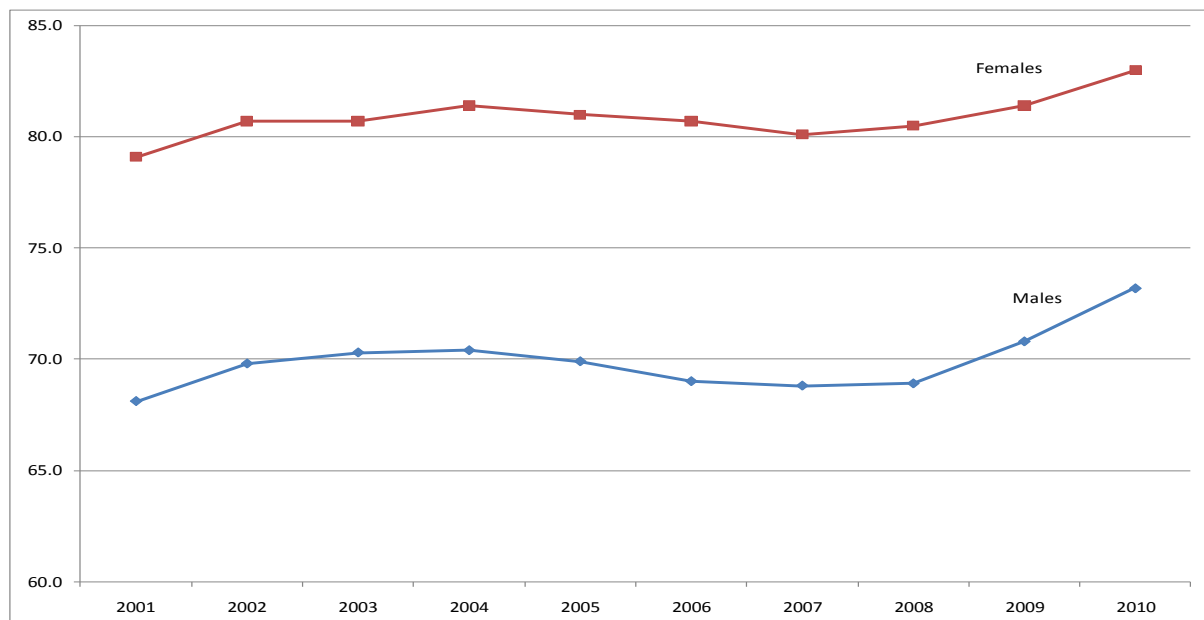


Capacity and Skills Building

Entry and Completion of Education

In 2010, about 60% of both men and women aged 15-24 years were participating in education. The education participation rate for women was higher than for men in each of the older ten year age groups up to 64 years. The retention rate through secondary school to Year 12 for full-time students was higher for females (83%) than for males (73%)¹ and has been for the past decade. The apparent retention rate for full-time students is an indicator that measures the extent to which young persons are continuing their participation in secondary school education and is regarded as an important measure of the performance of education systems and related government policies. This retention rate for full-time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students while has improved since 2001, still lags behind non-Indigenous. For male students it rose from 33% in 2001 to 44% in 2010, and for female students it increased from 39% to 50%.

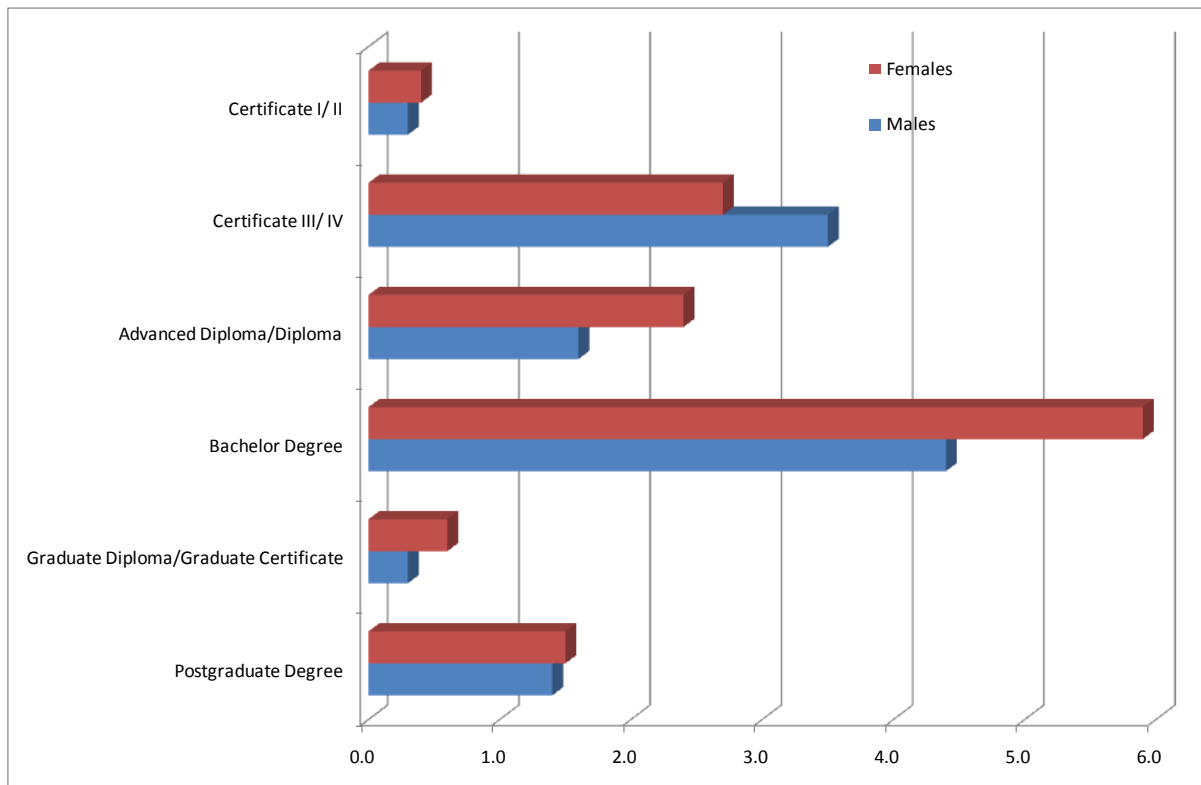
Figure 1: Apparent retention rate for full-time school students Year 7/8 to Year 12 (%)



Enrolment in tertiary level study for those aged 15 to 64 years of age is higher for women as compared to men for all levels with the exception of Certificate 3 and 4. The differential in tertiary education is most notable with women's enrolment in Bachelor Degree or above aged 18 to 24 years is much higher than men at 30.7% compared to 23.3% in 2010.

Education has been a major focus in the Australian government's strategy to 'close the gap' between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australian. In 2008, about a third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women aged 15-64 had attained non-school qualification, up from 27% in 2002. For this cohort, a similar picture is noted with more females having qualifications of Bachelor Degree and Diploma or Advanced Diplomas but more males having Certificate 3 and 4.

Figure 2: Enrolment in non-school qualification by level of education (15-64 years) (%)



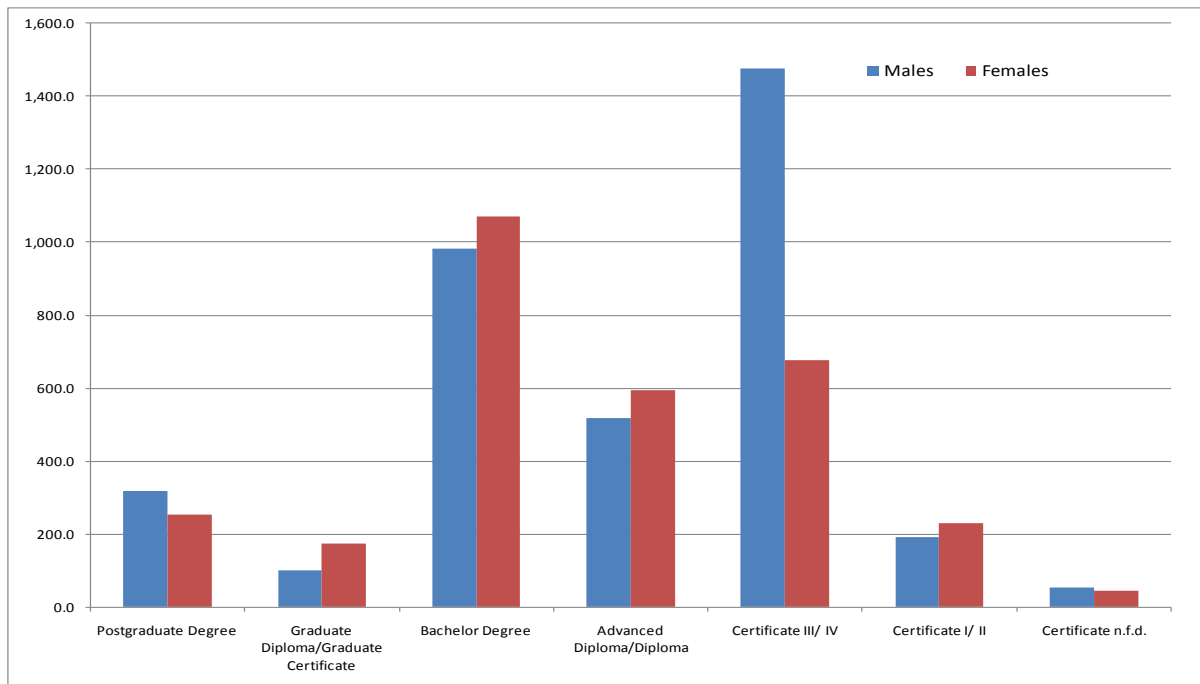
In terms of fields of study by students undertaking bachelor degrees in Australian universities, they are on average still choosing subjects in the area of education and health. However, they are increasingly representing a greater proportion to their male counterparts in non-traditional fields of engineering and related technologies and architecture and building.

As in 2009, the most commonly reported main field of education of current study for people aged 15–64 years enrolled in a non-school qualification in 2010 was Management and commerce (25%), followed by Society and culture (19%). By gender, for those aged 15-64 and are enrolled in a non-school qualification were:

- 20% of males aged were studying in the main field of engineering and related technologies, compared to 1% of females;
- 69% of students in the field of Society and culture were female;
- 76% of the 234,400 people were female in the field of Health; and
- 25% of students in Information technology were female

The median starting salaries for recent female Bachelor Degree graduates has consistently been lower than their male counterparts at \$48,000 compared to \$50,000 in 2010. The fields that had the largest discrepancy between males and females were fields of Architecture and Buildings and Economics and Finance (females earning nearly 90% of the median starting salary for males).

Figure 3: Employed Persons Aged 15-74 years, highest level of non-school qualification ('000)ⁱⁱ



Apprentices

In May 2010, there were 171,600 people aged 15-64 years who were employed as apprentices and part of the Australian Apprenticeship Scheme. An apprentice is a person aged 15-64 years who has entered into a legal contract (called a training agreement or contract of training) with an employer, to serve a period of training for the purpose of attaining tradesperson status in a recognised trade. Of these, 66,300 people had commenced their apprenticeship in the last 12 months. The majority of apprentices (88%) were males. The highest number of apprentices, 41,200, were working within the Construction field of trade followed by the Automotive and engineering field of trade with 39,400 persons.ⁱⁱⁱ While for females, they are predominately, 90% are in non-trade occupations^{iv}.

Australian Apprenticeship is an arrangement where an individual is employed in a traditional paid working arrangement with an employer. Whilst engaged in this employment arrangement, the individual also receives formal training in the relevant field, as agreed with their employer through a Training Contract. A Training Contract details the legal obligations binding the employer and the Australian Apprentice over the course of the Australian Apprenticeship. Australian Apprenticeships are available to anyone of working age regardless of their level of education, and can be completed full-time, part-time, or whilst still at school. Australian Apprenticeships are available in a variety of qualification levels in more than 500 occupations across Australia, in traditional trades as well as a diverse range of emerging careers.^v The trades ranged from the building and construction trades of electrical, carpentry, bricklaying, plumbing, painting and decorating, and signcraft, through to boiler-making, fitting and machining, automotive spraying and butchery^{vi}.

The Australian Government has developed the Australian Apprenticeships Incentive Program that encourages employers to open up genuine opportunities for skills-based training of their employees, through provision of financial incentives to employers who employ and train an Australian apprentice or trainee^{vii}. The Australian Government has contracted with Australian Apprenticeships

Centres to deliver Australian Apprenticeships Support Services that includes providing information and assistance to employers, apprentices and other interested people. Financial support is also made available for adult workers (aged 25 years or over) to upgrade their skills through an Australian Apprenticeship at the Certificate III or IV level in an occupation listed on the National Skills Needs List. Financial incentive is provided to employers for apprentices who is aged 45 years or more.

Women Tradies

The manual trades is an area where women are substantially under-represented. Despite many government initiatives over the past 30 years to open up the manual trades to women, discrimination and negative stereotypes about the ability of women to work in areas such as building and construction, boiler-making, fitting and machining, and painting and decorating have persisted (Karmel, 2009).

The pathways into apprenticeships and training for the women, like that for men, were varied and generally followed informal routes who regularly acquire apprenticeships via network connections and not responding to formal advertisements. The major difference for the women was the amount of time and tenacity it took for many of them to acquire their apprenticeship and/or training.

I started doing handyperson stuff for my friends and myself which I was good at and enjoyed. I applied for so many ads for carpentry apprenticeships but they didn't even respond or if they did, they tried to talk me out of it by telling me I would have trouble driving from here to there etc. Finally I contacted the Master Builders Association (MBA). They won't take you on unless you have work with someone so I got all the paper work and found someone who would take me on for three months. In fact it was the partner of a friend and I stayed with him for a year until I moved on to another job.

(Emma, carpenter)

The factors that were identified to be important in helping women enter and remain in their trades were:

- Trade families and family support. Many of the women that were surveyed in 2009 study identified family support, particularly from their fathers. Many of the women had come from strong trade families with many members of their family working in trade occupations.

My partner is a boilermaker ... Two of my uncles are electricians and my Dad is a fitter. My brother used to work with me at work. (Monica, electrician)^{viii}

- Teaching support and encouragement from school and college.
- Passion and tenacity to keep going in the face of adversity
- Employer support is recognised as vital for the survival of female tradespeople^{ix} as the relation is that apprentices are very dependent on their employer for their training.

Some of the barriers or challenges that women working in trades faced were:

- Discriminatory attitudes are the most significant barriers that added to their difficulties in gaining apprenticeship, work or training.
"there is no point in training women because they will get pregnant and leave"
(Adriana, the boilermaker).
- Physical factors – women not having the strength to do the job required.

Other supports available for trainees/apprentices are:

- AUSTUDY – if a person is studying full time or undertaking a full-time apprenticeship or traineeship they would be eligible for Austudy. The Austudy rates, as at 1 July 2011 are (maximum per fortnight):

○ Single or partnered (no children)	\$388.70
○ Single with children	\$509.20
○ Partnered (with children)	\$426.70

If they have been long-term unemployed and are starting full-time study in a course of 12 month duration or more, the Austudy rates are:

○ Single	\$472.10
○ Partnered, no children	\$426.70 ^x

- Newstart Allowance – if a person is aged 21 years or over and is looking for paid work and is prepared to enter into an Employment Pathway Plan and meet activity test requirements. The requirements are that they will agree to participate in activities designed to increase their chances of finding work such as applying for jobs, doing a course, or working part-time. The Newstart rates, as at 1 July 2011 are (maximum per fortnight):

○ Single	\$474.90
○ Single with dependent child or children	\$513.80
○ Partnered (each)	\$428.70
○ Single principal carer caring large family	\$625.90

- Youth Allowance – if a person is aged 16-20 years old and is looking for full-time work or undertaking a combination of approved activities, or have a temporary exemption from the participation and activity test requirements or is 16–24 years old and studying or undertaking an Australian Apprenticeship full-time. The payment rates range from \$212.70 (single with no children, under 18 years and living at home per fortnight) to \$509.20 (single with children per fortnight)^{xi}.

- Drought Assistance - income support payments for farmers and small businesses, advice and training grants and assistance to exit farming, and direct assistance for farm hands and irrigators. These measures also help with social pressures facing families across rural and regional Australia^{xii}.

- Climate Change Adjustment Program and Transitional Income Support – provides assistance for primary producers to manage, adapt and adjust to the impacts of climate change. The following assistance is provided by the program:

- Climate Change Adjustment Program Advice and Training Grant - is available to eligible primary producers if you are adversely, or likely to be, impacted by climate change, including if you are experiencing hardship caused by drought (available since 1 July 2008 and will be available until 11 May 2012).
- Transitional Income Support (from 16 June 2008 for up to 12 months until 30 June 2012).^{xiii} The payment rates are the same as Newstart Alliance and Partner Allowance.

There are a number of programs that operate at the national level and/or at the state or territory level that assist women to re-enter into the workforce. Below are samples of such programs:

- ACT Women's Return to Work Grants Program for women who have been out of the workforce for an extended period of time due to caring responsibilities. Each grant provides \$1,000 to successful applicants to assist with costs associated with things such as attending short courses, paying for childcare to attend job interviews, and undertaking further education and formal training^{xiv}.
- Queensland Government, First Start Program – This program has an overall objective that 50% of the participants will be women and has some of the target groups are people unemployed for more than 12 months, women re-entering the workforce, mature-age people (45 years and over). This is a traineeship that provides a full time positive with local government authorities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Councils and/or not-for-profit community organisation. The traineeship:
 - is an entry-level, paid position for jobseekers with little or no work experience
 - gives you both practical on-the-job experience and training at a registered training organisation (college).
 - usually takes 12 months to complete, depending on how quickly you gain the required skills.

At the end of the traineeship there is no guarantee that they will gain a permanent job, but effort will be made to help them find ongoing employment^{xv}.

- Australian Federal Government Building Australia's Future Workforce. The Australian Government will provide assistance to single parents to improve their skills and plan for a transition to the workforce when they move off Parenting Payment Single. This includes the Communities for Children program that provides early intervention initiatives to people receiving Parenting Payment Single and will ensure that single parents receive support and assist their children's skills ready for education. It includes playgroups, parenting education classes, mentoring and support groups and early learning programs. As well, single parents will be provided with professional career advisory service through employment service providers.^{xvi}

Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process whereby people are provided with an opportunity to have the skills and knowledge they have developed outside the formal education system assessed and valued against national qualifications frameworks.

Recognition of Current Competence - Where a person has previously completed some units of an eligible vocational qualification but not the full qualification, they may be given a credit transfer, rather than RPL. This may be termed a Recognition of Current Competence (RCC) assessment in some areas outside of the Program.

Recognising non-formal and informal learning: Participant insights and perspectives^{xvii}

Recognition of the skills acquired through non-formal or informal learning is important for a number of reasons. Individuals gain a feeling of worth and self-confidence, which encourages them to continue to upgrade their skills and knowledge, often leading to formal qualifications and improved employment outcomes. The process of recognition of prior learning (RPL) also ensures that knowledge and skills already held do not need to be repeated.

While recognition of prior learning is seen as an integral and valued component of the learning pathway and in many cases a critical catalyst to accessing formal education, both practitioners and learners have criticised recognition of prior learning for being difficult to access and implement.

Key findings from the study were:

- The language associated with the recognition of prior learning process discourages people from taking advantage of it. Training institutions and systems should undertake a rigorous audit of the language used in the recognition of prior learning process and in the associated documentation, ensuring significant input from present and past candidates.
- Training institutions should ensure that mentors and assessors used in the recognition of prior learning have high-level interpersonal skills, are strongly supportive of the recognition pathway, and have high credibility in their field.
- There is strong anecdotal evidence to suggest that encouraging candidates to reflect on their learning, which should lie at the heart of the recognition of prior learning process, significantly improves their confidence and contributes to successful future learning.
- Many people remain unaware that recognition of non-formal learning is an option for them. 'Word of mouth' has been the most powerful mechanism for promotion, but there is a need for clear information regarding recognition of prior learning to be provided to individuals as early as possible.

Many of these people were women looking to return to the workforce, either because their children had now left home or because of financial pressures, particularly associated with the drought in rural areas. Few of these people indicated that they would have enrolled in their training course if they had not been granted significant recognition of prior learning. In some cases, this was because being granted recognition gave them the personal confidence and self-esteem to go on and do the program^{xviii}.

Recognition of Prior Learning can be done by the Australian Apprenticeships Job Pathway website (www.jobpathways.com.au) and search for an occupation or qualification that they are currently doing or would like to do and review the summary of training or training units. ^{xix}

Productivity Places Program (PPP) objective is to provide targeted training to support the development of skills to meet existing and future industry demands. The PPP is aimed to provide access to up to 711,000 qualifications over 5 years from 2007 to 2012 for existing workers wanting to gain or upgrade their skills, and for job seekers wishing to enter the workforce. Training is offered to eligible existing workers and job seekers by state and territory governments. A number of places are delivered directly by the Australian Government through the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS)-PPP^{xx}.

The NEIS helps support eligible unemployed people to start up and run new, viable small businesses. A minimum of 19,700 training places are being provided to NEIS participants through the PPP over three years (7,100 places in 2009-10 with 6,300 places over each of the subsequent two years).

The training delivers a qualification in either: Certificate III in Micro Business Operations (BSB30307), or Certificate IV in Small Business Management (BSB40407).

The training is providing NEIS participants with small business management skills, which assists them in the development and execution of a business plan. Business plans need to be approved by a NEIS provider before the participant can start operating their NEIS business. In July 2011, NEIS Providers will receive their next offer for an allocation of NEIS-PPP training places and then be able to request the distribution of their accepted allocation of places to a chosen RTO(s). NEIS Providers are encouraged to distribute all or the majority of their training places to an RTO(s) as soon as possible. RTOs will then be able to enrol participants in the training upon receipt of a valid referral form from the NEIS Provider, up to 30 June 2012 or until the distributed places are fully utilised. An overview of this process is available in the Flowchart below.

Attachments

Australian Government, *Summary of the Australian Government Australian Apprenticeships Incentive Program* May 2011,

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Australian Apprenticeships & Traineeships Information Service, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Information for potential applicants, <http://www.aatinfo.com.au/OTHER/RPL%20process1.pdf> [Accessed 1 September 2011]

Smith, L., Clayton, B. (2009), Case Studies from *Recognising non-formal and informal learning: Participant insights and perspectives*, NCVER, http://eprints.vu.edu.au/1968/1/Recognising_non-formal_and_informal_learning.pdf [Accessed 1 September 2011]

ⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), *Gender Indicators, Australia, Jul 2011*, Catalogue No. 4125.0.

ⁱⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010), *Education and Work, Australia, May 2010*, Catalogue No. 6227.0, Table 11

ⁱⁱⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010), *Education and Work, Australia, May 2010*, Catalogue No. 6227.0

^{iv} National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2011), *Apprentices and trainees 2010: annual*, www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2387.html.

^v Keep Australian Working, <http://www.keeppaustraliaworking.gov.au/pages/ImproveSkills.aspx> [Accessed 1 September 2011]

^{vi} Shewring, F. (2009), *The female 'tradie': Challenging employment perceptions in non-traditional trades for women*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2100.html>.

^{vii} Australian Government, *Summary of the Australian Government Australian Apprenticeships Incentive Program* May 2011, <http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/FAQ/Documents/SummIncentive.pdf>

^{viii} Shewring (2009: 18)

^{ix} Shewring, 2009.

^x Centrelink (2011), *Payment rates*, http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/austudy_rates.htm [Accessed 1 September 2011].

^{xi} Centrelink (2011), Youth Allowance – payment rates http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/ya_rates.htm [Accessed 1 September 2011]

^{xii} Centrelink (2011), Australian Government Drought Assistance, http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/drought_assist.htm [Accessed 1 September 2011]

^{xiii} Centrelink (2011), Climate Change Adjustment Program and Transitional Income Support, <http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/ccap.htm> [Accessed 1 September 2011]

^{xiv} Burch, (2011), Grants criteria revised to help women re-enter workforce, <http://www.joyburch.com.au/node/239> [Accessed 1 September 2011].

^{xv} Queensland Government (2011), *First Start*, <http://www.employment.qld.gov.au/programs/sqw/firststart/index.htm> [Accessed 1 September 2011]

^{xvi} Ellis, K. (2011), A message from the Minister for the Status of Women *Womens_Budget_2011.rtf* [Accessed 1 September 2011]

^{xvii} Smith, L., Clayton, B. (2009), *Recognising non-formal and informal learning: Participant insights and perspectives*, NCVER, http://eprints.vu.edu.au/1968/1/Recognising_non-formal_and_informal_learning.pdf [Accessed 1 September 2011]

^{xviii} Smith & Clayton (2009: 18).

^{xix} Australian Apprenticeships & Traineeships Information Service, <http://www.aatinfo.com.au/OTHER/RPL%20process1.pdf> [Accessed 1 September 2011]

^{xx} Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations (2011), Productivity Places Program <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/SkillTraining/ProductivityPlaces/Pages/Overview.aspx> [Accessed 1 September 2011].