

Chapter 8

VET Institutional Arrangements and Quality Issues

INTRODUCTION

Much has been written over the past ten years about Australia's VET system, particularly about what is meant by an industry-led system.

ACCI has devoted significant attention to policy and programs for many years on behalf of Australian employers.

Over the next ten years, employers will be advocating a market-led approach with increased focus on demand and market signals.

In this chapter we provide an overview of the VET sector and concentrate on the assessment of quality in the sector and industry advisory arrangements that provide input into that quality assessment.

BACKGROUND

Australia's training regime has had close links with the skills needs of Australia from the beginning. In the late 19th century when mining and manufacturing were pre-eminent economic activities, training began as a male dominated activity.

The Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system as we knew it emerged in the 1960s and 70s with the growth of private providers in the 1980s as the services base expanded in the economy.

By the 1990s there was a general consensus that Australia's training system was in need of reform and in 1992, all States, Territories and the Australian Government agreed to establish the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and a cooperative VET system with strategic input from industry.¹ Industry advice was provided by Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs). ANTA was abolished on 30 June 2005 and its functions were absorbed into the (Australian) Department of Education, Science and Training.

Significant features of the current training system emerged in the late 1990s:

- New Apprenticeships (now known as Australian Apprenticeships);
- the establishment of the National Training Framework (NTF);
- the introduction of VET in schools; and
- the development of Training Packages.

In 2007, several industry advisory arrangements are in place to support the VET system. Essentially, there is formal industry involvement through the National Industry Skills Council and the National Quality Council, which are both Committees of the Ministerial Council on Vocational and Technical Education (MCVTE), and through the Industry Skills Councils which are funded by DEST, and provide advice on Training Packages amongst other things.

CONSIDERATION OF ISSUES

The National Training System

The national training system consists of two elements:

1. The Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF 2007), which provides quality assurance for Registered Training Organisations. Only registered training organisations (RTOs) can issue AQF qualifications and deliver accredited training and assessment.²
2. National Training Packages, which are a set of nationally endorsed standards and qualifications used to recognise and assess the skills and knowledge people need to perform effectively in the workplace.³

These are supported by the Australian Qualifications Framework, which provides a unified system of national qualifications in schools, vocational education and training (TAFEs and private providers) and the higher education sector (mainly universities).⁴

Aspects of the National Training System

1. The Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF 2007)

Quality of the System

Where there is no adequate price mechanism to signal to the market the relative quality of products, alternative mechanisms must be used to measure quality. Generally quality revolves around standards, performance, achievement and continuous improvement.

The Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) 2007 has been agreed by the Federal and State and Territory Ministers as a means of ensuring quality for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). Central to the AQTF 2007 are the Essential Standards for Registration, which are outcomes-based compared with its predecessor, the AQTF, which was more output-based. Additionally, there is a voluntary Excellence Framework that encourages RTOs to gain either a “quality committed” or “excellence” rating.

At the time of writing this Blueprint, the AQTF 2007 was yet to be introduced, but from a policy viewpoint, it should provide an important vehicle for ensuring RTOs are providing quality delivery of training.

How the AQTF 2007 is implemented, particularly in relation to assessment practices will be critical to its success. Assessment has long been of concern to employers, particularly where some RTOs do not conduct assessment properly, or employ a ‘tick and flick’ approach. As well, comparisons between RTOs indicate that poorly performing RTOs are treated in the same manner as those that perform. The importance of rigour in assessment is explored in more detail later in this chapter.

Standards

VET offerings must reflect industry standards and current business practices to meet the needs required by modern enterprises. Particularly challenging is the need to adapt and respond to changing technology and to utilise it in innovative ways.

The NQC has a key role in bringing together key stakeholders in the vocational and technical education sector - industry, unions, governments, equity groups and practitioners - to oversee and support the current and future quality of vocational and technical education across Australia. It is also critical to ensuring the successful operation of the National

Training Framework – the system’s requirements for quality and national consistency in terms of qualifications and the delivery of training.

The functions of the National Quality Council include:

- reporting to the Ministerial Council on the operation of the National Skills Framework, including Training Packages, Australian Quality Training Framework standards and other quality assurance arrangements;
- advising Ministers on the endorsement of Training Packages;
- recommending approaches to improve national consistency within the operation of the National Skills Framework; and
- fulfilling accountability requirements through providing an annual report on its operations to the Ministerial Council.⁵

It is critical to have a proactive NQC led by industry, which is responsible for the overall quality of national training arrangements, standards for Training Packages and support materials and a national framework for outcomes-based auditing.

The capacity to be able to make comparisons, based on industry benchmarks, is one method employed to gauge quality. Making comparisons between and within industries is difficult without benchmarks or competition.

Every enterprise has the right to determine its own standards but there is no benefit to be gained from having low standards. Parties within an industry can agree to set standards and benchmark quality. However, this does not mean that what is considered a high quality standard in one industry will be the same for other industries. The requirements to achieve quality standards also vary between industries and the level of inputs sometimes cannot be compared, such as the number of hours required to attain a unit of competency.

This makes it very difficult to determine standards, even where criterion referencing and outcomes measurement assist. Private and public feedback and less direct methods such as measuring improved productivity can also be useful gauges of quality standards but with not without difficulties in isolating the efficacy of specific interventions.

Standards assist individuals and enterprises to achieve

quality. Greater consistency in rewarding individuals and enterprises that achieve high quality outcomes for their clients is also highly desirable.

The NQC therefore provides a useful vehicle for achieving the necessary standards, as it is the only Ministerial committee that has the authority to review standards that are presented on behalf of stakeholders.

To ensure standards apply inside and across industry, the NQC should consider alternative mechanisms to support the AQTF 2007 in the implementation phase.

Three alternatives exist:

- make greater use of moderation between RTOs and VET practitioners to make comparisons of standards within and between industries; or
- introduce an industry-based inspection system like the one operating in the UK; or
- progressively introduce pricing and competition into the market.

The first two options need to be costed to estimate the level of resources needed to support these quality options.

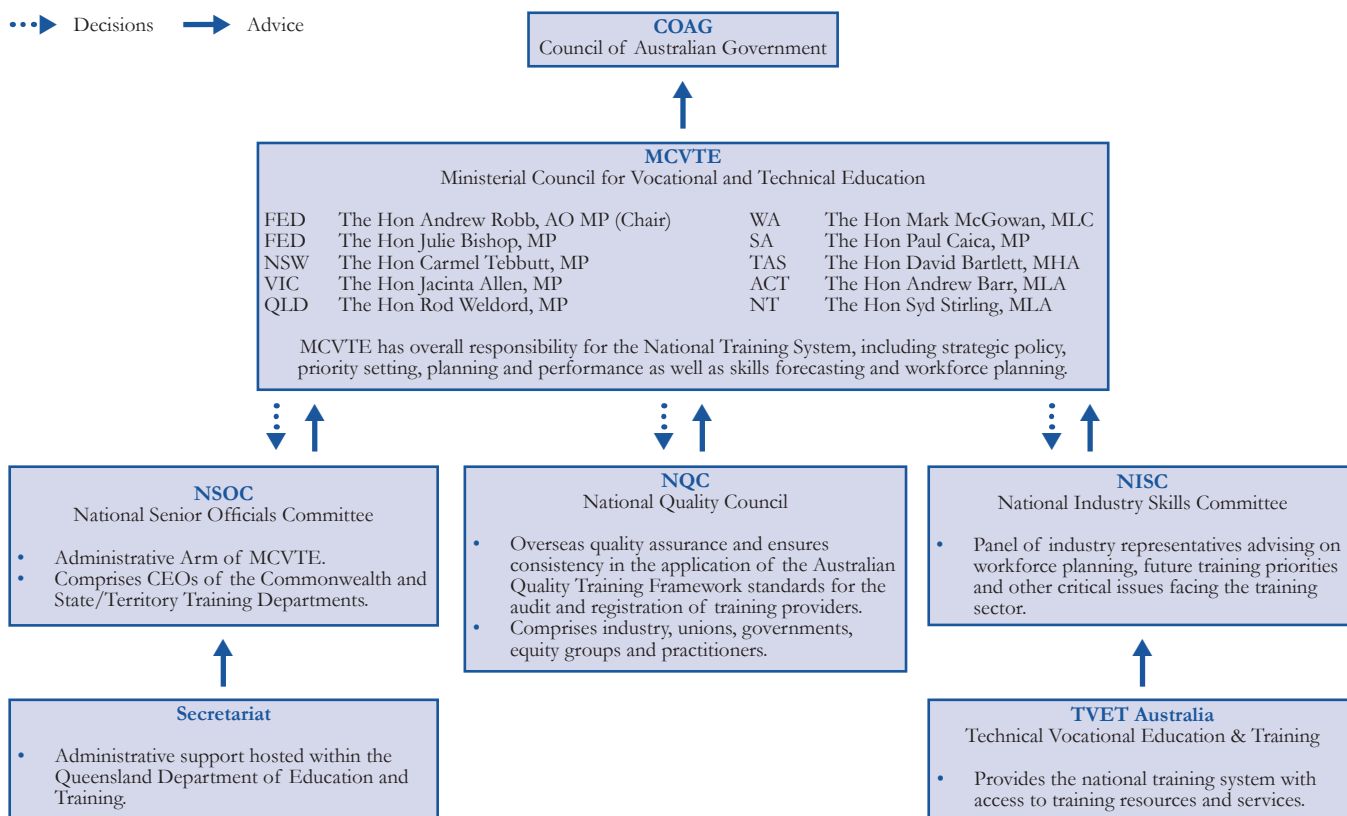
ACCI believes the third option requires changes at the systemic level but will yield the greatest change in quality. In Chapter 7 of this Blueprint, ACCI proposes the introduction of fees for the VET sector, supported by a student contribution scheme, similar to that which operates in higher education. This introduces greater pricing signals into the sector which will generate more competition.

In the paper, *A Well Skilled Future, Tailoring VET to the Emerging Labour Market* Sue Richardson and Richard Teese identify two models for meeting future skill needs:

The first is based on a strong collaborative community model, in which regions establish: strong community partnerships involving providers, government, employers and schools; robust mechanisms for measuring and responding to local industry needs, flexibility in delivery including in the workplace and online delivery; and inclusiveness strategies to target key groups. The second is a more market-driven model where multiple and varied VET providers (public and private) actively compete for students. The competition works to drive up enrolments, with pressure on providers to innovate in their responsiveness to local needs.⁶

ACCI favours a model that encourages a market approach to the delivery of VET. The benefits of opening up sectors to competition are well established. For example, when the

Figure 8.1
Training System Relationships



telecommunications market was opened up, prices went down, the range of choices was broadened and innovation drove improved quality of products, which were enhanced through the greater use of pricing signals.

The other alternatives of implementing system of moderation, as occurs in New Zealand, or an inspectorate system as occurs in the UK are also worthy of consideration. These options must be costed and assessed as to their suitability in the Australian context.

All mechanisms which provide greater confidence in the outcomes of training are important for consideration.

Rigour in Teaching, Assessment and Reporting

To achieve rigour in teaching, assessment and reporting of VET learning certain factors must be considered.

In relation to teaching, employers value skills that are acquired in real workplaces and where this is not possible, through simulation that is as close to the workplace as possible. On-the-job learning is therefore a critical component of the VET system. ACCI does not favour pathways where all learning is done completely off-the-job or through institutional pathways. Any off-the-job learning must be combined with on the job learning to achieve quality learning for VET students.

It is critical when using a competency-based approach

to learning, that assessment is rigorous and that there is comparability between the skills acquired by students undertaking the same course in different institutions. Internal and external moderation processes are desirable in collecting evidence that demonstrates a student's competence for the workplace. Otherwise there is a danger of 'teaching to one's own standard'. The use of some type of moderation system would provide confidence to employers that RTOs were delivering to a certain standard.

Reporting on student results should be outcomes based, not a reflection of compliance with input or process driven requirements. Clear, concise statements of competence must make explicit the standards set out and achieved. A nationally consistent reporting format is supported and the current model should be extended to report on employability skills, which are being incorporated into Training Packages and are highly desired by employers.

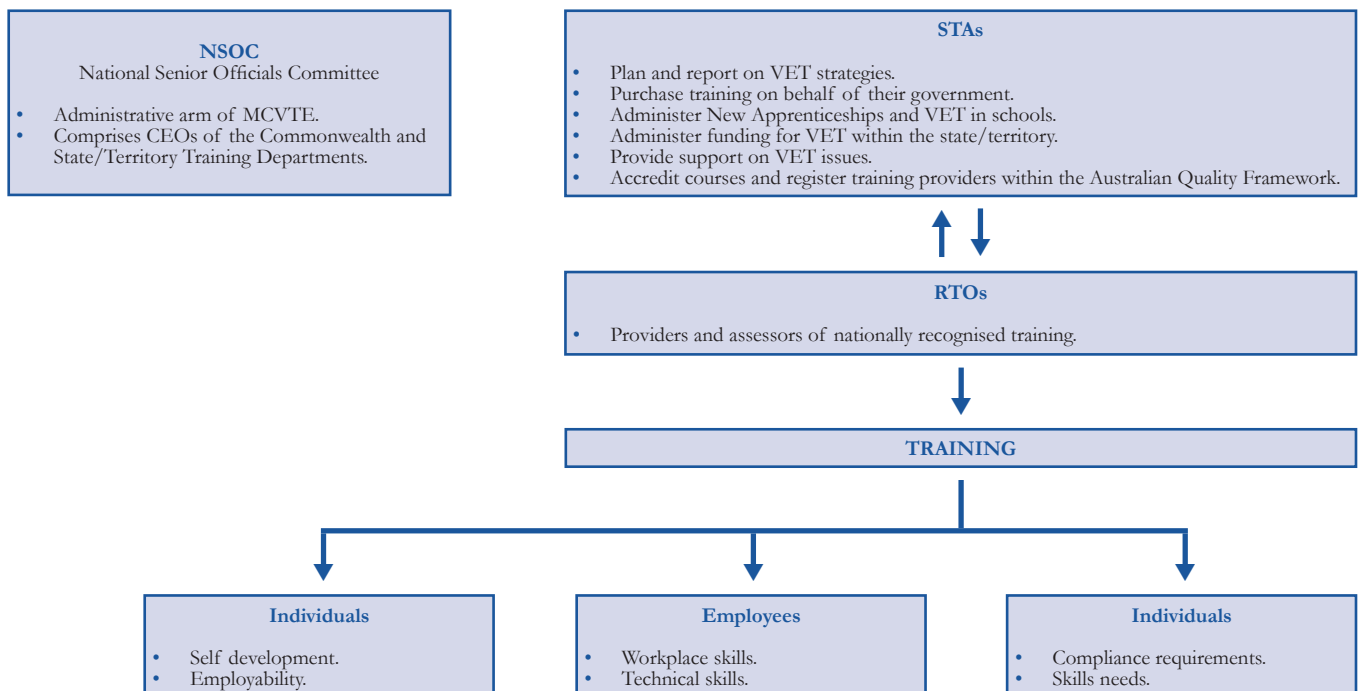
Governance Aspects of RTOs

Good governance models are incorporated into the *Essential Standards for Registered Training Organisations*. RTOs are no different to any other company seeking to carry on its business in the market place and have the same fiduciary and reporting standards.

Recognition of Excellence

Employers seek reassurance about the quality of VET

Figure 8.2
Training System Relationships



outcomes. The establishment of the Excellence Framework as part of the AQTF 2007 will go some way towards providing a mechanism for recognising high performing RTOs as well as providing guidance as to how that standard of excellence can be achieved.

There are also a range of awards that are provided by the Federal and State and Territory Governments as well as industry to encourage and recognise excellence.

These mechanisms are important, but what employers value is a recommendation on excellence provided by their peers.

Institute for Trade Skills Excellence and the Connection with Quality

The Institute for Trade Skills Excellence (ITSE) provides an important vehicle for employers with a view about RTOs based on the experience of other employers and rated against quality criteria.

ITSE was established in 2006 by the Australian Government to be proactive in promoting trade skills excellence and raising the status and value of trades skills training to the wider Australian community, especially in those trade areas experiencing skill shortages.⁷

Importantly, the Institute will identify and reward excellence by providing industry recognition of excellence in trade skills training conducted by RTOs aimed at improving the quality of trade training.

Currently there is little guidance for employers as to which RTOs provide high quality training except through their own experience and word of mouth. Cost implications of decisions to train where a sub-standard service is provided lead to wastage. On the part of RTOs, there is no incentive to achieve higher standards if there is little information in the market comparing them with high performing RTOs.

Employers are used to systems that grade performance within their industry and that can be easily recognised. Confidence to make decisions based on the guidance provided by an Employer Excellence Rating will avoid unnecessary costs and provide a way of making a training decision quickly and easily.

Nothing will promote the trades more effectively than a quality training system. As such, ACCI considers the Employer Excellence Rating of RTOs, combined with User Choice (discussed in Chapter 7) will provide a way for

encouraging excellence.

Third Party Access to Public Infrastructure

Generally there is a need to examine the infrastructure of all education and training sectors and industry to determine an efficient and effective mix, particularly innovative combinations to respond to industry needs.

Some TAFE equipment is sought after by industry, which is good for the environment and efficiency of production, however, the capital cost of such machinery can run into millions of dollars. Industry, however, invests in these machines because they get a return on their investment through increased throughput, efficiency, environmental compliance as well as retention and motivation of their staff by providing them with the latest technology on which to operate.

Often this equipment is only accessible in capital city TAFE centres, which places stresses upon regional students as well as those employers who invested in the latest technology machines and who do not want or value the training of their staff on outmoded TAFE machinery or techniques. The net result can be a higher propensity to train staff in-house rather than through single location TAFE facilities.

In less capital intensive industries, many businesses wish to access public infrastructure for use in education and training. New ways of partnering and sharing resources and greater incentives for private investment need to be considered to respond to these needs.

In addition, there may be some conditions where after-hours third party access to infrastructure is made on a commercial basis, such as the provision of child care.

Funding for VET should be reviewed in terms of the provision of training consistent with changing technology and industry needs. TAFEs should be given greater autonomy and flexibility to respond to these needs.

Currently, a significant portion of training occurs in the workplace through repetition, without necessarily a consistent level of theoretical support. Some RTOs provide training on general theory but not on current technology.

Industry can and has offered to provide opportunities for the placement of teachers to familiarise them with current technology. Together with additional resources RTOs will be better equipped to respond to industry needs.

In addition, the current industry contribution to the VET sector is significant. Employers' direct investment includes apprenticeship wages and on-costs, tools, non-productive and less efficient work time, supervision, mentoring, absence for training time, training fees and also the donation of TAFE resources such as materials, components and equipment.

Teacher Release to Industry

To engender further confidence in the quality of the training system, teachers must have mastery over the content of their courses at current industry levels. Where teachers have spent a considerable amount of time away from the workforce, release to industry programs will be required to achieve currency.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) commissioned a project under the National Skill Shortages Strategy in 2006 to develop a possible approach for an industry exchange program targeting teachers in the Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) sector and Careers Advisers in schools.

The project was primarily concerned with the traditional trade occupations nominated by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) for priority attention. These include bricklayers; carpenters and joiners; electricians; motor mechanics; plumbers; and refrigeration and air-conditioning mechanics.

Recent research by ACCI as part of the National Skill Shortage Strategy shows that industry and employers appear to have two primary concerns in relation to the skills and knowledge of careers advisers and VET teachers.

More details can be found in the Appendix. As a result of the research, ACCI proposes a model for teacher release to industry as follows:

1. A specific industry, through its industry association or licensing body, determines in-principle that there is a need for a teacher-industry exchange program.
2. The industry scopes the parameters of the program including the industry areas proposed for attention and States proposed for the program's operation, and nominates the annual contribution it will make to the program, including the form or 'kind' of that contribution.
3. Government (perhaps involving a co-contribution from

the Australian and State governments) agrees to match the industry contribution.

4. The industry develops a framework for the program which supports:
 - a. a teacher placement in industry for a negotiated period of time, with the specific placement assigned and approved by industry; or
 - b. an industry representative spending a negotiated period of time in a Registered Training Organisation (RTO).
5. The industry nominates the specific areas of learning they will support, the number of positions available and the criteria for selection, and identifies employers where teacher placements can take place.
6. The joint funding and program guidelines are provided to the industry/employer organisation contracted to manage the program.
7. Teachers submit applications for the program, which are assessed by agreed industry representatives and the organisation managing the contract. Applications are only considered if the teacher's application is supported by their RTO.
8. Where an applicant is successful, funding will be provided to the employer where the applicant is placed and to the applicant's RTO.

ACCI urges the Federal and State and Territory Governments to consider this model.

2. Training Packages

At the end of 2005, there were a total of 75 endorsed Training Packages.⁸ Training Packages are comprised of competencies that are determined by industry as being necessary to undertaking certain tasks in the workplace. It is important to note that the current Training Package arrangements are based on the concept of an occupation. Qualifications gained via Training Packages equip individuals to work in occupations. Also, there is no curriculum contained in a Training Package.

Another important plank underpinning employer involvement in VET is the utilisation of competencies that are part of the formal training system. The reason behind this is that competencies are developed by industry

to reflect workplace realities and build on the underpinning knowledge and skills of individuals. Qualifications based on competencies are a formal way of grouping the competencies along relevant industry pathways.

An industry based approach to the development of competencies explains how the training system has evolved. More recently there has been interest in cross industry competencies and the development of skills sets within qualifications. Innovative approaches to skilling structures will be required in order to leverage the latent potential of the workforce as the Australian economy changes yet again.

There is an argument to review the current grouping of competencies around industry pathways based on an occupation. The relevance of the occupation construct is not ubiquitous across all industries; especially where scientific and technological advancements combine previously unrelated fields and learning domains. Innovative approaches to the concept of a unit of competency are required in order to remain relevant to sunrise and emerging industries. Flexibility around packaging rules within Training Packages will also be of assistance.

Originally, the focus of training was on youth to enable them to enter into the workforce by learning skills that industry wants. However, where pathways for mature aged students, Indigenous, people with a disability, people returning to the workforce, people contracting their labour, and people choosing lifestyle options to fashion their workforce participation now typify patterns of employment, it will be crucial to capture the emerging needs of these groups and to integrate them as soon as possible into the training system.

Under the current NTF arrangements States and Territories are able to develop accredited courses for VET delivery outside of National Training Package qualifications. The original intention was for this to enable the States and Territories to fill any gaps in the qualification structure of training packages. The courses are often developed with minimal industry consultation and are not subject to the rigorous validation required for training package qualifications.

The proliferation of accredited courses has led to considerable duplication in the NTF as many are closely aligned to training package qualifications and many States and Territories develop programs with similar outcomes, especially in the vocational access field.

While a blanket statement cannot be made about the quality of all accredited courses, as a point of principle, ACCI prefers courses of study developed using Training Packages, where industry has been involved in the development of competencies.

3. Australia's Qualifications

More than a decade ago, one of the drivers in establishing the AQF was reform to Australia's vocational education and training system. This was in response to the increasing pressures of globalisation on Australia's skill base.

Given the reforms now underway through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and other international developments, it is timely to take a fresh look at Australia's qualification system.

Skill Sets

Of particular interest in the COAG reforms is the development of skill sets. Skill sets are able to accommodate the requirements for specific skills required for legislative requirements and in some cases can also provide a vehicle for recognising the skills gained through vendor training. They provide a vehicle for recognising skills that are common across industries.

Essentially skill sets provide different qualification pathways in that they combine general and specific units of competence but not at a full qualification. Given that skill sets can be developed and supported by the National Quality Council (NQC), they are a real response to the rapidly developing skill needs of business and the community and provide a timeframe that is relevant for businesses and individuals. They provide a niche approach that is targeted towards a real problem by thinking outside the square.

Being contemporary and responsive are two features along with quality that can provide a qualifications solution-based approach to some of Australia's emerging skill needs.

Additionally, the standards of some products have changed and many products produced today are technologically enhanced, easier to use, more flexible in application and more efficient. A qualified tradesperson is more likely to be able to do minor trades works outside his/her area of expertise when using contemporary products and skill sets will provide a way of ensuring the work being done meets high standards.

Skill sets that are able to be responsive to using modern products while maintaining quality are of benefit to all. Apart from the benefits to be gained through specialisation and economies of scale, a qualification based on skill sets is of benefit to the individual as well and can make them attractive to employers.

Skill sets have a particular application in meeting the licensing and legislative requirements attached to particular job functions. Grouping units of competency that meet the licensing and legislative requirements for particular occupations will enable rapid acquisition of skills and value-add to existing qualifications.

Skill sets should provide pathways to a full qualification or be used as professional development of holders of an existing qualification.

Qualifications and Lifelong Learning

The context for examining qualifications is lifelong learning. Lifelong learning, as the expression implies, is a philosophy about learning that takes place over an individual's lifespan from 'cradle to grave'.

A generation ago, individuals attended school, TAFE and university, obtained skills and then expected to have a life of work where little if any additional learning would be required. This concept has now been completely turned on its head.

Lifelong learning is attitudinal – that one can and should be open to new ideas, decisions, skills or behaviours. It sees citizens provided with learning opportunities at all ages and in numerous contexts - at work, at home and through leisure activities, not just through formal channels such as school and higher education.

The acceptance of lifelong learning reflects a combination of a more comprehensive understanding of learning and learning styles and the acknowledgement that technology and changing patterns of work mean that an individual will continue to acquire new skills on a continuing basis. It covers the whole range of learning including formal and informal learning and workplace learning. It also includes the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that people acquire in their day-to-day experiences.

Qualifications that provide a view of a person's skills and achievements at a particular point in time need to take account of this continuous learning environment. Not all skills required for work demand a full qualification.

Qualification pathways that indicate a progression in an industry based on qualifications also need to better reflect the realities of lifelong learning.

While skill sets provide an important pathway in themselves, progression to a full qualification should still be available and easy to access for those who choose to build on the skills obtained via skill sets.

Qualifications as a Proxy for Skills

While qualifications have intrinsic and extrinsic value, from an employer perspective, qualifications and skill sets can act as a signal of greater potential for further learning and skills acquisition, as a signal of immediate competence and to assist in recruitment decisions. It is important that employers have confidence in the qualification system and that the relationship between qualifications be transparent.

The idea of qualifications as a proxy for skills is acceptable in a broad context and as a generalisation in approaches to modelling. However, caution is needed lest the skills acquired, but not reflected in qualifications, are ignored.

These skills can provide the 'value add' an employer is looking for once an initial qualification is obtained. These are separate from skill sets and consist of the skills acquired through workplace learning and experience and other aspects of non-accredited and informal learning.

The question raised via the COAG reforms is: Can increased productivity and participation be obtained if more individuals obtain higher-level VET qualifications at the Diploma and Advanced Diploma levels?

Employers still regard the qualification necessary for basic entry into industry as a qualified tradesperson as Certificate III. Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas are relevant to some industries where technician level work applies.

So in some cases the answer to the question is 'yes'. However, a person does not become immediately productive for an employer, even if they have a qualification. This may require a further one to two years in the workplace to learn the skills and requirements of a specific enterprise.

Recognition of the importance of this type of learning needs to be considered and can be critical to a firm's potential to retain its staff. The role of such learning in workforce planning is essential to skills development. Regarding qualifications as a proxy for skills would find no place for this type of learning and the important linkages

to workforce planning and development.

Restricting the debate to traditional definitions of qualifications is limiting and the broader learning environment must be considered to understand the relational aspects of skills and qualifications.

Further, students who are encouraged to undertake a Diploma or Advanced Diploma may have unrealistic expectations of the level they should be employed at when entering the industry. Students need a balance between on-the-job experience and formal learning, but sometimes too little emphasis is put on practical experience at the Diploma and Advanced Diploma levels.

Employers often prefer skills gained through industry experience as opposed to those gained from completing a course. A higher level of knowledge and underpinning skills to obtain qualifications does not always mean a higher level of qualification is necessary to do a certain job and the two should not be confused.

Qualification levels relative to the overall level of technology in society must be considered before the jump is made to focus exclusively on higher-level qualifications. There is no point in having more highly-qualified members of the workforce, if the Diploma and Advanced Diploma do not add increased value and ignore the other skills a person will acquire in the workplace, including vendor qualifications.

Direct industry experience is often considered more valuable than qualifications, especially in businesses such as information technology and multimedia as well as some of the trades.

Qualifications have, however, become important in relation to increased regulatory requirements experienced by firms in recent years, but again this does not necessarily mean an individual would be better off acquiring these skills via a Diploma or Advanced Diploma. How this is credentialed needs to be carefully considered. Credentials should reflect competency, not whether a course has been completed or not. That is, the interpretation of competencies, customisation to the workplace, performance standards and evidence guides can provide sufficient flexibility to adapt to modern needs, notwithstanding that in some instances there is a genuine need in industry for higher-level qualifications.

Qualification Descriptors

How qualifications are described and put together is

therefore important in obtaining the best results for providing the value construct to connect employers, students and the broader community. Robust qualification descriptors are essential in ensuring the reforms outlined above are possible.

There has been much debate about the AQF and whether or not it is still relevant to today's society. The AQF provides the structures to describe qualifications and the descriptors used must be clear, concise, easy to understand and use, and provide meaningful distinction between levels. Any measure to make qualifications easier to understand and use is a good thing for the community.

Descriptors that are able to provide guidance on partial qualifications and informal as well as formal learning are therefore a consideration in meeting these objectives. Better information for learners and flexibility to transfer the credit as a result of learning will ensure an easier pathway between the sectors and foster lifelong learning.

From an employer perspective, the AQF provides the framework for a quality approach to qualifications. Being responsive to international trends, COAG reforms and emerging patterns of industry skill needs are achievable if there is rigour in the framework.

Employers support measures that will improve the descriptors to enhance lifelong learning and build capacity for Australian qualifications to meet modern needs.

Industry Advisory Arrangements

Obviously there needs to be a structure for the development, promotion and continuous improvement of Training Packages and support materials.

ACCI does not consider the current arrangements whereby Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) are the critical component in industry advisory arrangements, is working efficiently.

Instead, the structure should be supported by a tendering process of National Industry Training Package functions with appropriate industry input.

In November 2006 the Australian Government announced significant changes to Industry Skills Councils. This followed the need for *demonstrable reform*⁹ around:

- significantly improving governance of the advisory structures, by enhancing the leadership role of industry;

- achieving more active engagement with industry organisations and employers;
- ensuring advisory structures focus their efforts on the development of Training Packages;
- setting clear expectations of the Councils' activities over the next 15 months; and
- increasing the transparency of performance management and review.

Many of these reforms will go a long way to improving the performance of ISCs, however, ACCI does not believe these changes go far enough. Problems exist around consultation processes in relation to Training Packages. The processes involved are cumbersome and overly bureaucratic with industry the last port of call for input instead of the first. More often than not, the Training Packages are developed by consultants with little industry experience but who have expertise in the design and technical aspects of the construction of Training Packages.

ACCI considers that ISCs should be abolished and replaced by alternative arrangements so that better consultative mechanisms can be put in place.

This should be a transitional change from existing arrangements and begin with a pilot starting from 1 January 2008 and then progressively rolled out.

This is based on the critical nature of Training Packages in delivering a truly industry-led national training system and the need for a suitable industry-led mechanism to achieve this. The functions of any body formed to develop and improve quality, industry endorsed training products and services should be restricted exclusively to Training Package related functions. The body should be performance based, restricted to the following areas:

- development, review and improvement of Training Package and support materials;
- provision of advice to RTOs on products and services; and
- the extent of employer support for their activities.

Funding should only be provided for two years against these key performance indicators and an independent assessment should be provided during that period. If the organisation does not meet the criteria then the function

should be tendered.

Success of these bodies should be measured against the above three key performance indicators at an 18 month period by an independent evaluation team appointed by the Department of Education, Science and Training. There is a need to examine existing Training Package approval and review processes to streamline them and allow greater responsiveness to industry need.

It is imperative that any national structure has the capacity to engage with industry and governments, in a focused way, and that public funds are used effectively. It is also critical that the bodies formed do not offer industry advice to a range of government agencies or be treated by them as the voice of industry. Business and industry associations are the direct voice of industry, not artificially created mechanisms.

Industry engagement is not just about industry leadership of the Training Package development process. The matter of increasing the pool of 'industry champions' should be undertaken jointly by ACCI, member organisations and the Department of Education, Science and Training.

The path to more effective industry advisory arrangements in the Vocational Education and Training sector need not be a rocky one. What is required is a simple, streamlined and seamless system with the capacity for industry to contribute in a way which ensures that national Training Products of are relevant, timely and industry-driven.

The Role of Business and Industry Associations and the Demand for VET

Much has been written recently about the levels of demand for VET.

It is extremely difficult to predict the levels of demand for any good or service although trends can be identified and sophisticated analysis can add to this pool of knowledge. Demand for skills is closely linked to the economic cycle and exogenous economic impacts can and do change the level of demand.

Industry and business organisations work closely with their members to anticipate future skills needs. While official data collections are extremely useful in understanding the training market, they are always published in retrospect. Industry or business organisations cannot provide relevant assistance to enterprises without anticipating future directions. For small businesses in particular, anticipating

future skills needs is particularly important in building business capacity. For example, a business or industry organisation might assist an employer in determining how many apprentices, if any, the business might employ in the forthcoming year and help them to navigate the training system to achieve the desired result.

Business and industry associations do not work with their members in silos. They work on all aspects of industry including industrial relations, small business matters, the environment, taxation issues, exporting, and networking.

In terms of training, a holistic approach is taken. A school student matched with an employer for work experience provides a potential pathway into industry. An apprenticeship may be the next progression, followed by employment in the industry and self employment likely thereafter. After some time, the individual may then become an employer of apprentices themselves.

The support role played by business and industry organisations is not well understood outside those communities. It is these organisations that are likely to have their finger on the skills pulse. Not only does the individual enterprise receive support, but collectively trends across enterprises can be identified, barriers to participation brought to the attention of the relevant authorities and expertise accessed that would not be otherwise available.

Similarly, this aspect of industry is not widely understood across all training providers. It is essential that State/Territory governments consult with business and industry organisations to obtain the overall perspective of the enterprises that make up business and industry association membership, especially when analysing future anticipated demand and determining skills plans for training.

Training Structures to Obtain Industry Skills

Australian Apprenticeships

Australian Apprenticeships, also known as apprenticeships and traineeships in some States and Territories, provide a combined pathway of employment and training to obtain skills that are required by industry. Formerly, Australian Apprenticeships were known as New Apprenticeships.

Although mostly used as a pathway by young people, Australian Apprenticeships are available to anyone of working age and do not require any entry qualifications

Features of an apprenticeship include:

- skills desired by industry are obtained by using Training Packages;
- paid work and structured training that can be on-the-job, off-the-job or a combination of both;
- they are ‘competency based’ which means training can be completed faster if the required skills level is reached;
- recognition of existing skills and prior experience and course credit granted, potentially reducing formal training time;
- available full-time or part-time, also available part-time in many schools;
- lead to nationally recognised qualifications and skills, which provide the basis for further education and training; and
- a pathway from school to work.¹⁰

As at 30 June 2006 there were 400,200 apprentices and trainees of whom 157,700 were *traditional apprentices*.¹¹ Traditional apprenticeships are defined as those contracts within the *trades and related workers* occupation group which are at AQF level III qualification or above, with more than two years expected duration for full-time and more than eight years expected duration for part-time or school-based contracts. Using this definition, from 1996, apprenticeships and traineeships are grouped into traditional apprenticeships and other apprenticeships and traineeships.¹²

In 1996, there were a total of 154,000 apprentices in training, so the figures demonstrate the growing popularity of this system.

Some critics have raised issues in the past around whether definition issues and counting methods have disguised a downward trend in traditional apprenticeships and by implication an erosion of Australia’s skill base.

This most recently available data above indicates traditional apprenticeships are up 9% from one year previously. In recent years, the Australian Government has undertaken extensive promotional activities as part of the National Skill Shortages Strategy (NSSS), which identified a poor image of industry as a barrier to entering into an apprenticeship. The NSSS promotional campaigns and general higher level of awareness in the community about skill shortages can explain these results.

On the employment side of an apprenticeship, the employment arrangement is subject to a variety of industrial relations arrangements depending on the industry where the apprenticeship takes place. These are discussed in Chapter 9 - VET and industrial relations issues.

On the training side of the arrangement, the apprentice, the RTO and the employer prepare a training plan which covers areas such as the title and level of the qualification to be studied, the units of competence to attain the qualification, the learning resources that will be provided to the apprentice or trainee, any additional support that the apprentice/trainee may require if there are identified barriers to learning, the dates on which the RTO plans to monitor and/or assess the apprentice's/trainee's progress, and the arrangements the RTO will use to report back to the employer and apprentice/trainee on progress with the training. Training plans are attached to Training Contracts.

The apprenticeship structure is supported by Australian Apprenticeship Centres, which provide advice and support to employers and individuals wishing to enter an apprenticeship.

ACCI is a strong supporter of the apprenticeship system as providing a means for providing for current and future skills needs, but also as the preferred method of entry into industry.

Group Training Arrangements

ACCI supports group training as an integral component of entry level employment or skills development options for employers. Group Training Organisations are a key component in the overall policy platform in relation to Australian Apprenticeships. Since the introduction of group training arrangements in the 1970s, Group Training Organisations have played an integral role in implementing entry level training policy in Australia. As the apprenticeship and traineeship system has grown to over 400,000 and the occupations participating in the system have diversified, Group Training Organisations have also grown in size, quantity and diversity of service capabilities.

Group training arrangements enable employers to bring an Australian Apprentice into their business on an 'as needs' basis. The Australian Apprentice is employed by the Group Training Organisation and is placed with a 'host employer'. As the employer, the Group Training Organisation takes on the responsibility of paying, indenturing, supporting their employee and ensuring the New Apprentice receives

the appropriate training (both on and off the job). The 'host employer' is responsible for paying the Group Training Organisation wages and monitoring the Australian Apprentice's on-the-job training.

Group Training Organisations provide flexibility in a constantly changing and often uncertain labour market. As has been widely acknowledged, the Australian workforce is shifting from full-time working arrangements to casual, contract and part-time arrangements. Consequently, some employers are reluctant to commit to the three or four year timeframe requirement for apprentices and the 12 month timeframe requirement for trainees. Group training provides an alternative for these employers.

This diversity and flexibility of group training arrangements emphasises the need for flexible arrangements by State and Territory and Federal Governments and Group Training Organisations must be responsive to employer needs rather than often competing interests of governments and other intermediaries. In order for growth in the group training system to continue, Group Training Organisations must continue to operate as competitive business entities, which can develop sustainable markets and provide these necessary services to employers.

Trade Diploma

The apprenticeship model has served Australia well and should continue to be supported. It continues to be the entry level requirement for most trade occupations. There is a need in some industries for higher level qualifications in addition to trade qualifications. There is also a need for a variety of pathways. A trade diploma arrangement is not suitable as an entry point but could be used as a pathway between a certificate course and a degree. It is best suited to existing workers and only where relevant industry and workplace relations arrangements are in place.

This needs to be examined in the overall context of the place of higher level qualifications if the training system is to become more responsive to the needs of industry, but further investigation is needed as to which industries would best benefit from such an arrangement and which Training Packages allow the flexibility to deliver higher level technical skills.

Any model developed must include relevant industry experience and workplace learning to ensure relevant technical skills meet current industry needs. Best efforts must be made to ensure that individuals do not learn via a fully institutional pathway in any model put forward.

Testing for trade competence for the purposes of licensing should only follow nationally endorsed methods aligned to Training Package competencies.

When developing the model, the term 'diploma' should only be used where it is fully consistent with AQF guidelines.

The following principles should be used:

The factors industry will be considering when investigating this proposed higher level qualifications option include:

- the extent of industry consultation and involvement in developing the option;
- its relevance to each individual industry and the skills profile for running individual businesses within that industry;
- the amount of training that takes place in the workplace and not through fully institutional pathways;
- the extent to which current Training Packages enable higher level qualifications to be pursued;
- the extent to which the diploma meets with AQF requirements;
- the extent to which the additional skills will add value to industry;
- whether any proposed changes will mean that individuals will be able to progress along a previously unidentified career path and therefore be more likely to stay in industry; and
- whether the introduction of the higher level qualifications will provide better articulation between education and training sectors and open up opportunities for further study.

Other issues such as the wage level of graduates and employer incentives to train workers at the higher level will also need to be discussed in collaboration with other stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

Australia is recognised as a world leader in VET, which results from employer engagement and leadership in working with governments and RTOs. The closer the match between the realities of the workplace and current

industry standards, the greater will be the efficacy of training in meeting industry skills needs.

The apprenticeship model has served Australia well and should continue to be supported. Barriers to the Trade Skills Diploma being considered as an alternative pathway to apprenticeships need to be addressed.

In the context of Australia's high performance in VET, employers consider the quality of training to be a matter of continuous improvement and as such support mechanisms that support that quality.

In particular, consistency in the quality of assessment undertaken by RTOs remains a vexed question for employers. Confidence in the system can be engendered by a variety of means, including Employer Excellence Rating awarded by the Institute for Trade Skills Excellence.

ACCI PROPOSALS

ACCI proposes that:

- Industry Skills Councils be replaced by a competitive tendering process to allow for a more efficient provision of advice on the preparation of Training Packages. This should begin with a pilot program on 1 January 2008, and then move rapidly to full implementation;
- continuing attention needs to be paid in ensuring Training Packages adequately provide for competencies around industry pathways;
- Training Packages need to have the utmost flexibility to ensure that they are not just focussed on youth, but also mature aged workers, people re-entering the workforce, independent contractors, people with disabilities, and Indigenous Australians;
- VET Pathways should concentrate on skills being developed in workplaces;
- the National Quality Council should ensure that it is responsive to industry needs;
- teachers need to consistently undertake refresher courses to keep them up to industry standards via release to industry programs;
- Federal and State and Territory Governments should consider the model for teacher release to industry proposed in this paper;

- ITSE should move towards the implementation of a graded Employer Excellence Rating and make the ratings publicly available;
- the Federal Government should conduct a study to identify and address barriers to a Trade Skills Diploma;
- further consideration should be given to developing a model for higher level qualifications and their suitability for existing workers. Work to identify which industries would benefit from such arrangements and which Training Packages currently provide for these needs are the first steps in this process of developing a suitable model; and
- State and Territory governments should ensure that systems are in place to ensure third party access to infrastructure.

¹ <http://www.training.com.au/portal/site/public/menuitem.3e365e26c4085888a392e51017a62dbc/>.

² <http://www.training.com.au/portal/site/public/menuitem.8859775ffeb7888a392e51017a62dbc/>.

³ <http://www.training.com.au/portal/site/public/menuitem.ecff61cdd6de5b80f9fa5a1017a62dbc/>.

⁴ <http://www.aqf.edu.au/aboutaqf.htm#whatis>.

⁵ <http://www.atpl.net.au/nqc/>.

⁶ <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1721.html>.

⁷ http://www.dest.gov.au/portfolio_department/dest_information/publications_resources/resources/budget_information/budget_2005_2006/fact_sheets/itse.htm.

⁸ DEST, Op Cit, p10.

⁹ <http://www.dest.gov.au/ministers/media/hardgrave/2006/11/h002101106.asp>.

¹⁰ http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/about/default.asp#*.

¹¹ <http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/aats/quarter/jun2006/jun06sum.doc>.

¹² <http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/aats/trends/tradapp.pdf>.

APPENDIX

In recent years the Commonwealth Government has paid increasing attention to careers counselling services in schools. In 2004 the Australian Government announced 54 places would be available in a scholarship program for careers advisers in schools to undertake study or an industry placement in 2005.

Under the program, representatives from DEST, the Curriculum Corporation and members of industry organisations assess applications and priority is awarded to applicants who aim to achieve:

- enhanced career education outcomes for students at the school level;
- an enhanced approach at the school level to career education;
- enhanced career education beyond their own school; or
- to benefit a prospective host workplace (for Industry Placement Scholarships only).

In 2005, the Government committed to fund the scholarship program for another four years as part of the CAA initiative. The commitment included funding 27 Study Scholarships and 27 Industry Placement Scholarships for teachers employed in any Australian school or college who are working or have worked in the previous 24 months as a Careers Teacher/Adviser. The first group of Career Advisers graduated from the program in 2005.

State Programs

There are a range of diverse programs across States which provide teachers with opportunities to be involved with industry. The major programs are briefly described below.

Deferred Salary Scheme for Teachers in Schools and TAFE and Related Employees, Institute Managers and Chief Education Officers (NSW)

This program is run by the Department of Education and Training in NSW and allows participants to take a year away from the Department for professional development and renewal.

A large number of staff can be approved under the scheme each year:

- 2,000 eligible staff in State schools;
- 4% of eligible staff in a TAFE Institute or educational service division; and
- 4% of eligible staff in State Office Directorates and District Offices.

It is a five year program whereby participants defer a percentage of their annual salary for the first four years and have it paid in the fifth year when they are engaged in professional development.

Teacher Industry Placement Trials (Queensland)

This program entails the placement of a select group of teachers in an ICT business or research facility for up to four weeks. The program is funded by the Queensland Government and is directed at State school teachers.

The program aims to increase participants' technical knowledge and to develop their management and leadership skills.

The Premier's Industry Award for Teachers of Science and Mathematics (South Australia)

This program is conducted in conjunction with Business South Australia and provides an opportunity for 18 science and mathematics school teachers to spend ten days working in an industry or business.

The aim of the program is to provide teachers with an up-to-date understanding of the relevance of science and mathematics to industry.

Following the placement, participants are entitled to another five days out of the classroom to develop resources based on the placement and to attend presentation ceremonies. Participants can organise their own placement or be assigned a placement by the program organisers. If a teacher participates in the program their school is provided with 15 days of teacher relief.

TAFE Return to Industry Program (Tasmania)

In its 2004-2005 Annual Report, TAFE Tasmania describes an 'innovative' return to industry program for TAFE teachers. The Annual Report notes that 37 teachers participated and that the program provided teachers with an opportunity to understand the business environment and meet the vocational requirements of Training Packages

and the Australian Quality Training Framework.

eLearning Industry-School Partnership Program Teacher-Industry Exchange (ELISPP) (Victoria)

This program aims to develop mutually beneficial relationships between Victorian eLearning Companies and Victorian Schools. The program results in a placement of a teacher in an eLearning company or a placement of a representative of an eLearning company in a school.

The program is supported by the Victorian State Government through the provision of \$250 per person, per day of exchange, to the school or company. To ensure funding is received the exchange program needs to be approved.

TAFE Industry Skills Scheme – Victorian TAFE Development Centre

This program is managed by the Victorian TAFE Development Centre on behalf of the Victorian Government and has been allocated two million dollars over three years.

The aim of the program is to support arrangements between TAFE Institutes, enterprises and industry bodies that provide opportunities for TAFE staff to increase their industry knowledge. Each TAFE Institute is awarded an annual grant of \$30,000 as base level funding. The program is open to all staff and a detailed program proposal, developed by the participant and the partner organisation, must be submitted. Additionally, the proposal must have the written endorsement of the CEO or relevant Director.

The program is very flexible in its scope as projects should target *learning needs in new, specialised and emerging skill areas or areas with identified shortages of current industry skill*. Participants are able to use the funding for a range of purposes including tuition, travel and accommodation, equipment and resources and salary and project management costs.

Teacher in Industry Placement Scheme (Western Australia)

This program is designed for VET in School teachers to increase their knowledge of industry. The steps involved include:

- individual teachers initiating involvement in the program;
- the individual teacher and line manager working together

to identify skill gaps;

- the teacher identifying an industry placement and making arrangements; and
- the teacher keeping a daily record book/diary during the program and providing a program evaluation.

Participants can choose between a one day placement at different work locations and a block placement at one location. Each participant is entitled to five days teaching relief and individual schools can choose to supplement this. Teachers can be approved for a placement each year, conditional on the placement differing from previous years.

Additional Programs

In addition to the current programs outlined above, other schemes have been in place in States at various times over the last decade. The most comprehensive program was the Teacher Release to Industry Program (TRIP) in Victoria. The program was run between 1991 and 2003 by VECCI on behalf of the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DE&T).

TRIP was an intensive professional development program where school teachers were placed in industry on a full-time basis for 40 weeks to forge stronger links between education and industry and to develop a shared understanding between the two sectors. During the 40 week period the teacher remained a full-time employee of DE&T with full pay and normal salary benefits. Teachers who participated in the program were expected to return to their school after their industry placement and transfer the knowledge learned to their school community.

The TRIP program has been widely acknowledged as a successful model of a large-scale comprehensive professional development program.

Analysis of Current Programs

VET Teachers

Current programs within the States are extremely varied in both their scale and focus, with some directed to school teachers and others to VET in Schools teachers or TAFE teachers. In addition to these state-wide formal programs, the majority of TAFE Institutes have internal programs for teaching staff. There is little evidence of schools undertaking dedicated internal programs for either their

VET in Schools teachers or school teachers.

When considered in the context of the personal professional development needs of individual teachers and the needs of their employing organisation, the State programs have significant strengths. They provide important opportunities for those teachers who make a commitment to their own development to work with their organisation and industry/ employer partners to upgrade or learn new skills.

The dominant focus on personal development and organisational needs tends to result in programs designed in such a way that the needs of industry are a secondary consideration. While some projects have an ‘external’ industry focus with teaching staff updating their industry knowledge (e.g. some of the projects under the Victorian TAFE Development Centre’s *TAFE Industry Skill Scheme*), the majority are concerned with individual personal development (e.g. study tours, formal training) or the needs of the organisation (e.g. leadership training, project management training).

This emphasis on personal development and developing skills to assist organisational capability is extremely important, but does not address the primary concerns of industry that training provided in the VET system does not prepare students for the realities of workplace practices, particularly in the traditional trades.

Career Advisers

The programs run at a State level do not have particular relevance to Career Advisers as they are primarily focused on teacher development.

The Australian Government’s CAA initiative is important and relevant because of the industry placement component and the emphasis on enhancing career education outcomes for students and schools.

The limitation of the program for the purposes of this project is that there are only 27 scholarships across the country each year, and the focus is quite broad so will not necessarily contribute to resolving the primary concern of industry and employers around the negative perception of trade occupations.

Proposed Industry Exchange Models for the Traditional Trades

Distinct models are proposed to ensure the differing circumstances of both VET teachers and Careers Advisers

are addressed.

VET Teachers model

A range of current programs are directed to the professional development needs of teachers. As a by-product of some of these programs the needs of industry and employers are addressed, but there is no program in place that takes the needs of industry as the starting point for the program’s design.

The proposed model for a VET Teachers Industry Exchange needs to ensure greater mutuality of benefit, with industry need, and in particular the preparation of learners for the realities of workplace practices, providing the main driver of the program’s content.

For example, if a teacher participates in one of the current programs, the activity undertaken would generally be selected based on the needs of the individual or their organisation. The activities are varied and might include:

- attending structured training in areas such as leadership or project management;
- an industry placement in an area of emerging technology or an area of interest to the teacher; or
- returning to industry to refresh their skills and knowledge in their primary teaching area.

The first two examples provide professional development for the individual. These could result in an increased understanding and linkages with industry, but this is incidental to the primary purpose. It is only the final example which is directly connected to meeting the needs of industry because the teacher is refreshing their knowledge in their primary teaching area. This refreshment can then be used in their teaching which should, in turn, result in students being prepared for the realities of workplace practices.

The need for flexibility in both the design and funding of the program has been emphasised by industry. Some industries believe a six month placement would be appropriate. Another feels that two weeks every year is required.

There is also concern about the level of interest by teachers in such a program. There is a sense that the program could take some time to develop and become embedded in the national system. Nonetheless, there is strong support for a program such as described below and industry bodies are interested in assisting in the development, and potentially

the management, of such a program.

Principles and Guidelines

Against this background, it is suggested that the following principles and guidelines could form the foundation of an industry driven VET Teacher Industry Exchange model:

1. Industry/employer needs are the driving force and determine the scope of engagement; depending on the particular industry's perspective on the relevance of trade training, a teacher/industry exchange program will be attractive to some, but not all, industries;
2. Program design, including length and number of participants, is determined by industry/employers;
 - the nature of the exchange program will need to be flexible enough to cater for the differing operations of individual industries/employers;
3. The program is funded co-operatively between industry and government;
 - a funding partnership recognises the mutual benefits (to industry and the individual teacher) derived from the program;
 - the funding could be used for three streams of activity: to cover the cost of managing and administering the program, to provide relief funding to backfill the teacher vacancy and to provide financial support to the employer placing the teacher; and
4. The program management is contracted to an industry/ employer organisation.
2. The industry scopes the parameters of the program including the industry areas proposed for attention and States proposed for the program's operation, and nominates the annual contribution it will make to the program, including the form or 'kind' of that contribution.
3. Government (perhaps involving a co-contribution from the Australian and state governments) agrees to match the industry contribution.
4. The industry develops a framework for the program which supports:
 - a teacher placement in industry for a negotiated period of time, with the specific placement assigned and approved by industry; or
 - an industry representative spending a negotiated period of time in a Registered Training Organisation (RTO).
5. The industry nominates the specific areas of learning they will support, the number of positions available and the criteria for selection, and identifies employers where teacher placements can take place.
6. The joint funding and program guidelines are provided to the industry/employer organisation contracted to manage the program.
7. Teachers submit applications for the program which are assessed by agreed industry representatives and the organisation managing the contract. Applications are only considered if the teacher's application is supported by their RTO.
8. Where an applicant is successful, funding will be provided to the employer where the applicant is placed and to the applicant's RTO.

The principles and guidelines have been designed to provide flexibility and to allow adaptation by industry, employers and training providers. The principles and guidelines would therefore result in a range of programs tailored to the specific needs of each of the priority industry areas in the traditional trades.¹³

Indicative Program

An indicative program consistent with the principles could operate as follows:

1. A specific industry, through its industry association or licensing body, determines in-principle that there is a need for a teacher industry exchange program.

A variation of this model could involve the industry identifying a particular RTO and focusing their program around the RTO.

Career Advisers Models

In contrast to the situation for VET teachers, a national program exists which focuses on industry engagement for careers advisers. This program is broad-based and does not have a specific focus on the traditional trade areas.

During the first round of consultations for this project, Group Training Association Victoria (GTA Vic) provided information about a Teacher Industry Experience Program concept under development by the Association. GTA Vic proposes a program where classroom teachers, Careers Counsellors and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning and VET Co-ordinators are placed in a Group Training Organisation (GTO) to increase their industry knowledge and experience.

One of the major barriers to industry exchange for school staff is the lack of connection between schools and industry. GTA Vic suggests that the GTO network is an unutilised resource that is well-placed to overcome this barrier.

Both industry associations and Group Training Organisations have a network of host employers that is broad and varied. Access to this network would enable participants to visit workplaces to increase their understanding of traditional trades and the career opportunities within the trades areas. Additionally, it could inform the teacher's understanding of the processes and policies associated with apprentices. This would position teachers to better assist students when they return to school after the placement. As with the VET teacher model, the concept would need to be adapted to the needs of each industry.

A second model, suggested by the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce (VACC), involves a trade-qualified adviser visiting schools and presenting industry-specific information to school students. As pointed out by the VACC, a trade-qualified adviser would be able to answer specific questions from students and provide a genuine insight into the operation of their industry. This model would allow Careers Advisers to focus on providing time and space for an industry expert and guide students towards such people for specific industry advice. The VACC has previously trialled such a model and experienced significant success.

A final option would involve a similar approach to that proposed for VET teachers whereby Careers Advisers are directly placed in workplaces to gain an understanding of a particular industry.

In considering the different approaches, it is important to keep in mind that the main concern about Careers Advisers relates to perceptions of trades and their lack of understanding of pathways and the apprenticeship process. As such, a model that provides Careers Advisers with alternative avenues for assisting students or a broad perspective of industry, pathways and the apprenticeship

process could be more appropriate.

¹⁵ This model would not necessarily work across all industries, particularly if there is no industry body through which industry opinion can be expressed. However it must be remembered that the model has been designed specifically to address industry concern about the perception of traditional trades and teacher knowledge of the workplace. Therefore, it is assumed that if there is sufficient concern within a specific industry there will be an organisation, such as an industry association or licensing body that will be in a position to develop and auspice a model to meet the needs of their industry.

