supports the delivery of the relevant program. Whether the school delivers only one module of the VET program or 90% of the program, the school still faces the same flat auspicing fee. This is inequitable. Similarly, should the school share the delivery of more than one VET program with the RTO, they face an individual auspicing fee for each program. This means if you have a small number of students involved in a program (or even one student), it makes the cost of delivery of that program prohibitive for the school. This has been overcome in part by some schools (government & non-government) clustering together to share the delivery of programs which creates another set of issues for individual schools, especially as the two sectors are funded differently. It also relies upon a high degree of goodwill between schools and VET co-ordinators on issues such as timetables, transport costs and shared payment of fees.

Another aspect of the auspicing fee is that the RTO does not always provide the level of support that has been set out in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the school. The school then finds themselves in a dilemma with no avenue of recourse as they are reliant upon the RTO for auspicing/delivery of the program and they are unable to change providers mid-stream because programs often operate over a two year period. This creates high levels of dissatisfaction. It also makes it difficult for schools to seek out alternative RTOs with whom they may be able to work in the future.

Similarly, enrolment fees for students are charged at the market rate when in some cases the student never sets foot in the RTO/TAFE as the VET program is delivered entirely at the school whether it be by a staff member or an instructor provided by the RTO. The purpose of this fee is to access the RTO certificate at the end of the program. Schools often pass this cost directly on to the student and this again raises issues of equity of access to programs.

(v)   Staff delivery requirements and professional development

Schools in all states and territories state that human resources costs, particularly training, along with capital costs, are significant in determining if VET courses will run. These human resources costs include significant teacher re-training from other subject disciplines and up-skilling, assistant time for structured workplace learning, and assistant time to support students with special needs.

Coordination of VET and careers programs is essential. Most schools have a designated person who coordinates the vocational eduction agenda and in many cases this role is combined with that of Careers Advisor which is usually a fractional appointment within schools in the non-government sector. The role of the Vocational Education Coordinator is often not remunerated but personnel in this role usually attract a period allocation for the administrative demands of the position. The time allocation is, in almost all cases, reported as being insufficient for the nature of the work to be carried out.

The training of VET staff has been a huge cost incurred by systems and individual schools to ensure that staff are trained to industry training standards so that students who elect to take courses are eligible for qualifications under the AQF . The cost of release time for teachers to undertake training as well as complete work placements themselves has placed significant demands on them personally as well as on their workplaces, which need to provide casual teacher relief. Often the training expectations have been extended with additional training required in certain industries.

The continued availability of VET trained staff is an issue particularly in country areas. With long service leave or extended periods of sick leave, schools have difficulty locating trained teachers to ensure the credential is not compromised.

VET teachers are usually required to have additional qualifications to the teaching qualifications required for general teacher registration etc, and to acquire and maintain industry competence.

Running VET courses has added disproportionately more administrative requirements than that of other curriculum.

(vi)   **Capital expenses and cost of materials**

A number of courses require significant capital expenditure in order to meet the standards required. Many courses have particularly high start-up costs. Teachers and Coordinators complain of the very high costs of materials in courses such as Automotive, Furniture and Hospitality. Significant funding is required to provide industry standard equipment. Schools complain that there is no access to funding for industry standard level of equipment. Most funding available excludes access to capital works, purchase of equipment and consumables.

Courses such as Agriculture, Construction, Engineering, Music and Hospitality are very expensive for schools to run as they require specialist locations and equipment and consumables.

The need to upgrade existing equipment presents a significant problem for many schools.

Other expensive physical costs include computer software to manage records.

(vii)   **Organisational Costs**

These costs should not be underestimated when considering the real costs of providing VET in schools. The coordination of the program, briefing students, parent and staff, budget management, documentation, staff training, identification of structured work placements and within workplace assessment place huge demands on executive, Vocational Education Co-ordinators and school support staff. The administrative demands of vocational education are higher in relation to other curriculum.

(viii)   **Costs of Assessment**

Students need to have their competencies assessed by a fully credentialed trainer who has Certificate Level IV. While this has

been a priority in professional development for teaching staff, assessment must take place in situ in the workplace. This often involves additional out of hours visits by staff during holidays, over weekends or in the evening. One VET teacher in a rural school reported that the school had students undertaking work placements over a wide geographical area and the teacher was required to take a week to visit them in the holidays without any compensation or payment. Some schools do, however offer staff time in lieu, but this generally is difficult for already stretched VET teachers to take and does not go anywhere near the additional time required for assessment.

(xi) System infrastructure costs

These additional costs should not be underestimated. Catholic Education Dioceses, including those that are RTOs, incur administrative costs which require staffing and resourcing.

(x) Location, type and size of school

For example, Coordinators in large co-educational regional schools in working class suburban areas indicated that the schools need to provide a range of VET programs to meet the needs of students and regional employers and industries.

8.0 Conclusion

The IEU affirms the value of vocational education and training as being able to offer a wide range of pathways to students, to hopefully improve employment and further educational outcomes, and to meaningfully address issues of retention and relevance of schooling for young Australians. Our extensive consultations with members for the purposes of this Inquiry reinforced the positive impact good VET programs are having for students.

However, it is critical that the school sector receive more adequate resources to cope with this expanding agenda, particularly as articulated in policy directives of the Commonwealth government and MCEETYA. In particular, the real cost of providing VET must be met by federal and state governments. Professional development, industry relevant experience for VET teachers, time to develop sustainable partnerships with other providers and employers, and proper recognition of the breadth of expertise that VET practitioners have already developed are essential. The following recommendations, if acted upon by governments, would ensure the long term quality provision of VET in schools.

9.0 Recommendations

9.1 Terms of inquiry

The IEU believes that the Inquiry must also take into its scope of examination, the current political and economic imperatives of federal and state governments in the area of vocational education in schools, the actual cost implications, and the urgent need for both increases in funding and improved models of funding for vocational education and training across the school and

TAFE sectors.

9.2   Federal government funding

The IEU calls on the federal government to continue to support the delivery of VET in schools as a national priority and to accept its responsibility for ensuring that student learning outcomes in the VET area are not compromised by inadequate funding levels to the VET in schools program.

The federal government needs to adopt a long term, costed plan for vocational education that ensures that effective forward planning at both state/territory and school levels can occur. As a matter of urgency, a targeted funding strategy must be adopted to underpin the goals and objectives of the National Framework for Vocational Education in Schools

There are currently few formal arrangements to support the work of either vocational education teachers, Vocational Education Coordinators, and Careers Education Coordinators. The IEU recommends that additional funding be specifically committed to provide for workload (i.e. funded FTE staffing positions) and training support of these staff.

9.3   Indigenous Students and VET

The IEU believes that any strategy for dealing with improved VET outcomes for indigenous students is reliant on a much stronger commitment by the federal government overall to the needs of young indigenous people. At the very least, however, the IEU urges the government to ensure that the numbers of appropriately VET qualified Aboriginal support and teaching staff be dramatically increased in the secondary years of schooling. This would enable targeted support in the years that students are coping with curriculum choice, and possibly struggling the most without support structures such as specialist and culturally sensitive assistance.

Specifically the IEU recommends:

- the provision of cross cultural professional development and the promotion of the use of resources and teaching strategies which are culturally appropriate and inclusive of Indigenous perspectives.;
- improved access for Indigenous people to training and employment in education. Such employment provides the opportunity for Indigenous educators to be mentors and role models to non Indigenous teachers and support staff (and vice versa), to encourage and support Indigenous students through the schooling process and to do important liaising between the school and the community.

9.4   Strategic support for achievement of goals

Strategic support must be provided to underpin the achievement of the six key elements articulated in the Framework for Vocational Education in Schools (as outlined in section 4.2.2 of this submission).

Specifically, the IEU calls on the federal government to give strategic support

to the following specific goals of vocational education as outlined in policy:

(v)   ensuring up to date understanding and awareness of changing work and careers, particularly through the development and resourcing of a comprehensive career education strategy;

(vi)   provision of wider, beyond the classroom learning opportunities;

(vii)   support in making transitions/developing pathways;

(viii) provision of targeted teacher training and professional development funding programs to ensure that teachers are equipped with up to date knowledge and skills. This program should include an element for access to industry experience.

9.5   The funding of ITABS

The work of ITABs should continue to be supported through government funding to ensure that national standards continue to be met and portability arrangements maintained. There is a need, however, to examine the role of ITABs in the school sector.

9.6   Supporting partnership

The IEU calls on the federal government and MCEETYA to develop, as a matter of urgency, a strategy which includes funding strategies, to :

•   improve mechanisms for coordinating policy, program and resource management across the broad area of vocational education in schools, and

•   progress more coordinated and integrated approaches in this area, with particular attention to streamlining diverse funding initiatives.

A well-funded strategy is necessary to support the achievement of both the National Goals for Schooling and the Framework for Vocational Education in Schools.

9.7   Support for National Training Framework Compliance

The IEU calls on the federal government and MCEETYA to examine ways in which to streamline and reduce the costs of compliance for schools with the requirements of the National Training Framework. This must include a re-examination of the costs and administrative workloads required in relation to schools as Registered Training Organisations.