

4 Focus on school-industry linkages

4.1 Vocational education and training in schools

Substantial growth in school-industry links occurred in each of the States in 1997. This was evident in the growth taking place in the number as well as the range of vocational education and training (VET) programs designed to meet the demand for increasing numbers of graduates from secondary schools to have a range of skills and experiences linked more directly with employment. Expansion and innovation occurred in approved vocational education courses which emphasised quality assurance and consultation between the schooling sectors as well as within individual sectors.

Growth of VET

Greater formalisation of VET arrangements ensured that quality workplace learning opportunities provided for students in Australian schools were recognised by industry and the VET sector and were established as part of further education and training pathways.

School-industry links in some sectors were strengthened in 1997 through the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) and with the appointment of workplace coordinators and links committees. According to ASTF national surveys, structured workplace learning linked to the school curriculum greatly improved students' employment opportunities. The numbers of participants undertaking school-delivered vocational courses, joint secondary school-TAFE courses, endorsed courses with vocational content, industry studies, TAFE Pathway programs and national training modules all increased in 1997.

School to work projects such as Ready, Set, Go in South Australia were established with the aim to support:

- delivery of vocational education in schools;
- the coordination of work placements;
- career and course advice in regard to the changes in the industrial training area;
- enterprise education initiatives in schools;
- transition programs for students at risk; and

- integration of the key competencies into the curriculum.

1997 also saw many schools offering VET courses for the first time. The number of students enrolled in dual-accredited vocational education courses also grew significantly from 1996 to 1997.

Both Catholic and independent sectors experienced growth in the number of school-based courses and traineeships. Links between schools and local industry or businesses and with local education and training providers, including the TAFE system, covered a range of initiatives, industry sectors and approaches.

Areas of significant expansion, often involving schools and students across the sectors, were identified by the States. Those areas included:

- pathways into further education, employment and training, e.g. the expansion of traineeship and apprenticeship arrangements;
- schools and local businesses working together to expand curriculum offerings, including integration of key competencies;
- access and equity for all students through programs focussing on particular cohorts of students;
- credit transfer provision;
- increased numbers of structured work placements; and
- numbers of teachers and industry personnel trained as workplace assessors.

States reported that the numbers of school students in the three school sectors involved in vocational courses and/or the number of courses to which they had access increased significantly from 1996 to 1997.

In New South Wales, the number of students in years 11 and 12 involved in school-delivered vocational courses increased by 26.7 per cent to around 18,500 students.

In addition, senior secondary students have access to TAFE-delivered dual-accredited courses. In 1997, approximately 22,300 year 11 and 12 students across New South Wales were enrolled in TAFE-delivered dual-accredited courses.

Queensland also reported an increase in both the number of students studying subjects with embedded VET and the range of such subjects to which they had access.

The increased focus on vocational courses in Victoria from 1996 to 1997 is detailed in Table 4A. The number of schools delivering vocational courses almost trebled from 1996 to 1997 and student enrolments in such courses increased by more than 125 per cent.

The participation of Western Australian government schools and their senior secondary students in vocational courses also grew markedly from 1996 to 1997. The number of year 11 and 12 participants almost trebled and the number of participating schools grew by 58 per cent. Likewise, the number of year 11 and 12 participants doubled in independent schools (Table 4B).

A significant increase in VET activities in both government and non-government schools in South Australia resulted in 76 schools implementing 62 programs for approximately 4,200 students, comprising 9,000 module enrolments and 267,000 student delivery hours. Significant expansion was also seen in the South Australian independent sector (Table 4C) where accredited VET programs covered 13 industry areas.

Table 4A. Expansion of vocational courses, all schools, Victoria, 1996–97

	1996	1997
Schools delivering vocational courses	203	328
Enrolments in vocational courses	3,600	10,000
Number of vocational programs	11	17

Sources: Department of Education, Victoria

Table 4B. Expansion of vocational courses, government and independent schools, Western Australia, 1996–97

	1996	1997
<i>Government</i>		
Schools delivering vocational courses	36	57
Year 11 and 12 students undertaking vocational courses	683	1,991
<i>Independent</i>		
Schools delivering vocational courses	7	9
Year 11 and 12 students undertaking vocational courses	94	187

Sources: Education Department of Western Australia; Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia

Table 4C. Expansion of vocational courses, independent schools, South Australia, 1996–97

	1996	1997
Schools delivering vocational courses	8	13
Number of students enrolled in vocational courses	220	695

Source: South Australian Independent Schools Board

Participation in recognised school–industry programs in Tasmanian government schools involved 1,496 students covering 23 different industry areas. A further 1,168 students undertook extended structured training work placements in industry, amounting to a total of 23,475 days of training provided to senior secondary students by industry.

In the Northern Territory, the number of schools with senior secondary enrolments involved in VET programs and the range of programs offered across existing industry areas increased dramatically during 1997. There were 16 different VET programs, involving 359 students, which could be incorporated into Stage 1 of the Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE).

In the Australian Capital Territory, government schools and those in the non-government sectors increased the number of courses for national recognition and aligned courses with training packages. Other new proposals in government schools included professional development for teachers, marketing of vocational education to year 10 students, the inclusion of training packages in vocational courses and the development of vocational courses in additional industry areas.

Delivery of VET programs

A major objective of reforms in the VET sector for 1997 was to develop an effective and competitive training market, with both public and private provision of training. States responded to this objective by making greater use of contestable funding arrangements, thereby increasing provision of publicly-funded training by private and community-based providers.

Across the schooling sectors, teachers undertook professional development to enable them to deliver specific VET modules, with the support of industry-endorsed resources and in collaboration with registered training providers such as TRAC (Training in Retail and Commerce), Group Training Companies, Skillshare, TAFE institutes and private business colleges.

In the government sector, cooperation with registered training providers ensured that the vocational education and training work that students completed at school was credentialled and recognised in post-school training courses. There was also an increase in the number of schools achieving private provider status, where the concept of ‘best practice’ is now well established.

Key features of VET delivery in government schools were reported by several States, each of which included a focus

on accessing curriculum elements from outside the school, although VET curriculum as a whole was delivered within those States' secondary accreditation mechanisms.

In South Australian government and non-government schools, VET curriculum was delivered within the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE). Students worked with trained teachers, a registered provider or industry expert at the school, facilities of the provider, a Skills Centre or in on-the-job training facilities. If working with TAFE institutes, a Memorandum of Agreement, known as VISA (VET In SACE Arrangement) was established and when working cooperatively with a registered private training provider, quality assurance procedures were negotiated on an individual basis.

In Tasmania, all secondary colleges and some district high schools were registered training organisations and offered programs combining components of the Tasmanian Certificate of Education endorsed under the National Training Framework (NTF).

In Darwin, structured workplace learning was outsourced to a private provider which provided the off-the-job component. This approach enabled students to access a program which would normally not be available in such a small population centre.

Several States reported that the number of Catholic schools which became registered providers of VET courses increased in comparison with 1996. In Queensland, 59 per cent of Catholic schools had extended registration with TAFE to offer TAFE certificate courses and approximately 42 per cent were registered with the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Commission (VETEC) for delivery of stand-alone VET courses up to Australian Standards Framework (ASF) Level 2.

A similar provision existed in Tasmania, where Catholic schools were registered as providers to deliver courses to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Certificate 2 level.

Within the independent sector, the mechanisms through which vocational education were delivered to students varied. For example, in New South Wales, links were established with local industry or businesses and with local education and training providers.

In Queensland, the number of cooperative arrangements with various TAFE institutes increased and a number of independent schools continued to deliver vocational education courses registered in their own right with VETEC.

Accreditation arrangements

National industry competency standards and nationally recognised training modules were used as a basis for VET programs which were typically developed by the State boards of studies, or equivalent, in conjunction with schools, TAFE and the VET Accreditation Boards or industry representatives. Programs covered a range of industry-specific areas and included structured workplace learning, sometimes for as long as six weeks.

Courses offered in some instances were based on national competency standards and/or modules and provided level 1 and 2 AQF certificates. Students who gained these certificates were provided automatic credit transfer to post-school VET.

In Queensland, increasing numbers of government schools delivered nationally accredited VET in schools through Board, Board-registered and 'stand alone' VET courses. Human and physical resources were provided by Education Queensland to enable schools to offer programs in at least two of eight broad industry areas, with the choices of programs being made at school level. Regional Education Advisers (Senior Schooling) and Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (BSSSS) officers facilitated the introduction of Board and Board-registered subjects which contained industry-endorsed competencies and modules.

Table 4D summarises accreditation arrangements in place for VET courses at year 11 and 12 in Queensland in 1997.

In Western Australia, there was one certification and accreditation process — the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE). Relevant VET courses, including national training modules, were incorporated into the WACE and recognised in the accompanying statement of results.

Table 4D. Accreditation arrangements for VET courses undertaken by year 11 & 12 students, government schools, Queensland, 1997

<i>Area of VET study</i>	<i>Students</i>
TAFE subjects	3,745
TAFE subjects reported on Senior Certificate	26,107
Board-registered subjects with Study Area Specifications (year 11 students)	9,349
Board, Board-registered and stand-alone TAFE courses in major industry areas	18,122

Source: Education Queensland

The accreditation system in place in Western Australia, mirrored elsewhere in Australia, ensured that VET was delivered “as part of broad, general education that combines study towards senior secondary certificate with nationally recognised, accredited, vocational education and training” (*Principles and Guidelines for Improving Outcomes for Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools*, DEETYA, December 1996).

Credit transfer arrangements

All States have established systems of articulation and credit transfer with TAFE, through Pathways or similar programs. Recognition of prior learning or credit transfer also applied to courses offered by registered private training providers. Such credit transfer requires recognition at a systemic level of educational equivalence. In 1997, it was possible to count stand-alone VET modules towards the requirements for State-based certificates of education.

Industry was closely involved with State curriculum and accreditation authorities, the existing high levels of cooperation ensuring that the requirements of the State-based certificates of education, the TAFE sector and industry were met. For example, New South Wales reported that credit transfer provisions between HSC courses and TAFE courses expanded, with more than 40 HSC courses providing credit transfer into over 185 TAFE NSW courses.

The BSSSS in Queensland published the *Advanced Standing Handbook* which listed advanced study/credit transfer arrangements into TAFE Queensland courses for Board and Board-registered subjects. The handbook outlined advanced standing which was negotiated for nine Board subjects and all eight Board-registered Study Area Specifications.

Many SACE Stage 2 subjects in South Australia offered credit transfer into TAFE courses through systemic recognition of education equivalence. These arrangements are published by the Department of Education, Training and Employment in the *1997 Credit Transfer Directory*.

Enterprise education

Schools in a number of States worked together with local community and businesses to establish enterprise education programs. The objective of these programs was to ensure that young people leave school ready to play a role in the business life of the local region. Some school clusters developed enterprise education strategies to support the integration of the key competencies into all school curricula across all year levels. In some States, enterprise initiatives in schools were funded by government

departments. For example, the Queensland Department of Tourism, Small Business and Industry funded projects in eleven schools.

Programs in New South Wales and Tasmania included Practice Firms, the Young Achievement Australia Business Skills Program, the Australian Business Week Program and the Australian Quality Council E-Team program. In other States, grants assisted professional development of teachers and the development of pilot programs such as Linking Enterprises and Schools in Victoria.

Some independent schools in Western Australia conducted Young Achievement Programs with the assistance of local business or used their own small independent business packages. Others included national training modules in their technology and enterprise programs.

Cooperation within and between sectors

Particularly noticeable in 1997 was the emphasis on forming partnerships between the government, Catholic and independent schooling sectors. Plans were implemented across the sectors to increase the quality and quantity of training and skills development in the community and to establish extra opportunities for students to develop general vocational competencies. Examples of such cooperation included:

- cross-sector planning which resulted in the preparation of video material on school–industry partnerships and protocols and assisted the development of the information technology, multi-media and arts industry links in South Australia;
- the clusters model in Western Australia, where 119 government schools cooperated in 12 groups in order to decide on programs and funding for vocational education. The model was also used for work placements and vocational training. In the independent and Catholic sectors there were five clusters of a total of 38 schools. These clusters operated work-based learning programs and accessed training provided by registered training organisations;
- the coordination of policy direction for VET programs and the allocation of ANTA funding by a central reference group comprising the State training authority and all three education sectors in South Australia. The same groups also served as a forum for the sharing of information and the provision of support for those involved in programs in schools. Schools working

together across systems to plan and implement New Apprenticeships in schools further exemplified the benefits of cooperation to States with limited total student numbers; and

- a cross-sectoral database relating to structured workplace learning was established in the Australian Capital Territory through the Coordination Project.

4.2 School-industry links

Industry areas represented in schools

All States reported expansion in the range of VET programs offered across existing industry areas as a result of the increase in partnerships formed between industry representatives and school bodies. The industries most involved included automotive and allied trades, horticulture, hospitality and tourism, community services and health, building and construction, recreation, retail, business, electronics, metals and engineering.

Hospitality and office skills were generally reported as having the highest involvement with some specialised industry links being established in different States. For instance, the largest individual enrolment in Tasmania was in courses relating to tourism, followed by generic work education, automotive and wholesale, retail and personal services.

In Western Australia, there was a strong representation by hospitality-related courses, metals and engineering. Other industries, however, such as retail and automotive, which employ large percentages of the workforce, were under-represented.

Included among the new courses reported by States were:

- viticulture;
- contemporary music;
- horse studies;
- clothing design;
- laboratory skills; and
- retail operations (an enterprise-specific course in conjunction with McDonalds in Victoria).

Catholic schools formed many partnerships with industry groups and individual enterprises through work-based learning programs such as INSTEP and integrated programs of both on- and off-the-job training. Integrated programs and industry partnerships existed in most industry areas,

including hospitality, tourism, metals and engineering, office and administration, information technology, retail, health services, child care, automotive, mechatronics and systems, and horticulture. Among examples reported:

- in Western Australia, at least 900 enterprises were on databases for on-the-job training including companies such as BP, Coles-Myer, Toyota and the Caravan Association of Western Australia; and
- Catholic Education authorities sponsored VET courses in remote locations in the Northern Territory, changing the emphasis from the craft-centred courses of former years. New courses included literacy and numeracy skills; retail training; driver education; office administration; craft techniques; purchasing/retailing goods; as well as work and health safety.

Vocationally-oriented programs in independent schools expanded beyond the traditional short-term work experience and work placement. Programs in metropolitan regions in the States included the main industry areas, with some initiatives being conducted in conjunction with the mining industries in Western Australia. Industry areas increased in New South Wales and Victoria, with schools offering increased dual-recognition courses in these States.

Reporting from other States confirmed similar expansion in the range of links with industry and included:

- the establishment by most schools in South Australia of strong links with industry, with schools having a number of agreements in place with local TAFE institutes as well as having links with local industry. Programs with institutes of TAFE have been formalised through Memoranda of Agreement that detail the partnerships; and
- Australian Capital Territory programs included work experience in years 11 and 12, accredited vocational courses for year 11 and 12 students in the fashion and hospitality sectors and participation of year 11 students in the Young Achievement Australia program.

Expectations of industry and the responses of schools to them

Specific industry expectations of schooling included use of best practice curriculum models as well as user friendly programs, which emphasised attitude and aptitude rather than industry-specific skills. Vocational training was expected to prepare students for the world of work and relevance was a key expectation. Some industries such as

building and construction expressed the expectation that more teachers would gain industry experience and physical resources would continue to be upgraded.

Reporting from across the sectors in all States detailed a greater commitment in 1997 to providing VET courses that had been developed in collaboration with training sectors and industry. The quality and relevance of programs and work placements increased and closer liaison with industry training boards was reported. Reference was made to State Training Profiles to ensure that the expressed needs and expectations of industry were being met. ASTF projects in particular, focussed on enhancing school support for industry and communication between schools and industry.

In New South Wales, significant reform of the HSC included enhancing the quality of vocational studies.

In Victoria, the VET in Schools Professional Development Project for VET Staff and Industry Trainers provided training and an associated professional development kit for 150 'change agents' to deliver Linking the VET Triangle workshops for 1998. In addition, the Teacher Release to Industry Program provided 53 teachers with 40 week placements covering a range of industries throughout the State.

The government sector in Queensland accredited VET courses only where staff were appropriately qualified or experienced and where the school facilities met the relevant Industry Training Advisory Board standards. School–industry committees and teacher placement in industry days continued to increase.

All VET courses and programs in South Australian government schools require that students spend time on-the-job, undertaking structured workplace learning through partnerships with TAFE, major and minor industries, businesses and other registered providers. The Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia consulted widely with the three schooling sectors to produce a document called *Recognition of VET Outcomes Towards SACE* in order to further school–industry links.

In Western Australia, traineeships, New Apprenticeships and structured workplace learning offered the major links between schools and industry. Other links between industry competency standards and the Western Australian Certificate of Education were 3,000 modules spread across 250 programs. Programs had to articulate with apprenticeships, traineeships, employment and further training, and school programs which did not articulate in this way were identified for modification.

Formal, accredited VET arrangements in Tasmania ensured that quality workplace learning opportunities provided for school students were recognised by industry and the VET sector and were part of further education and training pathways. Participation in recognised school–industry programs in 1997 by 1,496 students covered 23 different industry areas. A total of 1,168 students undertook extended structured training work placements in industry. These placements amounted to a total of 23,475 days of training provided to senior secondary students by industry. Tasmania combined the Nationally Accredited Training Program with components of the Tasmanian Certificate of Education, thereby achieving true industry-recognised and recognised general education outcomes.

A working party representing government and non-government schools in the Northern Territory recommended ongoing liaison between schools and industry. Employment opportunities for Indigenous students in independent and Catholic schools in remote areas of the Northern Territory were also enhanced by the development of courses specific to employment opportunities in their community.

In the Australian Capital Territory, the School to Industry Taskforce provided a forum where industry representatives could articulate their requirements for high quality placement processes. Evaluations of vocational placements under the Student to Industry program in all schools indicated that employers were supportive of vocational programs and that they were involved in cross-sector planning committees.

4.3 Participation in VET

Government school sectors across the States consistently reported that twice as many year 11 students were involved in courses with formal industry links as year 12 students. Figures from the Catholic sector and independent sectors reflected similar relative levels of involvement.

In a departure from the more usual involvement of senior secondary students with VET programs, some pilot community placement programs in South Australian schools involved students across years 9, 10 and 11. A key aim was to explore the role of community groups in initiating and supporting school-based programs which included a combination of education and training. Mention was also made of the desire to minimise program disruption for students in years 11 and 12, which will result in more activity in year 10 in the future.

The South Australian Catholic sector also reported that, although greatest participation was recorded at Stage 1 of SACE (year 11) in 1997, the progression to a second year of programs would result in greater activity at Stage 2 in 1998.

Some States quantified the involvement of senior secondary students in vocational programs (Tables 4E, 4F and 4G). In each State significantly more students participated in vocational programs at year 11 than at year 12.

Table 4E summarises the involvement of New South Wales year 11 and 12 students across all schooling sectors, according to the classification of the course being taken.

Data from Queensland, (Table 4F) identifies the involvement of students according to several broad industry areas.

Data from Western Australia followed a similar approach to that of Queensland, but reported on courses in a number of additional industry areas (Table 4G).

Table 4E. Enrolments at years 11 and 12 in vocational programs, all schools, New South Wales, 1997

	<i>Year 11</i>	<i>Year 12</i>
Joint Senior Secondary TAFE-courses (including 3 Board-developed status courses)	15,245	7,128
Vocational Content Endorsed Courses	8,354	4,600
Industry Studies	3,555	2,033
TAFE HSC Pathway	696	280
Total	27,850	14,041

Source: Department of Education and Training, New South Wales

Table 4F. Enrolments at years 11 and 12 in vocational programs, by major industry category, all schools, Queensland, 1997

	<i>Year 11</i>	<i>Year 12</i>
Tourism and hospitality	4,322	303
Business, clerical, retail and wholesale	6,675	3,883
Engineering and metals	3,197	213
Primary industry	664	590
Total	14,858	4,989

Note: These figures include both Board subjects with embedded vocational education (ie used for university entrance ranking) and Board-registered subjects.

Source: Education Queensland

Table 4G. Enrolments at years 11 and 12 in vocational programs, by major industry category, government schools, Western Australia, 1997

	<i>Year 11</i>	<i>Year 12</i>
Tourism and hospitality	554	321
Business, clerical, retail & wholesale	428	295
Automotive, engineering and metals	700	300
Health and community services	122	38
Building and construction	111	4
Primary industry	105	59
Furnishings	78	21
Industrial studies	117	76
Production design	80	—
Sport and recreation	153	7
The arts and related technology	136	28
Other	952	248
Total	3,536	1,397

Source: Education Department of Western Australia

VET participation by gender

Despite the intended outcomes of the National Women's Vocational Education and Training Strategy to increase the number of females completing VET programs and broaden the distribution of females across fields of study, there was little evidence that the traditional gender distribution across industries varied for VET in schools.

Reporting from several States provided a range of information linking the gender of students to participation in VET programs.

In New South Wales, the number of female students undertaking VET programs was slightly higher than males for all types of VET programs, across all Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) categories and in both government and non-government schools.

In Queensland, the number of females participating in VET was somewhat lower than for males, particularly in the case of year 11 students studying Board-registered subjects with industry-endorsed competencies.

In Western Australia, the proportion of total placements occupied by females dropped approximately five per cent in 1997. This was partly due to an increased interest by boys in the traditional male-dominated trades and to the fact that programs in agricultural colleges, most of which qualified for VET status, tended to be more popular with males. Areas

dominated by females were business, childcare, fashion, hospitality, tourism and retail trades. A significant majority of males were found in automotive, electrical, furnishings, industrial studies, manufacturing and most notably, metals and engineering.

The Catholic sector reported some variations in numbers of participating females. Some States indicated that the numbers of female and male VET students in years 11 and 12 were fairly even, although in South Australian Catholic schools, far more female students (700 female and 360 male students) recorded some level of VET activity during 1997. The popularity of office and hospitality streams and the implementation of VET into some all-girl schools may have contributed to the greater participation by girls.

VET and students with disabilities

In some States, projects were developed to include students with special education needs in vocational training and the numbers of students involved increased.

A notable example was reported from South Australia, where one independent school which catered solely for students with disabilities established links with local industries and a TAFE college to facilitate the aim of finding work experience and paid work opportunities for students.

VET and Indigenous students

Increased participation by Indigenous students in VET programs was reported by a number of States. As all VET in schools programs incorporate some focus on literacy and numeracy levels and articulate with further training and employment, progress was also made in these areas, both as part of the general provision of VET and through specifically-targeted programs.

In South Australia, the Aboriginal and Islander Career Aspirations Project provided training and development for career education coordinators, school counsellors, Aboriginal education resource teachers and Aboriginal education workers. One group of schools with large enrolments of Aboriginal students (Port Augusta and Whyalla) is part of the Students at Risk element of the 'Ready, Set, Go' program. Thirty-six country and metropolitan schools were reported as having significant numbers of Aboriginal students undertaking workplace programs as part of their SACE studies.

Enrolments in the Kimberley multi-campus program in Western Australia, which specifically targets Indigenous

students, increased from 79 in 1995 to 122 in 1997 and the success rate (ie. progress to graduation, further education or work) rose from 66 per cent in 1995 to 78 per cent in 1997.

In Northern Territory Catholic schools, 42 Indigenous students were enrolled in Certificates I and II in General Education. One Catholic school in a remote Indigenous community, in consultation with the local council, set up VET courses for young people who had left school and negotiated links to workplaces in Darwin.

Independent schools which provided programs for Indigenous students from remote areas, initiated a planning process to develop training courses suitable for students and relevant to employment opportunities in their communities.

VET and students at risk

There was limited reporting of participation in VET programs specifically by students at risk, although two States did report some specific focus on this group.

In South Australia, five school to work transition programs commenced with a view to broadening the range of VET provision to students at risk. Indigenous students, students with disabilities, rural and isolated students and students at risk of leaving school early were the focus of these transition programs.

Access and bridging programs were available for students at risk in Western Australia. Programs such as Fast Track incorporated aspects of VET, though not all programs or students fully met the definition and criteria for VET. Planning was undertaken to bring more of the programs into line with VET criteria. There were 79 'Fast Track' students in VET in 1997.

4.4 National developments in VET and related areas

Comprehensive database for the senior secondary-VET interface

A project was commissioned in 1997 to be overseen by the MCEETYA Taskforce on School Statistics. The project is aimed at identifying the nature of participation in the post-compulsory years of schooling and recommending future action which may be required to ensure that a comprehensive database is established. Underlying the project was an ongoing concern at the increasing difficulty in providing accurate enumeration of senior secondary enrolments in

Australian schools in view of the increasing joint school–TAFE arrangements, and other structural changes in senior secondary schooling.

The project, which will commence in 1998, will map the existing organisational arrangements for senior secondary schooling in all States and establish the extent of accredited vocational education in senior secondary curriculum and the extent of year 12 subject enrolments (e.g. HSC, VCE, etc.) being undertaken in the VET sector. It will also develop a prototype of a unit record database (including data elements and a collection instrument) of year 11 and 12 and VET equivalent attendees/enrolled students to assist in addressing some of the problems identified with existing collections as well as the future scope of education statistics collections for the post-compulsory schooling years in schools, VET, further and higher education. The feasibility of the adoption of common standards for enumeration (e.g. student contact hours/full-time equivalent enrolments), where applicable, in the various sectors of education, will also be assessed, in order to assist policy development in education and training.

The MCEETYA Taskforce on VET in Schools

The MCEETYA Taskforce on Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools was established in 1997 to provide Ministers with advice on issues and guidelines for the implementation of VET in schools.

The Taskforce's terms of reference include:

- undertaking further national work on the implementation of VET in schools;
- providing advice on milestones for implementation in 1997 and beyond in the light of available resources;
- providing regular reports to Ministers and liaising with the ANTA Board, Advisory Committee, New Apprenticeships; and
- developing arrangements in secondary schooling to bring about a focus on apprenticeships and traineeships, or modules in training packages which relate to apprenticeships and traineeships, in conjunction with ANTA.

The Taskforce developed a strategic plan which incorporates:

- an implementation strategy, with transition arrangements for 1997, leading to broader implementation of New Apprenticeships in 1998;

- the development of guidelines to help schools deliver apprenticeships and traineeships;
- further work on a recurrent funding formula and advice on ways schools can access funds for VET in schools programs and New Apprenticeships in the long term;
- the development of guidelines for effective work placement coordination;
- the establishment of a mechanism, in conjunction with curriculum, assessment and certification authorities, to identify accreditation, certification, assessment and reporting issues relating to VET programs in schools, with a particular focus on identifying areas with potential for national cooperation;
- the achievement of high levels of industry ownership of programs which involve enterprises and schools at the national, State, regional and local levels;
- coordination with the VET sector;
- addressing other infrastructure items such as private registration, quality assurance mechanisms and legislation related to duty of care, public liability and workcare and workcover;
- addressing costs of developing, upgrading and maintaining capital facilities and equipment;
- advice on a marketing and communication strategy specifically targeted to schools and enterprises, students and their parents; and
- the establishment of mechanisms for reporting to key agencies and authorities.

The Taskforce reported to MCEETYA in 1997, outlining progress on issues and guidelines for the implementation of New Apprenticeships for school students.

New Apprenticeships

New Apprenticeships is one of the Commonwealth's key initiatives to reduce youth unemployment and improve the global competitiveness of Australian businesses. A national campaign to raise the profile of apprenticeships, particularly in new industries such as technology, was launched in 1997. This included newspaper, radio, magazine and trade journal advertisements, which ran for four months. Information kits were sent to 60,000 small and medium-sized businesses and 2,500 secondary schools throughout Australia. An associated Internet website was established at <http://www.newapprenticeships.gov.au>.

Under the new apprenticeship system the skills and qualifications of new apprentices and trainees will be recognised in all States, greatly expanding job and career options. Employers will be able to choose where their apprentices are trained and it will be much easier for them to hire an apprentice or trainee. Students will be able to earn while they learn, by combining a paid apprenticeship with their secondary school certificate. The reforms will enable them to obtain skills and qualifications recognised by industry as part of their senior secondary schooling. They will be able to begin apprenticeships or traineeships at school, or undertake VET modules that will articulate into apprenticeships and traineeships after they leave school.

Nationally, New Apprenticeships were still mostly in the planning stage in 1997, as the national and State parameters were not fully in place. In some States, New Apprenticeships provided the impetus for formalising VET in particular industry areas such as electrical, building, automotive and construction. Some impacts of New Apprenticeships, however, were reported:

- New Apprenticeships funded professional development programs in pilot schools in Victoria, which informed schools, training providers and industries of New Apprenticeships policies and practices;
- Queensland reported that, as the New Apprenticeships initiative mandates on-the-job training in the form of paid work, fears concerning 'real' training have now been allayed; and
- 30 students from five schools commenced New Apprenticeships in Queensland in 1997, the most popular areas pursued being hospitality, engineering and business. One high school held the first trial with apprenticeships in the metal fabrication area, involving the local TAFE institute, a training company and the school. Students attended school three days per week and TAFE two days per week, with on-the-job training undertaken primarily during school vacation periods.

Commonwealth initiatives

The Commonwealth's commitment to reforming apprenticeships and traineeships, together with reforms in workplace legislation, aimed to assist school leavers become better prepared for further education, training or the workforce. A funding package of initiatives worth \$187m over four years was put in place in 1997 to develop effective and reliable pathways from schooling to employment for young people. This was made up of ANTA funds and funding for the School to Work Programme, the

Australian Student Traineeship Foundation and the Jobs Pathway Programme.

Several States reported the use of ANTA funding as a basis for the future development of traineeships and apprenticeships in the major industry areas and to provide apprenticeships and traineeships for students continuing their year 12.

In Western Australia, funding supported a number of programs connecting schools and registered training organisations and allowing students to work towards AQF credentials at levels 1 and 2.

Through ANTA-funded professional development activities and the employment of executive officers to assist schools in Northern Territory, there was an increased awareness of VET and understanding of VET programs, local management committees were established and funding and industry support pursued.

In the Catholic sector, ANTA funds seeded vocational activity in 27 of 28 Catholic secondary schools in South Australia.

Some independent schools instituted training in national training modules under ANTA, accessing training provided by registered training organisations. In Tasmania, ANTA funding helped to expand awareness of VET courses in independent schools, made possible information days, developed infrastructure for new VET programs and facilitated cross-sector professional development courses.

Parliamentary inquiry on the employment of young people

The report *Youth Employment: A Working Solution* was tabled in Federal Parliament on 29 September 1997 by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, following a reference the previous year from the Commonwealth Minister. The Committee's term of reference was to inquire into and report on 'factors influencing the employment of young people'. In doing so, the Committee laid particular emphasis on the factors which influence employer attitudes towards the recruitment, maintenance and expansion of employment opportunities for young people.

The report discusses a range of issues relevant to the employment of young people. The Majority Report makes eighteen recommendations, which include:

- the need for an increased focus on the teaching of literacy and numeracy;

- funding places for young people to complete year 12;
- expansion of workplace education into the early years of high school;
- improved career information;
- increased recruitment of trainees and apprentices by the government sector;
- exemptions from superannuation and payroll tax for employers taking on young people; and
- changes to young peoples' wages.

Schools in the South Australian independent sector reported using the report *Youth Employment: A Working Solution* as a basis for increasing involvement between teachers and industry personnel. Strategies to enhance linkages between schools and industry included close liaison with industry training advisory boards/councils, group-training companies and with personnel from industry Skill Centres.

4.5 Other issues and directions for VET

Several States reported on issues affecting VET delivery in 1997. Although these issues were not consistently reported across States, they were identified as having a significant impact on schools and industry in their attempt to provide high quality VET programs. Considerable planning and effort was also undertaken by VET authorities to address the issues identified as impacting on the optimum success of VET program delivery.

Professional development

Assessment and certification of teachers and recognition of prior learning was a general issue requiring attention. The introduction of the national training packages and new accreditation arrangements generated extra demand in Catholic schools for professional development of teachers.

The improvement of professional development was identified as a priority, especially in relation to the need for improved accreditation of courses. Quality models and training modules for principals, coordinators and teachers in the VET area were proposed across the States.

Professional development in the areas of workplace training, structured workplace learning grading and coordination training, knowledge of national training modules content and delivery was mentioned as an important requirement for continued expansion of VET.

Several education authorities mentioned the proposed development of support materials in conjunction with industry, especially in the area of special education. A database identifying such staff and their locations was suggested by Western Australia.

Accreditation

The need to reshape the delivery of accredited VET programs was identified by most education authorities. Accreditation was seen as a potential cause of unnecessary duplication across schools and systems, and the possibility of inconsistent judgements about the viability of programs was also identified as a concern.

Proposals were made to bring forward the timing of the accreditation process, as it was believed that this would determine more effectively whether schools were responding to industry needs.

A number of States focused on key aspects of VET accreditation in their reporting.

The report, *Coordinating Diversity: Directions for Post-Compulsory School Education in Queensland* (end 1996) endorsed the current trend for all accreditation and registration to go through the BSSSS and for units of competence to be embedded in subjects.

In Western Australia, the Curriculum Council developed a discussion document that proposed registration of schools as training organisations, shifting the emphasis from curriculum accreditation to provider registration.

Structured workplace learning

Despite certain initiatives to simplify and coordinate work placements, structured workplace learning emerged as an area requiring attention across the States. The need to retain the goodwill of employers was seen to be critical in order to sustain existing placements and find new ones.

In the Northern Territory, a proposal was put forward to fund a small number of workplace coordinators through the ASTF and further appointments were anticipated as new programs became established. It was expected that there would be an increase in the number of school-based coordinators to oversee VET programs within each school.

A non-government school in the Australian Capital Territory was examining the feasibility of 'in-house' work experience/placement, through a project such as the establishment of an on-site restaurant.

Funding

The considerable costs of VET and the uncertainty of funding timing and sources were recurrent hurdles to provision of programs. Students in some schools were denied appropriate access to very successful programs where adequate funding was not available. Western Australia, for example, mentioned the high cost of programs for students with disabilities, because of the need for each student to have a social trainer for part of their structured workplace learning time.

The cost of entering into partnerships with TAFE or other providers for off-the-job training varied considerably between industries and providers and in some cases it was beyond the capacity of schools to pay.

A range of directions were taken by the States as part of their strategies to address issues related to the application and monitoring of funding for training.

The Department of Education and Training in New South Wales planned to develop a strategic framework for quality vocational education and training in schools to guide the implementation of State, national and Commonwealth funding changes.

Education Queensland intended to supply Commonwealth School to Work State-based funding to schools on a submission basis to develop partnerships with business, industry and the VET sector. The Catholic sector collaborated with Education Queensland to pass on some of their ANTA funding to the BSSSS to allow study area specification competencies to be mapped and recognised as part of the Senior Certificate once training packages become available.

In Western Australia, models for unit costs were proposed and the funding ramifications of outsourcing programs were to be addressed in 1998.

Some student cohorts in focus

Although most reporting about VET took a general student focus, some concerns were expressed in respect of the participation of particular student groups in VET programs. For example, while relatively few VET students in Western Australia took a Tertiary Entrance Examinations courses in 1997, the potential for this group to expand was limited by the fact that they did not receive full tertiary entrance recognition for the work they undertook in VET.

Another concern was that students in remote and isolated areas required better communication links and models of

delivery for VET programs. The need for consistent and cost-effective funding arrangements for programs for these students was also mentioned.

It was proposed that all students should have ready access to VET courses and gain credit for their achievements.

Particular cohorts of students identified as requiring special attention in the immediate future included:

- those affected by the mutual obligation requirements of the Youth Allowance;
- female students in non-traditional industries;
- students with disabilities; and
- students in year 12 also doing part-time traineeships.

Other key issues

Attitudinal barriers

Further education was needed for employers, parents and students across sectors to recognise the scope and sustainability of VET programs. There was also a need to acknowledge that effective vocational education is broader than part-time apprenticeships.

In independent schools, VET courses required teachers and administrators to be more flexible and to modify their approach to the school timetable. Social acceptability was still perceived as a problem in this sector.

All sectors reported raising the status of VET in schools as a specific objective. Collaboration with industry and across the educational sectors was proposed to develop strategies to accredit VET programs as part of year 12 studies.

Outsourcing of courses

Various approaches to the delivery of VET options need to be trialled, costed and documented. Parts of programs may be outsourced, facilities hired, trainers employed or combinations of all of these can be used. The effectiveness of group training companies for outsourcing on-the-job training needs to be costed and documented. This issue was particularly important for the delivery of traineeships.

Management and accountability issues

A range of issues and developments were identified by the States in their reporting.

In the Northern Territory, there was a proposal for the establishment of databases to support management and

accountability processes and plans to clarify the role of management committees.

In Western Australia, development and modification of the management and accountability processes was planned to address issues such as the management role of clusters and the development of appropriate databases for cluster planning; the accountability roles of district directors and the central office; the links between VET in schools and local area education planning;

broadening of communication networks to support management and accountability processes; and structured workplace learning coordination to increase the number of placements available and allow the needs of large business to be met.

Both the independent and Catholic sectors planned to develop sustainable links with industry in order to provide quality work placements for students and encourage a more 'industry led' approach to VET.