

**Senate Employment, Workplace Relations
and Education Reference Committee**

**Inquiry Into Indigenous Training And
Employment Outcomes**

**Submission from the Australian National
Training Authority**

July 2004



1. BACKGROUND

Vocational Education and Training in Australia – Governance

Vocational education and training in Australia is a national system developed through cooperation between the Australian and State and Territory Governments, industry and the community.

Governance arrangements for the national vocational education and training system are laid out in the *Australian National Training Authority Act 1992* (ANTA Act) and the ANTA agreement endorsed by Australian Government and State and Territory Ministers for vocational education and training (ANTA MINCO) in August 2001.

The ANTA Act and the ANTA Agreement also create the basis for a range of partnerships between governments and industry for the development and refinement of the vocational education and training system.

The ANTA Act describes ANTA MINCO as the peak national decision making body for vocational education and training. The Council consists of the Ministers from each State and Territory and the Australian Government who are responsible for vocational education and training and is chaired by the Australian Government.

State and Territory Training Authorities operate within the framework of the national policies and strategies agreed by ANTA MINCO to address the training needs and priorities of industry and the community within their jurisdiction. The responsibility for the provision of training and assessment services rests with the States and Territories.

About ANTA

The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) is an Australian Government statutory authority established in 1992 to provide a national focus for vocational education and training (VET).

ANTA's mission is to ensure that the skills of the Australian labour force are sufficient to support internationally competitive commerce and industry and to provide individuals with opportunities to optimise their potential.

ANTA reports to an industry-based Board and is an administrator and adviser.

It advises the ANTA Ministerial Council on:

- VET policy, strategy, priorities, goals and objectives nationally; and
- VET plans which States and Territories develop each year. These plans detail how States and Territories propose to meet national priorities, goals and objectives.

ANTA administers national programs and the Australian Government funding of approximately \$1.1 Billion annually to the national VET system.

The Policy Context

ANTA's work to increase outcomes for Indigenous people in vocational education and training is guided by two key national policy documents:

- 1) *Partners in a Learning Culture: Australia's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 2000-2005.*
- 2) *Partners in a Learning Culture: Blueprint for Implementation*

In 2000, the ANTA Ministerial Council made a significant commitment to improving outcomes for Indigenous people in VET through their endorsement of *Partners in a Learning Culture: Australia's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for vocational education and training* and a Blueprint for its implementation (the Blueprint). These documents, which run until 2005, assign specific responsibilities to a range of VET sector and other partner organisations to improve vocational education and training outcomes for Indigenous Australians. A copy of the *Partners in a Learning Culture* strategy and Blueprint are provided at [Attachments A & B](#).

The Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council (AITAC) advises the ANTA Board on issues facing Indigenous people in vocational education and training. The ANTA Board established AITAC in 2000 to monitor progress of the national strategy for Indigenous people in VET – *Partners in a Learning Culture*, and its Blueprint for Implementation, and to provide advice on emerging issues. AITAC is a cross-sectoral group, comprising representatives from stakeholder groups that have a role to play in implementing the Blueprint. These include, State and Territory training authorities, Australian government organisations such as the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, and the Department of Education, Science and Training. It also includes industry and union representatives.

A mid-term review of the Blueprint for implementation of *Partners in a Learning Culture* was commissioned by AITAC in 2002/2003. The purpose of the review was to seek qualitative and quantitative evidence of activity both from those implementing actions and Indigenous learners and indicate areas for further research. This submission draws significantly on the findings of the mid-term review.

The VET sector has identified the Blueprint as one of the Annual National Priorities of the system. Annual National Priorities are agreed by Ministers each year as part of the VET sector's planning and accountability arrangements. In 2004, Annual National Priority 'D' calls for jurisdictions to achieve agreed outcomes for 2004 for the Blueprint for Implementation of *Partners in a Learning Culture*. The Blueprint was also a priority in 2003 & 2004.

- 3) *The National Strategy for VET – Shaping Our Future 2004-2010*

The VET sector's national strategy sets a broad vision and establishes long-term objectives for the national VET system. It includes key performance measures designed to indicate progress towards the achievement of the objectives.

The current national strategy, *Shaping our Future: Australia's National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 2004-2010*, was endorsed by the ANTA Ministerial Council in November 2003.

This Strategy is a commitment over seven years to achieve four objectives, one of which is focussed at increasing outcomes for Indigenous Australians:

- Indigenous Australians will have skills for viable jobs and their learning culture will be shared.

This Strategy will guide the commitments of both the Australian Government and State and Territory governments. It will be progressed through a National Action Plan¹ which details national priority actions to be undertaken through partnerships between ANTA, the Department of Education, Science and Training, State Training Authorities, peak industry bodies such as the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, diverse stakeholders within the vocational education and training sector as well as key Australian Government departments such as the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Department of Family and Community Services, the Department of Industry Tourism and Resources and the Department of Transport and Regional Services. One of the priority actions is to:

- develop more strategic, long-term and coordinated links between Community Development Employment Projects, VET and sustainable mainstream employment and business outcomes through the *Pathways to Employment* national pilot and similar transition initiatives

A copy of *Shaping Our Future* and its Action Plan is provided at Attachments C & D. Details of the *Pathways to Employment* project are provided on page 6 of this submission.

We know that VET has significant potential to increase employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians. In the following response to the Terms of Reference we outline the policy and practical responses that aim to shift the system so that Indigenous Australians access and achieve outcomes from vocational education and training at the same rates as all Australians.

¹ Agreed to by Ministers at the 11 June 2004 meeting of ANTA MINCO

2. RESPONSE TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

a) The effect of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme on the education and long-term employment outcomes of Indigenous people in rural, remote and urban areas.

ANTA does not hold any quantitative data on the effect of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme on the education and long-term employment outcomes of Indigenous people in rural, remote and urban areas. Because of this we are unable to make specific comment on this issue. Data about employment outcomes for all vocational education and training students is collected through a Student Outcomes Survey.

It is not currently possible to separately identify CDEP employment from other forms of employment in the Student Outcomes Survey, however it is likely that the employment rates following training for Indigenous people from this survey are assisted by CDEP activity. ANTA has funded a survey that will attempt to provide more data regarding the impact of CDEP employment on Indigenous VET student employment outcomes. Further information regarding this survey is provided in this section.

However, the need to improve training and employment outcomes for CDEP participants is recognised in the *Partners in a Learning Culture* Strategy and Blueprint, and the importance of this action has been recognised by ANTA MINCO who have agreed to treat those actions in the Blueprint relating to CDEP as a priority.

CDEP & vocational education and training – what the mid-term review found

Strategy 11 of the Blueprint contains a range of cross-government actions designed to make sure that CDEP participants access strategically identified training that will lead to unsubsidised employment.

The mid-term review of the Blueprint found that Blueprint partners have commenced work on these actions, and that many State and Territory Training Authorities have been working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission towards better alignment of CDEP training. The researchers noted the complexity of this work because of the different functions served by CDEPs in different locations, and the differing roles of CDEPs in individual skill development and community economic development.

Some stakeholders consulted during the mid-term review expressed concern that the availability of CDEP influenced the aspirations of individuals, possibly affecting the school retention rates of students. The mid-term review research highlighted the importance of programs designed to increase school retention rates for Indigenous students, and suggested that research into the effect of CDEP on school retention rates may be warranted.

“An Indigenous kid in Year 12 in the country, doing well at school, could do anything – but his ambition is only to work with his uncle on CDEP” (Mid-term review of *Partners in a Learning Culture* – interview - Victoria: Manager, Indigenous organisation).

The mid-term review also found that successful outcomes from CDEP are achieved when training undertaken by CDEP participants is strategically linked not only to the needs of participants, but also the needs of local industry, and the interests and circumstances of local Indigenous communities. Initiatives gain significant momentum when training and community enterprise development are directed towards possibilities for enterprise development genuinely “owned” by the local community. Some examples highlighted in the mid-term review of instances where training is contributing to such strategic initiatives include:

- the Murrin Bridge Winery near Lake Cargelligo in NSW, which has trained Indigenous community members in viticulture, and in construction and other trades, as part of a substantial enterprise development initiative for the community
- the development of automobile services by Indigenous community members in Bairnsdale, Victoria
- the development of a variety of Indigenous enterprises in Shepparton, Victoria, including a successful Indigenous clothing manufacturing enterprise.

How ANTA is working to improve the links between training & CDEP

ANTA is currently engaged in two activities that will increase our data about the link between CDEP and vocational education and training. This will provide information that will enhance our ability to improve the link between training and CDEP. These initiatives are a *Pathways to Employment* project and a survey of outcomes for Indigenous students. Details of these are provided below.

Pathways to Employment – a strategic response

The ANTA Ministerial Council has recognised the importance of improving the links between CDEP, training and sustainable mainstream employment. It has agreed to focus on Strategy 11 of the Blueprint, which aims to increase opportunities for CDEP participants.

As a result of this commitment by Ministers, ANTA is currently working with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to undertake a *Pathways to Employment* project as a strategic response to Strategy 11. As well as achieving specific outcomes at a local level for the 16 CDEP sites that will participate in this project, the project aims to influence longer-term, systemic change.

The primary aims of the *Pathways to Employment* project are to:

- Work with the CDEP management to identify potential participants to participate in a project to move Indigenous people beyond CDEP into sustainable employment, including small business.
- Identify the vocational education and training required by these candidates.
- Negotiate the arrangements for the design and delivery of vocational education and training to selected participants.
- Based on the lessons from these pilots, develop models that could be usefully replicated across CDEPs.

- Develop a strategy to establish better future links between CDEP, the vocational education and training system and sustainable mainstream employment.

Improving Our Policy Response – Indigenous Student Survey

ANTA has funded the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) to undertake a survey on outcomes for Indigenous students who participate in VET. The survey aims to cast light on the question “*What individual, community and economic benefits arise from participation in VET by Indigenous people?*” It has a specific focus on CDEP. The survey will provide both quantitative and qualitative data that will assist in shaping the VET system’s policy responses to meeting the needs of Indigenous communities. The findings of the survey will be reported in late 2004.

Increasing the links between CDEP & training – some challenges

The mid-term review showed us that improved outcomes for CDEP participants will be achieved by on the ground partnerships, supported by policy linkages that focus on CDEP as a transition point offering an opportunity for substantial skill development rather than an “end point”. While recent reforms to the CDEP program are supportive of this notion, considerable cross-sectoral planning and collaboration is required to ensure this is successfully implemented on the ground.

A key challenge for the future is to make sure that training that provides nationally accredited, portable qualifications is an integral component of CDEP, and that the training system delivers strategic, co-ordinated links between training and employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

We know that there are many on-the-ground partnerships between CDEP organisations, training providers, industry partners and organisations such as group training organisations. Another challenge is to identify the key ingredients of these successful partnerships and explore ways to repeat their successes across other sites.

Finally, it is important that the work to date in linking training for CDEP participants to skill shortages and enterprise development continues. This is a considerable task. Our preliminary work in scoping the *Pathways to Employment* project shows that best results will be achieved when CDEP organisations have a dedicated resource to develop the necessary partnerships. Closer links between industry and Indigenous communities are also required to achieve long-term success.

- b) The appropriateness of the current framework for the funding and delivery of vocational education and training to meet the requirements of Indigenous communities and to prepare Indigenous people for employment, especially in rural and remote settings**

Funding and delivery of vocational education and training

Vocational education and training funds are provided by ANTA to jurisdictions in accordance with the ANTA agreement which outlines key objectives and the planning and accountability arrangements for these funds. The ANTA agreement is negotiated between States and Territories and the Australian Government. Negotiations for the next ANTA agreement will re-commence in October this year.

State and territory annual vocational education and training plans

Each year, State and Territory training authorities prepare annual plans that respond to the national strategy and annual national priorities. These plans outline the strategies, the planned level of training delivery to be achieved during the year, as well as other information required by the ANTA agreement. These plans are consolidated into the Directions and Resource Allocations report to the ANTA Ministerial Council in November each year, which triggers the release of Australian Government funds for the system.

State and Territory training authorities control the arrangements for purchasing from training providers within their jurisdiction.

VET Infrastructure for Indigenous People program (VIIP)

Specific funding to support the delivery of vocational education and training for Indigenous people is provided through the VET Infrastructure for Indigenous People (VIIP) program.

The VIIP program replaced the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) facilities program in 2000.

Under the VIIP program, State & Territory training authorities can access capital funding to assist communities establish a skill centre or purchase essential training equipment.

States and Territories work closely with the communities and their Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council representative to identify project ideas that are submitted to ANTA for approval in terms of the program guidelines. The list of approved project ideas are then referred by ANTA to a National Selection Committee for their endorsement.

States and Territories are advised of the outcome of this process and requested to work closely with the successful applicants in developing the full project proposal for consideration by ANTA in terms of providing funding approval.

A total of 101 projects have been endorsed under this program to date, representing funding of approximately \$30.383 million since 1996.

Eligible applicants are community organisations established as 'not-for-profit' legal entities, and are therefore accountable for the expenditure of public funds.

Organisations eligible to receive funding include:

- Indigenous community organisations;
- Existing Skill Centres to expand the delivery of training;
- Independent Aboriginal providers of VET; and
- CDEP organisations where a special case can be demonstrated.

Applications for 'special case' funding under the guidelines are submitted to the National Selection Committee for their consideration and funding approval. The committee determines the merits of each proposal and advises ANTA whether the project should be funded.

Funding Frameworks – What the Mid-Term Review Found

The mid-term review of *Partners in a Learning Culture* highlighted the need for funding models that account for specific learning support needs, and for more effective use of existing resources. There is also a need for funding models that are flexible enough to take account of the unique issues associated with the delivery of VET to remote and rural Indigenous communities, as well as models that accommodate the movement of Indigenous learners across State and Territory borders in Central Australia.

The mid-term review also highlighted that the short-term and episodic nature of most funding makes it difficult for providers to undertake the much-needed long-term and continuing planning for delivery of VET at particular sites and to particular Indigenous clients and communities. This means that often only short-term contracts can be offered to staff, working against career development for Indigenous staff who may be employed only on a casual or part-time basis, thus impacting on the quality of delivery for the student.

Challenges

In addition to the findings of the mid-term review, stakeholders have raised with ANTA a number of other funding related challenges faced by the VET sector in terms of provision of vocational education and training for Indigenous people. These include:

- The difficulty in providing additional supports such as the need for funding models to take into account issues of learner supports such as tutoring, mentor support, literacy and numeracy support and community support.
- The difficulties posed by current funding mechanisms that require minimum numbers of students to make training delivery viable, and how this can work against Indigenous students, particularly those wishing to learn in a group with other Indigenous students.

- Ways to share and build on best practices in funding allocation, that exist around the country – for example, we know that in some jurisdictions, weightings are applied to account for remote location or learner’s literacy and numeracy considerations.
- The additional costs in delivering VET in remote areas, because the same economies of scale achievable along the eastern sea-board of Australia are not possible in these locations.
- The movement of Indigenous learners across State and Territory borders to attend a VET provider closer to their place of residence, and the need for funding models that are flexible enough to ensure that providers are equipped to support these students.
- The need for funding models that support training organisations in providing a flexible environment for Indigenous learners – for example, extensions of time to attend to family matters or attendance at ceremonies.
- The need for sufficient professional development funds to make sure that VET professionals have the skills to customise the delivery of training for Indigenous students.

ANTA is undertaking two pieces of work that will contribute to the body of knowledge in this area.

Resourcing VET Research

We are currently leading research to examine scenarios for future VET demand based on investigation of future social and economic trends and salient national policy directions. This research will also consider the impact on resourcing if outcomes for Indigenous Australians are to be improved.

Identifying & Sharing Good Practice

ANTA has asked State and Territory training authorities for examples of good practice in VET provision for Indigenous people and people with a disability so that these can be analysed to see what key lessons can be distilled, and how, through the development of national principles, we can foster the broader replication of the good practices we’re hearing about – a number of which stem from the Indigenous controlled provider sector.

- c) **The effectiveness of competency-based training models to deliver an appropriate level or mix of skills necessary for employment of Indigenous people, including the achievement of necessary standards of literacy and numeracy**

Competency Based Training

National competencies are an industry-determined specification of performance which sets out the skills, knowledge and their application required to operate effectively in employment. Competency based training develops the skills, knowledge and their application required to achieve competency standards. Competency descriptions are in units of competency, which are themselves made up of elements of competency, together with performance criteria, a range statement, and an evidence guide. Units of competency aligned to industry defined national qualifications and assessment guidelines are the three endorsed components of a Training Package.

Competency based training focuses on what people are able to do, not just on what they know. This integration of theory and practice better positions people for employment than the more traditional, knowledge-only focus. Contemporary competency based training with an emphasis on learner *outcomes* rather than a tightly specified learning *process* enables greater customization of the learning process to meet client needs. This can be particularly beneficial to Indigenous learners if culturally appropriate delivery and assessment methods are employed.

In addition to Training Packages, the VET sector has a range of courses that are developed by and accredited within individual States and Territories. Although still essentially meeting a competency outcome many of these accredited courses are stand-alone language and literacy or pre-vocational courses. Although all State accredited courses appear on the national register (NTIS) their usage and currency varies from State to State.

Training Packages

In 1996, the ANTA MINCO agreed to the development of a policy framework for the development and endorsement of competency standards and Training Packages. This framework was designed to provide for greater industry influence over the direction and outcomes of training while also allowing providers to customise training to suit the diversity of individual learners and industry clients.

Training Packages were developed by national Industry Training Advisory Bodies and Recognised Bodies for specific industries. The organisations are now replaced by Industry Skills Councils, or directly by large enterprises.

The first Training Packages were endorsed in 1997. As at 21 June 2004, there were 72 industry Training Packages and nine enterprise Training Packages nationally endorsed, covering 80% of the Australian workforce across all sectors of the economy.

Training Package units of competency are the smallest level of recognition 'currency' for national recognition purposes. A Statement of Attainment can be issued for individual units of competency or groups of units that do not make up a complete qualification. 'Packaging' of units to meet whole job role requirements allows for the completion of full Australian Qualifications Framework qualifications. While Training Packages are not teaching and learning guides, they may be supported by training/resource materials such as learning strategies, assessment materials and professional development materials may support them. These can be customised to meet the individual needs of the learner. The Training Package Development Handbook (<http://www.anta.gov.au/pubBundle.asp?qsID=11>) provides guidance to Training Package developers on incorporating language, literacy and numeracy requirements into units of competency.

Literacy and Numeracy

Language, literacy and numeracy skills underpin all workplace communication and play an important part in the Key Competencies and employability skills. Even in what may seem to be very 'hands on' technical language, literacy and numeracy competency is likely to be critical to effective performance. Therefore, in Training Packages language, literacy and numeracy are fully integrated into units of competency to reflect what is needed 'on the job'. The policy for language, literacy and numeracy is for it to be 'built in not bolted on'; but it must be explicit and recognisable in order for effective training and assessment to take place.

Language, literacy and numeracy skills:

- Must be placed in workplace context
- should only include those skills actually required for successful performance of work tasks
- could be included within elements, performance criteria, in the range statement or evidence guide, depending on how the skills relate to workplace tasks.

A recent decision by the National Training Quality Council² stated that: "AQF qualifications and Statements of Attainment covered by the Australian Quality Training Framework must be delivered and assessed at a level of English language proficiency appropriate to the context of delivery. This does not preclude the use of Languages Other Than English (LOTE) to support training delivery and assessment. Where units of competency and/or qualifications have been delivered and assessed entirely in a LOTE, then the language of delivery and assessment should be noted on the testamur. Testamurs are to be in English. Official translations may (optionally) be included on the reverse of the document."

This means that where English language proficiency is crucial to the workplace task then it should be developed and assessed but competencies where English

² The National Training Quality Council endorses training packages, and advises the ANTA Board on policies to ensure quality and national consistency of training outcomes and the relevance of training to industry and regional needs.

language proficiency is not critical can be trained for and assessed using the first language of the learner.

Competency based training and assessment is not in itself an impediment to achievement of competency if a learner has literacy or numeracy issues. Improving literacy for an individual can be achieved by any learning process and the literacy / numeracy training process is not defined by competency standards but is an aspect of meeting the competency outcomes required.

Industry competency standards do, however specify workplace skills and in so doing express the level of literacy / numeracy required to perform effectively. If a learner demonstrates they have difficulty meeting this outcome then a program to improve their literacy / numeracy can be undertaken first or simultaneously with the industry training. This would not be an integral part of a Training Package qualification because it can't be assumed that everyone undertaking the training will not have the required language / literacy / numeracy requirements.

The Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) sets out the nationally agreed quality arrangements for the delivery of vocational education and training and consists of Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) as well as standards for the registration and audit of those RTOs by the various State and Territory training authorities. The *Standards for Registered Training Organisations* include a standard requiring RTOs to apply access and equity principles and provide timely and appropriate information, advice and support services to clients. In addition to this the standard for learning and assessment requires the RTO to ensure that in developing, adapting or delivering training and assessment that the language, literacy and numeracy requirements develop the learning capacity of individual learners. Choices about how language, literacy and numeracy issues are dealt with in training rest with the RTO.

The competency approach does not therefore require a *greater* level of literacy / numeracy than that which actually applies in practical application in work however a mismatch can happen where training and assessment has been designed with an academic orientation relying on information exchange that is highly dependent on the need for reading and writing academic or technical texts. Learners frequently experience difficulty meeting the *training program* literacy requirements because of how it is designed when they could possibly meet the workplace requirements more easily if different delivery and assessment methods were used eg; spoken answers to assessments, project or portfolio assessments rather than tests or essays, observation and visual documentation of competency. A major issue here for Indigenous learners is the greater emphasis on written material in the training environment than is actually required in the workplace.

Training Package developers are required to use an independent equity advisory service in the Training Package development or review process, and in part this assesses whether the language / literacy / numeracy requirements – explicit or implicit – go beyond reasonable expectations of workplace performance. But in practice it is the methodology of delivery and assessment by Registered Training Organisations that is crucial for fair, valid and reliable and culturally appropriate outcomes for Indigenous learners. There is a need for continuing development of culturally appropriate methodologies of delivery and assessment and professional development of VET teachers and trainers to guarantee quality outcomes for all learners.

Accredited, stand-alone literacy programs are not impacted on by competencies or Training Packages qualifications, and literacy support programs can run alongside or be integrated with vocational qualifications, but in practice there are many resourcing and timing barriers to this happening. Each State and Territory deals with the issue differently.

What the Mid-Term Review Found

The key findings of the mid-term review of *Partners in a Learning Culture* in relation to competency based training / Training Packages were that:

- there was significant variation in the degree to which Training Package developers and Industry advisory bodies were responsive to the needs and circumstances of Indigenous learners;
- Greater Indigenous input is required in Training Package design and development processes to ensure that they met the needs of Indigenous learners;
- Professional development for VET practitioners is important to ensure that they have the requisite skills for training delivery and assessment that is culturally appropriate; and
- a range of initiatives exist that address the problems of language and literacy in creative and acknowledging ways, however stakeholders consulted during the review acknowledged the importance of funding arrangements that enable adequate language and literacy support in the delivery of training.

Challenges

- The need for a more flexible funding model to allow for language, literacy and numeracy skills acquisition and development alongside technical/vocational skills development;
- The need for research into relationship between 'employability skills' and Indigenous ways of learning and doing;
- The need for development of professional development models for RTOs to support culturally appropriate delivery and assessment methods;
- The need for centralized resource database of best practice Indigenous training resources; and
- The need for centralized tracking of projects and outcomes in order for shared understandings.

How ANTA is working to ensure competency-based training meets the needs of Indigenous people

The High Level Review of Training Packages

In 2003, the ANTA Ministerial Council commissioned ANTA to undertake a high level review of Training Packages.

The ANTA Ministerial Council considered the Review's recommendations at their June 2004 meeting, and agreed on six major areas for action around:

- ANTA's national leadership to achieve a 'new settlement' around Training Package development and implementation
- improved Training Package design
- a more rigorous and inclusive development and review process
- a more effective VET qualifications framework within and across Training Packages
- better support for teaching, learning and assessment
- mechanisms for improving pathways to and from Training Packages

Training Package Equity Advisory Service

Training Package developers are required to use the ANTA Training Package equity advisory service to provide advice on equity issues in the Training Package development or review process. This initiative was developed as a response to the *Partners in a Learning Culture* Blueprint and the VET sector's national strategy and Blueprint for people with a disability in VET – *Bridging Pathways*.

Since the commencement of the advisory service thirty Training Packages, which were under review, have been, or are currently being evaluated by the Equity Advisory Service.

During the process consultants analyse units of competency against the needs of clients from various equity groups and develop sample units of competency for use as best practice. They also provide advice on appropriate assessment methodologies and reasonable adjustment and examine the qualifications from a position of access and equity.

ANTA has committed to continuing this service by requiring that all new, as well as reviewed Training Packages must undergo an equity evaluation. This will be funded through ANTA's service agreement with Industry Skills Councils.

An evaluation of the Equity Advisory Service will be commissioned in the near future to determine its adequacy as a measure to ensure the non-discriminatory nature of core VET products.

Literacy & Numeracy and the Australian Quality Training Framework

As mentioned above, the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) *Standards for Registered Training Organisations* specify that registered training organisations must attend to language, literacy and numeracy needs of learners. To assist with this, ANTA has developed a resource: *Frequently Asked Questions About Language, Literacy and Numeracy Issues in the Australian Quality Training Framework* to assist providers in meeting these obligations.

Literacy & Numeracy National Project Innovative Grants

Each year ANTA distributes funds provided under the VET Funding Act for a national project aimed at providing language, literacy and numeracy input into a range of existing national policy initiatives. Under the Innovative Projects component of this Project, funds are made available for the creation and adaptation of training products for Indigenous groups and identification through action research of culturally appropriate training models. A full listing of these projects can be found at www.dest.gov.au/literacynet

- d) **The effectiveness of Commonwealth, state and territory-based initiatives to engage more Indigenous people in training and to encourage higher level skill acquisition in skilled trades and professions, including health and teaching;**

Participation by Indigenous people in vocational education and training³

- **Participation in VET by Indigenous Australians is strong** - Indigenous people participate⁴ in vocational education and training at nearly twice the rate of other students. 17.6% of Indigenous Australians aged 15-64⁵ participated in vocational education and training during 2003, as compared with 9% of all Australians aged 15-64⁶.

The proportion of VET students who are Indigenous has increased from 3.3% in 1999 to 3.9% in 2003 – an increase of 15.2%. This is attributable to strong growth in participation by young people (aged 15 to 24) who constituted 46.3% of all Indigenous students in 2003. This rate of participation by Indigenous young people is slightly higher than the rate for all young people, which was 43.2% in 2003.

- Over two thirds of Indigenous students (66.4%), reside in rural and remote areas compared with just over one third of the total VET population (35%).
- **Although participation of Indigenous people in VET is high, Indigenous people are faring less well than all other VET students against indicators such as participation in higher level courses, success rates, skills outputs and employment outcomes. However, steady improvements against most of these indicators are being made.**

Participation in Higher Level Courses

- Indigenous VET students generally study for qualifications at lower Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)⁷ levels than all students. However, the proportion of Indigenous students studying at AQF certificate level III and above has increased from 35.9% in 1999 to 39.3% in 2003. This rate is lower than for the general VET population, whose participation in courses at AQF level III and above increased from 50.5% to 55.3% during this same time period.

³ All data in this section refers to government-funded VET students, and is drawn from the NCVER, Vocational Education and Training Provider collection unless otherwise stated.

⁴ Participation rate = numbers in VET as a proportion of the total numbers of people aged 15-64 of the stated social group – based on 2001, ABS statistics

⁵ ABS, 2001 data quoted in *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage, Key Indicators 2003*

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⁷ The Australian Qualifications Framework, commonly referred to as the AQF, is a unified system of thirteen national qualifications in schools, vocational education and training (TAFEs and private providers) and the higher education sector (mainly universities).

During the period 1999 – 2003, the proportion of Indigenous VET students studying at the Diploma or Advanced Diploma level decreased slightly, dropping from 6.7% in 1999, to 5.6% in 2003.

During the period 1999 to 2003 participation of Indigenous students in other, non-AQF courses, such as non-award courses, subject-only enrolments and miscellaneous education has declined. These courses are less likely to lead to an employment outcome.

Success Rates

- Success rates⁸ for Indigenous students are lower at 63.7% in 2003, than for all VET students at 77.1%. However, this rate has increased steadily from a rate of 57.5% in 1999.

Skills Outputs

- In 2003, Indigenous students completed 3.3% of all units of competency and modules of training completed by VET students. This figure represents a growth of 27.6% since 1999.

Employment Outcomes

- A large proportion of VET graduates are employed prior to commencing their training. This is also true for Indigenous students, however in 2003, their rate of employment prior to commencing training was lower, at 56%, when compared to all VET students (68%)⁹.

In 2003, the proportion of Indigenous VET graduates in employment following their training was 60%, while the rate of employment for all VET graduates following training increased by 6 percentage points to 74%¹⁰.

It is not currently possible to separately identify CDEP employment from other forms of employment in the Student Outcomes Survey, however it is likely that the employment rates following training for Indigenous people from this survey are assisted by CDEP activity.

In 2003, 35% of all Indigenous Graduates who were not employed prior to commencing their training, were employed or in further study after completing their training¹¹.

In spite of these improvements, the mid-term review highlighted the need for improved pathways from lower level courses to Certificate III and above (especially in Training Packages which do not offer courses at lower Certificate levels) for Indigenous students and the need to focus on increasing the participation of Indigenous students at Certificate III and above.

⁸ The load pass rate calculation is based on the nominal hours supervised associated with each outcome. It represents the proportion of competencies achieved / passed and recognition of prior learning awarded of the total number of competencies achieved.

⁹ NCVET, 2003 Student Outcomes Survey

¹⁰ NCVET, 2003 Student Outcomes Survey

¹¹ NCVET, 2003 Student Outcomes Survey

Given the strong rate of participation of Indigenous people in VET, our challenge is to ensure that training undertaken by Indigenous students has a specific pathway to employment.

Participation by Indigenous people in skilled trades & professions including health and teaching

The proportion of Indigenous apprentices and trainees in trades occupations decreased from 32.2% in 2000 to 30.3% in 2003¹². The number of non-Indigenous apprentices and trainees in trades occupations also decreased during this period from 45.8% to 34.6%. The majority of Indigenous apprentices and trainees were in non-trades occupations in 2003, with 30.1% in Clerical, sales and service occupations and 16.6% in Labourers and related workers occupations (compared with 28.1% and 8.5% respectively for all other apprentices and trainees).

Table 1: Percentage of apprentices and trainees in each (ASCO) occupation group, by Indigenous status, Australia, 2000 – 2003

	2000		2001		2002		2003	
	Ind.	Non Ind.	Ind.	Non-Ind	Ind.	Other	Ind.	Other
<i>Tradespersons & related workers</i>	32.2	45.8	30.7	40.6	31.9	36.7	30.3	34.6
<i>Non-trades</i>								
Managers & Administrators	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.7
Professionals	3.3	0.6	1.6	0.6	2.0	0.6	2.5	0.6
Associate Professionals	4.1	3.5	4.5	4.1	4.4	6.5	5.6	7.4
Advanced clerical & service workers	0.4	0.9	3.9	2.6	2.1	2.4	1.1	2.0
Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers	28.9	24.4	29.3	26.6	31.2	27.6	30.1	28.1
Intermediate production & transport workers	6.3	10.3	8.1	12.4	8.9	12.8	9.3	12.6
Elementary clerical, sales & service workers	6.4	5.7	4.4	4.5	3.7	4.7	3.9	5.4
Labourers and related workers	17.7	8.5	16.9	8.3	15.2	8.3	16.6	8.5
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: NCVET, 2000-2003 Vocational Education and Training Apprentice and Trainee data collection

Indigenous students participate in training in the health field at a higher rate than for all students. Participation of Indigenous students in education-related training is slightly lower than for all students. An overview of the participation of Indigenous students in 2003 by field of education is provided below.

¹² Source: NCVET, 2000-2003 Vocational Education and Training Apprentice and Trainee data collection

Table 2: Units of competency/modules completed by Indigenous students by field of education (%)

	2003	2003
	All students	Indigenous students
Natural and physical sciences	2.0	2.0
Information technology	2.5	1.2
Engineering and related technologies	16.4	14.6
Architecture and building	4.9	5.0
Agriculture, environmental and related studies	2.8	4.9
Health	8.9	10.7
Education	2.6	1.9
Management and commerce	27.4	19.7
Society and culture	8.9	9.9
Creative arts	3.8	5.5
Food, hospitality and personal services	5.7	4.0
Mixed field programs	14.0	20.6
Total	100	100

Source: NCVET, 2003 Vocational Education and Training Provider Collection

How ANTA & AITAC are working to engage more Indigenous people in training and encourage higher-level skill acquisition

Higher Level Skill Acquisition for Indigenous people as a priority

Following the mid-term review, the ANTA Board has agreed to a recommendation from its advisory council on Indigenous issues, the Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council (AITAC), that a priority focus be placed on strategies to improve pathways between lower and higher levels of training, with a focus on overcoming obstacles to higher level training currently experienced by Indigenous people, particularly in rural and remote Australia.

Increasing the number of Indigenous trainers

The mid-term review found that better outcomes can be achieved for Indigenous students in VET if greater numbers of Indigenous people are employed as trainers in the VET sector. As a result of this, in considering advice from the ANTA Board on the findings of the review, ANTA MINCO has agreed to focus on strategies that will enable increased numbers of Indigenous people to qualify for Certificate IV from the Training and Assessment Training Package¹³, as a priority in the remainder of the term of *Partners in a Learning Culture*;

Industry Skills Councils

One of ANTA's key roles is to work closely with industry to ensure that the VET sector is responsive to industry's need for a skilled workforce. National Industry Skills Councils are one of the mechanisms through which ANTA receives industry advice. One of the roles of these National Industry Skills Councils is to support the development, implementation and continuous improvement of quality nationally recognised training products and services, including Training Packages.

¹³ the minimum qualification for trainers in the VET sector

ANTA's contract with each Skills Council requires them to support key national policies including the national strategy for VET 2004-2010 and the Blueprint as well as a number of quality guidelines and reporting requirements relating to the Training Package and support material development process.

As part of its work plan for 2004 and 2005, AITAC will engage with the new Industry Skills Councils to ensure that the objectives of the Blueprint are understood and supported by the Councils so that training is genuinely responsive to the needs, interests and circumstances of Indigenous people and communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker qualifications

Community Services and Health Training Australia (CSHTA) is currently managing a review of the existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers Standards that were initially endorsed in 1998 to bring these standards and accredited courses into the National Training Framework. This is being achieved by developing competencies and qualifications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers. To date, the project has focused on covering the primary health care role of Aboriginal Health Workers and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers by encompassing aspects of clinical care, acute care, health promotion and general health care.

Improving Pathways into Training Packages

This project is designed to develop cross industry Training Package qualifications at Certificate I or II levels, which incorporate vocational, generic and employability skills to enable pathways to higher level qualifications in a range of Training Packages.

There will be a specific focus on how these qualifications will work for groups such as early school leavers, including those at risk of leaving school early because of disadvantage or learning disability, people with special needs relating to their language or cultural backgrounds, for example Indigenous people in remote communities and/or people whose English language skills require additional support, people with geographic disadvantage and people wishing to enter or re-enter the work force, including those who have been long-term unemployed or are of mature-age.

The proposed pathway qualifications will be flexible and relevant to the proposed target groups in that it provides relevant, specific employability skills, enables the selection of endorsed units of competency, can be delivered and assessed in a variety of ways, provides for the application of skills in a meaningful work context, and provides pathways into other Training Package qualifications and employment.

Identifying and Sharing Good Practice

ANTA has commissioned a project aimed at increasing the contribution made through the identification of good practice, extending it from a traditional 'communications' approach, using the power of storytelling and identification of champions, to actively inform and transform VET system policies and practice on

the ground. We anticipate that this project will provide examples of models for increasing higher-level skill acquisition for Indigenous people that can be built on across jurisdictions.

Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry Workshop

ANTA has recently funded the Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry to conduct a workshop to develop a strategic approach to Indigenous employment within the 'traditional trades'.

This workshop will result in information that will advance the objectives of *Partners in a Learning Culture*, by helping inform ACCI's development of a strategic national approach to Indigenous employment pathways within the 'traditional trades'.

A report on the workshop outcomes will provide information from industry representatives on good practice in relation to recruitment, retention and training of Indigenous people, and industry views on barriers to this.

- e) **Models for engaging industry and Indigenous communities in partnerships to develop long-term employment opportunities for Indigenous people – in infrastructure development through to the arts – and the limitations and opportunities these confer;**

Partners in a Learning Culture

Objective 4 of *Partners in a Learning Culture* aims to develop closer links between VET outcomes for Indigenous people and industry and employment. Strategy 10 of the Blueprint contains a range of actions aimed at establishing and expanding partnerships between Indigenous peoples, communities, training providers and industry.

What the Mid-Term Review found

The mid-term review found that much activity is underway in relation to implementation of Strategy 10 of the Blueprint. It highlighted that State and Territory training authorities play a key role in partnerships designed to develop long-term employment opportunities for Indigenous people. A key finding of the review was that partnerships between training providers, communities and industry work best and are more sustainable when formalised, and when Indigenous communities are involved in planning. Some examples of activity occurring on the ground include:

1. In NSW the Aboriginal Programs Unit of the State Training Authority is working with industry and TAFE to develop a Memorandum of Understanding that will lead to improved employment opportunities for Indigenous students.
2. A partnership between Hammersley Iron and Coburn School in Geraldton, WA aims to target Indigenous students requiring support in school and help them build stronger expectations about the links between school, training and employment.
3. A major project for building of a railway involving a partnership between the government and Lands Councils in the NT has resulted in 55, out of a possible 157 apprenticeships created for the project allocated to Indigenous people.

How ANTA is Working to Support Partnerships between Industry & Indigenous Communities

Group Training Organisations – a key partnership link

Research funded by ANTA has shown that Group Training Organisations play a key role in linking industry and Indigenous communities in partnership. This project identified eight features of best practice in forming 'productive learning partnerships' between employers, group training organisations and Indigenous Australians. The research highlighted the importance of partnerships in working to address local Indigenous community priorities as well as the importance of mentoring in achieving employment outcomes.

The findings of this research have been broadly disseminated to Group Training Organisations throughout Australia. A copy of the research report, which outlines examples of many community, industry and group training organisation partnerships is provided at [Attachment E](#).

Increasing opportunities for Indigenous Australians in major infrastructure and capital development projects, including construction and telecommunications

As a result of a decision by ANTA MINCO in May 2002, ANTA has been working with State and Territory training authorities and the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) to investigate ways that the VET sector can increase opportunities for Indigenous Australians in major infrastructure and capital development projects.

We know that these projects, including construction and telecommunications, are a key to creating new business and job opportunities in regional and remote communities. The use of fly-in/fly-out labour does not help Indigenous communities capitalise on these opportunities. There is significant potential for the VET sector to work more strategically with industries, enterprises and government agencies to identify skill needs for large projects before they start, and work with communities to build the required skills.

Our initial work has involved building a national picture of any initiatives currently being undertaken by State and Territory training authorities in this area, and identifying any challenges in replicating these more broadly.

We know that there are a variety of approaches being pursued across jurisdictions. These range from policies which stipulate the number of Indigenous apprentices to be employed according to the value of government construction and maintenance contracts, to Memorandums of Understanding which focus on the training of Aboriginal apprentices employed by contractors involved in construction and maintenance of residential buildings in Indigenous communities. In addition to these policies, some jurisdictions are also aiming to increase the number of Indigenous people undertaking traineeships and apprenticeships on publicly funded building and construction projects.

Our work to date has also highlighted that the achievement of significant and sustainable change requires a systematic approach, significant cross-portfolio consultation, and genuine involvement of Indigenous communities. While this will not happen quickly or easily, work is progressing on two fronts:

1. ANTA has sought assistance from DEST in referring this issue to the Australian Government Secretaries Group on Indigenous issues. As a result of this referral, the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, DEST, DEWR, the Department of Finance and Administration, and other Australian government agencies, are working to explore opportunities and possible leverage points.
2. Jurisdictions have agreed that a national workshop between VET sector agencies, with strong Indigenous involvement, and representatives from organisations such as OATSIA, DEWR and the ANTA Board's advisory committee on Indigenous training issues (AITAC), would be a useful tool for:

- considering the range of activities currently occurring
- sharing different approaches that jurisdictions have tried to date, and the learnings these have generated
- identifying points of leverage at a local level to enable jurisdictions to progress work in this area
- identifying key partners who need to be engaged in each jurisdiction
- exploring the possibility of national principles and best practice models to take this forward in a systemic way.

Challenges

State and Territory training authorities have identified a number of important issues which impact on the ability to effectively increase business and job opportunities for Indigenous Australians from major infrastructure and capital works. These include:

- the need for centralised, forward planning for all government contracts so that apprentices can continue their training and employment pathways through successive contracts
- the need for a consistent reporting framework across all Government agencies
- the need to address the impact of size of construction contracts, particularly in regional and remote areas, on capacity for ongoing employment of Indigenous apprentices for the duration of Certificate III apprenticeships
- the importance of identifying and addressing the individual training needs of participants, eg through pre-employment courses or tuition in English literacy and numeracy to support successful outcomes
- the importance of inter-agency partnerships and collaboration in identifying training and employment opportunities.

We know that jurisdictions will need to utilise different approaches at the local level. We also know that there are two broad categories of initiatives required to take this forward – vocational education and training sector specific initiatives, as well as initiatives involving employment and procurement arrangements, requiring liaison with agencies outside the VET sector.

As we progress this work, we are aware of the need to draw on, and complement related work being done by Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs¹⁴ and take account of similar initiatives being undertaken in non-VET sector agencies, such as housing authorities. We are also aware of the need to involve organisations such as the Master Builders Association and other industry groups in planning a way forward.

This co-ordinated effort to create training and employment opportunities has great potential to make a sustainable difference to Indigenous communities.

¹⁴ A related piece of work is being undertaken by the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, through a referral to their Officials' Committee on Employment. ANTA will continue to liaise with the MCEETYA Officials' Committee on Employment to prevent duplication of effort and to facilitate a co-ordinated approach to driving progress with this issue.

VET Infrastructure for Indigenous People Program

The VET Infrastructure for Indigenous People Program provides some good examples of Industry and Indigenous community partnerships. An example of how the program has facilitated such a partnership is outlined below.

Weipa multi-purpose facility

This is a joint initiative involving the Traditional Owners of the region, Comalco and governments working in partnership to establish the Western Cape Training Hub.

The proposal involves the fit out of a building donated by Comalco to construct two training rooms, a large conference room, which also doubles as a training room, and an IT/Multimedia room.

The Hub will deliver training and provide employment programs to Aboriginal people of Aurukun, Mapoon, Napranum and Weipa with the support of the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE, Cairns Regional Group Training and the Australian College of Tropical Agriculture in coordinating the delivery of training in the region.

The project also involves the upgrade of four dongas to provide accommodation for visiting trainers. The lack of available accommodation for visiting trainers is a major barrier to the delivery of training in the region.

The project has the full support of the Queensland Government and DET and other Australian Government and State agencies. The project is consistent with the Queensland State Education 2010 strategy, which in part deals with the provision of training to Aboriginal people in remote areas.

Comalco's Indigenous employment policy sets a target that by 2010 Indigenous people from the region will make up 35% of its workforce. The establishment of the Hub will enable Indigenous peoples of the region to receive the training they need to gain employment in the mining industry.

The project is a good example of the benefits of using the skill centre program to encourage partnerships with Indigenous Communities and industry to meet the training needs in remote regions.

Attachments

- A. *Partners in a Learning Culture National Strategy*
- B. *Partners in a Learning Culture Blueprint for Implementation*
- C. *Shaping Our Future: Australia's National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 2004-2010*
- D. *Shaping Our Future: Action Plan 2004 – 2010*
- E. *Partners in a Learning Culture: A Best Practice Guide for Employment Indigenous Australians Through Group Training Arrangements.*