

**LIFELONG LEARNING:  
PROCEEDINGS OF A SYMPOSIUM**

**16 May 2002**

**Edited by  
Chris Selby Smith & Fran Ferrier**



**MONASH UNIVERSITY - ACER  
CENTRE FOR THE ECONOMICS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

# **LIFELONG LEARNING:**

## **PROCEEDINGS OF A SYMPOSIUM**

**16 May 2002**

**Edited by  
Chris Selby Smith & Fran Ferrier**



**MONASH UNIVERSITY - ACER**

**CENTRE FOR THE ECONOMICS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

The Centre for the Economics of Education and Training is funded by the Commonwealth Government through the Australian National Training Authority as a Key Vocational Education and Training Research Centre

This project was funded by ANTA through the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI). The views and opinions expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of ANTA. ANTA does not give any warranty or accept any liability in relation to the content of the work.

ISBN 0 909931 40 2

Published by  
Monash University-ACER  
Centre for the Economics of Education & Training (CEET)

2003

For further information please contact

CEET

Faculty of Education

PO Box 6, Monash University, Victoria 3800, Australia  
Telephone: + 61 3 9905 9157, Facsimile: + 61 3 9905 9184  
Email: [ceet@education.monash.edu.au](mailto:ceet@education.monash.edu.au)  
[www.education.monash.edu.au/centres/ceet](http://www.education.monash.edu.au/centres/ceet)

# Contents i

Editors' Introduction iii

**The BIAC-TUAC Survey: An Overview** 1  
C. Selby Smith

**SESSION ONE: Employee and Trade Union Perspectives: Current experience, opportunities for improvement** 11

- Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association 11  
Therese Bryant
- Australian Services Union 15  
Keith Harvey
- Australian Education Union 19  
Rex Hewett
- National Key Centre in Industrial Relations 24  
Julian Teicher
- Discussion 29  
Chris Selby Smith  
and Fran Ferrier

**SESSION TWO: Employer and Employer Organisations' Perspectives: Current experience, opportunities for improvement** 33

- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia 33  
Gary Collins
- National Electrical and Communications Australia Association 39  
Peter Glynn
- Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry 45  
Pam Jonas
- Business Council of Australia 48  
Maria Tarrant
- Discussion 51  
Chris Selby Smith  
and Fran Ferrier

**SESSION THREE: Governments: Steering and Rowing** 58

- Commonwealth Overview 58  
Peter Grant
- Australian National Training Authority 63  
Paul Byrne
- New South Wales Department of Education 67  
Robin Shreeve
- Adelaide Institute of TAFE 76  
Madeleine Woolley
- Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture 79  
Geoff Creek
- Discussion 85  
Chris Selby Smith  
and Fran Ferrier

<b>SESSION FOUR: The Three Perspectives: commonalities and differences</b>		<b>89</b>
• Employees and Trade Unions	Rex Hewett	89
• Employers and Employer Organisations	Steve Balzary	100
• Governments	Moira Scollay	105
• Discussion	Chris Selby Smith and Fran Ferrier	109
<b>SESSION FIVE: Other Initiatives: A wide diversity</b>		<b>113</b>
• Edge Training Solutions, Perth	Greg Lewis	113
• Mayne Health	Jenny Duncan	117
• Adult Migrant Education	Thit Tieu	121
• Can We Avoid the Dark Side of Lifelong Learning?	Peter Waterhouse	130
• Lifelong Learning in the Community/Non-Government Sector	Bruce Wilson	138
• Discussion	Chris Selby Smith and Fran Ferrier	141
<b>SESSION SIX: Summary of Main Themes</b>	Kaye Schofield	<b>146</b>
<b>Attachment 1: Program for Symposium on 16 May 2002</b>		<b>164</b>
<b>Attachment 2: Interview on 1 May 2002 with Mr. Julius Roe, National President of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union</b>		<b>166</b>
<b>Attachment 3: Interview on 6 May 2002 with Mr. Bill Mansfield, Assistant Secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions</b>		<b>170</b>
<b>Attachment 4: Interview on 21 May 2002 with Ms. Moira Schulze, Chief Executive Officer, and Ms. Jenni Blencowe, General Manager, Planning and Program Development, Adult Multicultural Education Services, Melbourne.</b>		<b>176</b>

## **EDITORS' INTRODUCTION**

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris, of which Australia is a member, has had a continuing interest in lifelong learning. As part of the OECD's work program in this area its Business and Industry Advisory Committee (BIAC) and its Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) are collecting further information on the situation relating to lifelong learning from the viewpoint of their affiliates in individual member countries. In Australia these are the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU).

ACCI and the ACTU approached the Monash University-Australian Council for Educational Research 'Centre for the Economics of Education and Training' (CEET) to undertake the survey of lifelong learning and the world of work. Since the survey focuses on the world of work, and particularly on the need for retraining and upgrading of skills and knowledge, the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) agreed to support the study. CEET is an ANTA key research centre; CEET receives a core grant from ANTA; and both ACCI and the ACTU are represented on the ANTA Board.

CEET's survey involved five different approaches: surveys of the available quantitative and qualitative material; a survey of key stakeholders; a survey of the experience for disadvantaged groups and individuals; and eight case studies. Some possible future directions were indicated in the final chapter of the survey report to ACCI, ACTU and ANTA. To elicit the views of key stakeholders a full day symposium was held in Melbourne on 16 May 2002 and this monograph presents the symposium proceedings. It includes the presentations; the main points raised in the discussion sessions; and interviews with three individuals who were invited to the symposium and wished to attend, but in the event were not able to because of other commitments, from the ACTU, the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, and the Adult Multicultural Education Service in Melbourne.

The symposium on 16 May involved twenty-eight participants, representing a range of constituencies, including employer associations, trade unions, national and state governments, public and private vocational education and training providers, small business, and the research and consulting community. Of course, not every possible viewpoint could be accommodated in the limited time available; and in retrospect a particular absence was the adult and community education sector, which makes a significant contribution to adult learning, and to overall social and individual development in Australia.

The survey for BIAC-TUAC, which has been published by CEET\*, was a co-operative study by members of CEET, in which we took the primary responsibility. The symposium itself was organised by Chris Selby Smith. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the valuable assistance in organising the symposium and preparing the proceedings for publication that we received from Toni Borrett.

Chris Selby Smith Faculty of Business and Economics, and CEET, Monash University.	Fran Ferrier Monash University-ACER CEET
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------

March 2003

---

\* C. Selby Smith, F. Ferrier, G. Burke, K. Schofield, M. Long and C. Shah (2002), *Lifelong Learning and the World of Work: CEET's Surveys for the ACCI, ACTU and ANTA*, CEET, Monash University, Melbourne.

## **THE BIAC-TUAC SURVEY: AN OVERVIEW\***

This introduction sets out the background to the present study, together with some brief discussion of the OECD's previous (extensive) work in the area of lifelong learning, the particular involvement of BIAC and TUAC, and the specific matters which CEET has been asked to investigate. It concludes with some discussion of the approach adopted by CEET to carry out the surveys and the structure adopted for the report.

### **Background**

In April 2001, when the Education Ministers of the OECD countries met in Paris, both TUAC and BIAC made significant contributions to the OECD work on lifelong learning. The Education Ministers' conclusions, which included a call to partnership with employer and employee organisations, were endorsed by the OECD Ministerial Council in June 2001. As part of the OECD's work program aimed at developing studies and policy recommendations for use in member countries, BIAC and TUAC are collecting further information on the situation concerning lifelong learning from the viewpoint of their affiliates in individual OECD countries.

The OECD has long placed a high priority on lifelong learning. For example, in 1996 OECD Education Ministers concluded "lifelong learning will be essential for everyone as we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and has to be made accessible to all" (OECD, 1996). In 2001 the Secretary General stated that "As the world moves increasingly to knowledge-based economies and societies, the emphasis given to this goal [ie. to lifelong learning] is not only right, but it must be reinforced ... it is not surprising that education emerges everywhere as the major preoccupation of citizens and of governments. It should be our priority of priorities" (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 2001, p. 7).

Mr. Johnston advanced three main considerations to support his conclusion. First, he argued that knowledge and skills, what he termed human capital, are an important determinant of economic growth and social development; and that education and training systems play a crucial role in fostering the development of the human capital which is needed. Secondly, he argued that the new and old skills demanded in the labour market need to be complemented by skills that help foster the social networks, norms and values (what Mr. Johnston termed social capital) that are essential for well-functioning democracies, with active participation by citizens. Institutions for learning can help to create values for social co-operation and thus nurture social capital along with families, local communities and firms. Thirdly, he

---

\* The presentation was given by Chris Selby Smith, Professor, Department of Management, Monash University, Clayton Campus and a Director of CEET.



emphasised that there is an important role for education and training systems to play in promoting equity. Even though overall education levels have increased over the past few decades, education and training opportunities continue to be unevenly distributed. New risks of inequality may also be emerging. For example, as jobs expand in high-skilled occupations, new skills-based inequalities may emerge. The OECD has expressed particular concern that unequal access to, and use of information and communication technologies could reinforce existing inequities through the development of a new “digital divide”.

The concept of lifelong learning, or lifelong education, became current in the 1970’s.<sup>1</sup> Initially the concept tended to focus on giving adults access to formal courses at educational institutions. However, in 1996 the OECD Education Ministers adopted a more comprehensive approach. It covered all purposeful learning activities that aim to improve knowledge and competencies. Interestingly, other international organisations, such as UNESCO and the European Commission, have also adopted the more comprehensive approach. Of course, the present BIAC-TUAC survey is only concerned with a part of the cradle to grave continuum, specifically lifelong learning and the world of work. However, the broader international developments provide the context for the present survey.

The OECD’s lifelong learning framework emphasises that learning occurs during the entire course of a person’s life. “Formal education contributes to learning as do the non-formal and informal settings of home, the workplace, the community and society at large” (CERI, 2001, p. 10). There are four key features of the lifelong learning approach, as conceived by the OECD. First, it offers *a systemic view of learning*, since it examines the demand for, and the supply of, learning opportunities, as part of a connected system covering the whole lifecycle and comprising all forms of formal and informal learning. Secondly, it emphasises *the centrality of the learner* and the need for initiatives that cater for the *diversity* of learner needs. This represents a shift of attention from the supply of learning to the demand side. Thirdly, the approach emphasises *the motivation to learn*, and draws attention to self-paced and self-directed learning. Fourthly, it stresses the multiple objectives of education policy, which include economic, social or cultural outcomes; personal development, and citizenship. The lifelong learning approach also recognises that, for the individual, the priorities among these objectives can change over the lifecycle; and that each objective has to be taken into consideration in policy development.

---

<sup>1</sup> For more detailed discussion see CERI (2001), on which much of this background material is based, and the wide range of references that are cited there. The CERI report summarises many of the main results of the OECD’s work on lifelong learning since 1996 and identifies a range of future challenges.

The OECD argues that it is the first of these key characteristics that most distinguishes lifelong learning from other approaches to education policy (which tend to be sector-specific). Consequently, people at each stage of life need not only to be given specific opportunities to learn new things, but also to be equipped and motivated to undertake *further learning*. Secondly, each learning setting needs to be *linked* to others, to enable individuals to make transitions and progress through various learning stages. Thirdly, *resources* for education cannot be looked at only in the context of separate sectors of formal provision. The lifelong learning approach raises questions about whether the distribution of education and training resources is optimal in promoting an individual's engagement in learning over the lifetime, and addresses resources for informal as well as formal learning. And finally, no *single ministry* has a monopoly of interest in lifelong learning. The approach requires a high level of co-ordination for policy development and implementation.

One of CERI's main objectives is to facilitate practical co-operation among OECD member countries in order to seek solutions and exchange views on educational problems of common interest. A wide range of models has been identified for collaboration between employers, employees and governments that might advance the lifelong learning agenda. Not all of them can be discussed here, even if attention is confined to those with particular relevance to the world of work. However, illustrative information for certain OECD member countries is set out in the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation's *Education Policy Analysis* (CERI, 2001, chapter 1). Nevertheless, today's consensus about the importance of lifelong learning for all is matched by agreement that it is far from easy to achieve in practice.

The OECD argues that there are five key areas for countries to consider when seeking to implement strategies for lifelong learning for all and in determining the priorities for policy reforms (CERI, 2001, pp. 17-40). First, recognise all forms of learning, not just formal courses of study. Recognition of prior learning in Australian vocational education and training seeks to address this matter; it can also be significant in articulation pathways. The OECD notes that "highly flexible non-university-level tertiary institutions – such as ... Australia's technical and further education (TAFE) Colleges – can have many advantages in creating learning pathways. They can provide flexible entry points, offer remedial and foundation programs for those lacking entry prerequisites, and provide programs at several levels to allow individual students to meet a range of learning needs within a single institution" (CERI, 2001, p. 21). The OECD also comments that, whatever the weaknesses of national information and guidance services for youth, the weaknesses and gaps in services for adults are even more evident.

Secondly, the OECD stresses the importance of developing foundation skills that are wider than those traditionally identified as central, including in particular, motivation and the capacity for self-directed learning. The

international evidence clearly shows that those people without an upper secondary qualification and without strong literacy skills are among the least likely to participate in further education and training as adults, or as adults to take part in training within enterprises. Across OECD countries as a whole, about a quarter of 20 to 24 year olds have not completed upper secondary school. VET in schools programs, such as those in Australia, can have a valuable role to play in this respect. Recent research has highlighted some of the techniques that are successful in motivating adult learners (US Department of Education and OECD, 1999; OECD, 1999a). In general, adults appear to be most motivated when they draw on past experience; when learning is located in the context of their own lives; when it is applied to real problems; and when they have choice and control over what they learn. A culture of learning is important for promoting adult learning; and the OECD suggests that an important determinant is the degree to which governments and the social partners are convinced of the need to refresh and upgrade adult skills.

Thirdly, the OECD emphasises the reformulation of access and equity priorities in a lifelong context, by looking at the opportunities that are available to individuals across their life-cycle and in the different settings where learning can occur. The OECD argues that knowledge-based economies and societies cannot afford to exclude a large part of their population from access to education and learning resources. Furthermore, inequalities in society often raise problems of mutual understanding and adjustment within organisations, in society at large and in the democratic process. However, the issues of equity are broadly social, cultural and economic and not just educational. There are cultural and social norms at stake, political interests and active pressure groups at work, so that education policies alone are unlikely to be sufficient in addressing the equity challenge. Social inequalities existing outside the education system contribute to educational inequalities in terms of access, opportunity, process and outcomes as well as in terms of the consequences of achievements and attainment.

While all OECD countries are pursuing equity goals through education policies, what is less certain is the extent to which other guiding policy aims within education (eg. improving accountability or promoting market mechanisms in education) support or counterbalance the pursuit of equity. Since those with acute learning needs are most at risk of exclusion, while also being least likely to become lifelong learners, an expansion of lifelong learning may in itself potentially exacerbate rather than reduce existing inequalities. Statistically, the impressive expansion of participation in education has contributed to a steady improvement in the average educational attainments of the populations and workforces in OECD countries. In general, these developments have widened learning opportunities. Nevertheless, a relatively large part of the population,

especially people from low-income families, some ethnic minorities, and the disabled remain disadvantaged in relation to learning and employment opportunities.

The OECD study identified a range of policy initiatives to assist the achievement of greater equity in education and learning. They include: adapting to individual needs; setting clear and achievable objectives; aiming for good-quality upper-secondary education for all; deploying resources strategically; obtaining reliable data; targeting adult training at disadvantaged groups; educating people with disabilities in an inclusive manner; emphasising equal access to technology; and strengthening policy co-operation on equity (CERI, 2001, pp.92-94). CEET's recent research has included studies on a range of relevant areas, including the Stocktake of VET in Australia (Selby Smith, Ferrier, et al, 2001); studies of User Choice, including its equity aspects (Selby Smith and Ferrier, 2001; and Ferrier and Selby Smith, 2002); and the current study of funding arrangements for VET students with a disability. A recent study of enterprise education and training in Australia and New Zealand is also relevant (Long and Selby Smith, 2003), since both within and between OECD countries, access to job-relating training tends to reinforce existing inequalities in levels of educational attainment. Thus, policy needs to address not just the nature of learning programs, but also the characteristics of workplaces. To the extent that learning-rich workplaces are stimulated by external factors, such as an increasingly competitive business environment and by technological innovation, they have often fallen (when those internal and external factors have been treated as matters of public policy) within the ambit of ministries of industry, regional development, technology or industrial relations rather than being a matter for education portfolios. The CERI study argued that gaps in access are particularly evident across the OECD countries in the early childhood and adult years. It also concluded "increased diversity of learning methods and options can help raise upper secondary completion rates and combat early school leaving. They can also be a major factor in raising access to tertiary education and adult learning" (CERI, 2001, p. 26).

Fourthly, the OECD stressed the importance of considering resource allocation across all sectors and settings, including – one might add – the incentives facing the various participants and the likely effect of such incentives on outcomes in terms of lifelong learning. The OECD argued that public authorities need to consider three aspects particularly. First, are the resources adequate to support lifelong learning for different types and settings of provision and over different phases of the life cycle? Secondly, are resources well used or can efficiency gains be achieved? That is, can more output be obtained from given inputs or can the same outputs be achieved using a lesser quantum of resources? Thirdly, there are issues relating to the sources of funding. If more resources are required, who will pay for them and how can those resources be mobilised? Many OECD countries are relying on

expanded private contributions and increased competition in the provision of learning opportunities to improve efficiency and increase capacity. The development of a training market and the introduction of User Choice are interesting examples in Australia, to which CEET's research has contributed. Over the 1990s, there was a clear trend in favour of greater private contributions in many OECD countries (OECD, 1999b), particularly at the tertiary level, in the field of adult learning, and for early childhood education.

Fifthly, the OECD has emphasised the requirement for collaboration in policy development and implementation among a wide range of partners, including ministries other than education. For example, the OECD's thematic review of adult learning emphasised the close interaction that is required between education, training, labour market and social policies in meeting the needs of adult learners (OECD, 1999a). The recent report of the OECD review team on lifelong learning in Norway recommended that implementation adopt "a whole of government approach ... [and] that the Prime Minister ask the Minister for Education, Research and Cultural Affairs to co-ordinate the implementation of the lifelong learning agenda across the various ministries" (OECD, 2001). Of course, since lifelong learning involves a wide range of stakeholders, including learners and their families, institutional and other providers, and social partners, the need for co-ordination in policy development and implementation is much wider than within government alone.

### **Major Themes**

While BIAC and TUAC recognised explicitly, in establishing their survey on lifelong learning, that there is great diversity among the OECD member countries, they suggested a framework "derived from a consensus on the matters which must be addressed". This framework underlies the approach adopted by CEET. It is, of course, especially concerned with the world of work, and particularly on the need for retraining, the upgrading of skills and knowledge, and VET.

BIAC-TUAC's draft framework proposed three principles. First, they argued that governments, employers and employees share responsibility for lifelong learning; and that within this broad framework both trade unions and employers' organisations have an important role to play. Relatedly, they argued that systems of qualification and recognition should be established through partnership. Secondly, BIAC and TUAC emphasised that there must be wide and equitable access to lifelong learning opportunities for everyone in the society. This principle is breached at present in every OECD country; to meet it adequately will require major changes in policy and practice. Thirdly, in relation to the lifelong learning concept itself, BIAC and TUAC argued that "motivation is a key factor in learning"; that competency development, understood in a broad sense encompassing knowledge, skills and attitudes, is

“a key concept for teaching and learning”; and that, although no one model fits all situations, “sector/industry specific frameworks can be feasible”.

BIAC-TUAC also suggested it would be helpful, and would facilitate comparisons across countries, if the survey responses addressed four matters (at least). First, they identified *motivations*, since they argued that shared responsibility for lifelong learning in individual countries is based on the motivations of each of the main actors they identified ie. governments, employers and employees. BIAC and TUAC noted that the motivations of the three main actors could reinforce each other, even though their perspectives may be different. In relation to employers, BIAC and TUAC drew a distinction between individual enterprises and employers’ organisations, just as they distinguished between individual employees and trade unions in relation to employees. They characterised lifelong learning as potentially contributing to the full development of all talents; as a strategic asset for innovation and growth in the economy; for the better functioning of the labour market; for employability, personal development and employment security; and as contributing to social inclusion, including greater gender equity. These high aspirations may sometimes be in conflict.

Secondly, BIAC and TUAC asked that consideration be given in the national surveys to the methods and approaches for providing lifelong learning in each country, such as new methods for learning and teaching. The elements they identified included some with particular relevance to vocational education and training in Australia. For example, the elements identified by BIAC and TUAC included: qualification frameworks; recognition, including assessment of prior learning and work experience; accreditation of providers; flexibility of delivery; interaction between workplaces and lifelong learning providers; quality control; and private as well as public providers based on a well-functioning market.

Thirdly, BIAC and TUAC asked that consideration be given in the country surveys to resources and facilities. They noted the shared responsibility of governments, employers and employees – as well as employer organisations and trade unions – for promoting lifelong learning and the effective use of resources. Nevertheless, BIAC and TUAC emphasised that governments bear “the main responsibility” for providing a good initial education; and that this is essential for successful lifelong learning. BIAC and TUAC encouraged those undertaking the individual country surveys to consider various schemes for encouraging lifelong learning in the world of work, including the incentives (or disincentives) facing the main actors.

Finally, BIAC and TUAC asked that the country surveys identify any major obstacles to lifelong learning that exist. For example, it may be that there is no obvious use in the workplace for workers to utilise the new or improved knowledge, skills or attitudes that they have developed through some aspect

of lifelong learning; or that there are gender specific obstacles in particular countries, circumstances or workplaces. BIAC and TUAC asked that, wherever possible, where such obstacles are identified, consideration also be given to how they could be removed, or at least their impact reduced.

### **CEET's Approach**

In discussion with members of the Steering Committee (ACCI, ACTU and ANTA) it was emphasised that the *approach* adopted by CEET in undertaking the overall survey should encompass four aspects. First, the report should survey existing arrangements for lifelong learning in Australia (ie. "reflect national realities"), particularly those relating to experience in the world of work, the need for retraining and upgrading of skills and knowledge, and the particular contribution of the VET sector. Secondly, it was emphasised that the survey should draw the various elements together in a policy-relevant way. The purpose is to assist people to make better decisions, so that improved outcomes can be achieved for enterprises, individuals and the overall society. For example, identifying an enterprise that undertook lifelong learning especially well; specific groups that benefited from a particular approach; or lifelong learning barriers that were effectively addressed in one place or another. Thirdly, it was requested that the report include "best practice examples" which illustrate specific aspects in Australia, especially those that illustrate successful co-operation between the social partners and between them and the public authorities. Finally, the Centre was asked, where possible, to indicate some possible improvements to the current arrangements which arise from the survey findings.

The *process* for undertaking the BIAC-TUAC exercise was relatively simple. CEET was asked to undertake the surveys, based on existing material, and to complete it by the end of June 2002 (Selby Smith, Ferrier et al, 2002). It was a co-operative study by members of CEET, with overall direction resting on Chris Selby Smith and Fran Ferrier. The surveys would give particular emphasis to the world of work, retraining and upgrading of skills and knowledge, and the VET sector. CEET's more detailed outline was considered and approved by the Steering Committee, comprising Mr. Steve Balzary (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Canberra), Mr. Bill Mansfield (Australian Council of Trade Unions, Melbourne) and Ms. Moira Scollay (Australian National Training Authority, Brisbane). The ongoing relationship with each of them throughout the survey included detailed discussions about the structure and content of this symposium, which was held in Melbourne on 16 May 2002 to explore the perspectives of key stakeholders.

The symposium fits into the broader project that CEET undertook. Of course, it was not for CEET to say what the key stakeholders' views are. In the first session four speakers present employee and trade union perspectives on

lifelong learning and the world of work, emphasising both current experience and the opportunities for improvement. In the second session four different speakers present employer and employee organisations' perspectives, while the third session presents government and provider perspectives (including at national, State and individual provider levels). The fourth session compares and contrasts the three perspectives, seeking to identify where governments, employers and employee organisations agree and also the areas where they disagree. In the next session five other areas that contribute to lifelong learning in Australia are considered, emphasising that there is a wide diversity of perspectives and contributions, even when attention is confined to the world of work. Each of the sessions included opportunity for comments and discussion. Finally, Kaye Schofield presented a summary of the main themes that arose during the day. A more detailed outline of the program is at Attachment 1.

### References:

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) (2001), *Education Policy Analysis*, OECD, Paris.

Ferrier, F. and Selby Smith, C. (2002), *The Experience of User Choice: Do the Size and Location of the Firm Make a Difference?* Working Paper No. 40, Monash University-ACER Centre for the Economics of Education and Training, Melbourne.

Long, M. and Selby Smith, C. (2003), "Enterprise Education In Australia And New Zealand", in J. Keeves and R. Watanabe, *The Handbook on Educational Research in the Asia-Pacific Region*, Kluwer Publications, Amsterdam.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (1996), *Lifelong Learning for All*, OECD, Paris.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (1999a), *Overcoming Exclusion through Adult Learning*, CERI, Paris.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (1999b), "Resources for Lifelong Learning: What might be needed and how it might be found", *Education Policy Analysis*, Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, Paris.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2001), *Lifelong Learning in Norway: Report of the Review Team*, OECD, Paris, 16 October 2001: document DEELSA/ED (2001) 6, Recommendation 6.1.



Selby Smith, C. and Ferrier, F. (2001), *User Choice: The Experience Since 1998*, Working Paper No. 36, Centre for the Economics of Education and Training, Monash University, May 2001.

Selby Smith, C., Ferrier, F., Burke, G., Schofield, K., Long, M. and Shah, C. (2002), *Lifelong Learning and the World of Work: CEET's Surveys for the ACCE, ACTU and ANTA*, Monash University-ACER Centre for the Economics of Education and Training, Monash University, Melbourne.

Selby Smith, C., Ferrier, F., Anderson, D., Burke, G., Hopkins, S., Long, M., Maglen, L., Malley, J., McKenzie, P. and Shah, C. (2001), *CEET's Stocktake: The economics of vocational education and training in Australia*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide.

U.S. Department of Education and OECD (1999), *How Adults Learn*, Proceedings of a conference held April 6-8, 1998, Georgetown University Conference Centre, Washington, D.C.

## **SESSION ONE: EMPLOYEE AND TRADE UNION PERSPECTIVES: Current experience, opportunities for improvement**

**Chair: Michael Long, CEET.**

### **SHOP, DISTRIBUTIVE AND ALLIED EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION (SDA)\***

The SDA is Australia's largest single trade union with over 200,000 members working principally in the retail industry, but also in industry areas such as wholesaling, hairdressing, beauty, and modelling. It is from the perspective of our members in these industries that I will be speaking today.

Lifelong learning in the world of work is a worthy goal and the focus of retraining and upgrading skills and knowledge is particularly relevant to our members. Education and training (ie. the formalised development of skills and knowledge) are increasingly becoming pivotal factors in whether individuals can obtain, hold and advance in employment and therefore have the capacity to be able to live decently with dignity. It is therefore significant and important that we make lifelong learning more of a reality.

So what do we have to do to achieve it? We need to be doing many things, but I will only have time to mention a few which are priorities for our organisation.

Whilst there are some queries to be raised regarding the quality of outcomes produced by the VET sector, the fundamentals of the system are nevertheless sound. Much work has already been done. For the past decade Australia has been experiencing almost continual reform of the VET sector. During this period, major advances have occurred in the system as a whole and particularly in industries such as retail. Previously, there had been virtually no generic training for shop floor employees. Training, where it occurred at all, was company specific and did not lead to a nationally recognised, portable qualification. Through the commitment of unions and employers to the training agenda, there is now widespread bipartisan support between employers and unions for the VET system. Training packages have been developed and there has been a broadening of the availability of nationally accredited training to the entire workforce.

---

\* Presentation by Therese Bryant, National Education and Training Officer of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association.

## Existing Workers

The retail industry traditionally did not have a strong training tradition. In recent years, that has changed and now retail is near the top of the list in the number of people undertaking New Apprenticeships. Increasingly employers are placing emphasis upon new workplace entrants undertaking structured AQF II training, generally in the traditional traineeship mode. Over time many of these people advance to an AQF III program. Those acquiring credentials are placed in positions whereby they can advance in their company. In fact, increasingly the trend is for companies to require employees to have qualifications before they can be promoted.

A key question which remains concerns what happens to the many current employees who have not previously had the opportunity of completing an AQF II qualification. It is already starting to occur that some of these employees are being “leapfrogged” for promotion by those who have been able to complete an AQF qualification. The options for such employees are to gain a relevant qualification so that they are on equal terms with their workplace colleagues or otherwise to sit tight and take their chance. The employees concerned have often been early school leavers and have never had access to the post-secondary school education or training dollar.

They are also often low-income earners who cannot afford to pay their own course costs. The benefit of gaining a qualification in such circumstances is essentially to them and not to their employer. In such circumstances the employer may choose not to meet the employee’s course costs. Further, for an employer to meet the course costs of all employees essentially for the benefit of the employee would be a very costly exercise. The expense of completing a qualification could thus prevent a person from being able to maintain an employment situation or otherwise confine them to low wage positions for the whole of their working life. Why should these employees be left behind by the system?

The current arbitrary restrictions upon the availability of incentive payments further complicate the situation. Incentive payments are not available to people such as those I have just mentioned, where they have been with their employer for a considerable amount of time. This is inequitable and effectively denies access to quality training at an affordable cost to many working people. It is time for Australia to adopt a position of guaranteeing all people, including those currently in the workforce, a minimum training entitlement. Such an entitlement could be means tested and only be available for the achievement of a first post-school qualification. Nevertheless, it would be an important step towards addressing the major problem of older workforce participants being locked out of employment.

Young people continue to be the largest group undertaking training linked to training contracts. The number of older people signing training contracts is growing, but they are usually in a situation where they have a partner to assist in supporting them financially. Unless Australia wishes to consign older workers to the scrap heap, we must be open to workers of all ages undertaking training linked to training contracts.

### **RPL Should be More Accessible**

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) has long been promoted as a feature of the new training landscape. In practice, it has had limited application, primarily due to the funding systems operating in the States and Territories. Under current funding arrangements most States and most training providers find that RPL is a costly exercise. Consequently, it has been applied only on a limited basis. Many existing workers, through extensive on the job work experience, could complete all or a substantial portion of an AQF II qualification via an RPL process. This would be a cheaper exercise than providing for the costs of a full course. It is not unreasonable that these employees should have the costs of RPL for an AQF II qualification met by government. Access to adequately funded RPL must be expanded if we are serious about lifelong learning.

### **Industrial Matters**

Industrial matters are particularly important when one considers the high number of non-completions of traineeships. The evidence suggests that low wage rates and poor work conditions are a critical factor. The National Training Wage provides rates that are lower for the same age group than the relevant junior rate in the relevant Enterprise Agreement. This may be defensible if the trainee receives proper training, a credential of standing and reasonable working conditions. However, it is a constant complaint of trainees that they get the worst rosters, inadequate on-the-job training and are expected to work overtime without pay. Trainees are not protected by unfair dismissal legislation and are consequently often afraid to complain for fear of losing their job.

A recent destination survey in the hairdressing industry, conducted by the Victorian Industry Training Board, revealed that low wages and poor working conditions were the overwhelming reasons why so many employees were leaving the industry within five years of commencing their apprenticeship. Employers need to take note.

### **Incentive Payments Should Continue**

For industries such as retail to have moved to the extent that they have, in embracing structured, accredited training, has involved a major shift in

thinking, especially by the larger employers. The existence of incentive payments and subsidies played a role in bringing about this mindset change. There does, however, need to be consideration given to reverting to the system where the incentive payment was split, so as to provide a focus on completion as well as commencement. Many trainees leave their employer for various reasons, such as deciding that the type of work is not what they want or because they find the working conditions intolerable. In so doing they greatly decrease their chance of commencing a traineeship with another employer, because the second employer will not be eligible to receive a subsidy.

Further, whilst traineeships continue to be a major feature of the VET system there is no good reason why such traineeships (or incentive payments) should be restricted by age. To do so flies in the face of lifelong learning.

### **Employers' Role**

Employers have a very important role in the advancement of lifelong learning, including providing the relevant on-the-job training linked to the trainee's off-the-job education and training. In many cases this just isn't happening.

Employers also have a role in developing a workplace with a learning culture. This is not only a matter of injecting resources. It includes treating all employees with respect, tolerance and as genuine members of the team, as well as determining the career aspirations of all employees and how their current skills fit with those career aspirations. Generally, retail companies do not know the career aspirations of most of their shop floor employees, because they have never asked them. Succession planning is reserved for those tagged for management.

### **Conclusion**

To achieve a broad take up of lifelong learning across the Australian workforce will require a major cultural change. As with all cultural change, it is not a matter of addressing only one or two issues. The change process will be complex and require a multi-faceted, holistic approach. A clear vision is needed of what is being sought; and a vision that is shared by government, employers, employees and their representatives. Also needed is a thorough plan, which is implemented and reviewed progressively. Ensuring that all the players have an equal say will optimise "ownership", commitment and hopefully individual and collective development. We are on the way, but there is much more to be done.

## AUSTRALIAN SERVICES UNION\*

The Australian Services Union is one of the amalgamated mega-unions, although not quite as large as the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association. The Australian Services Union represents workers in a number of areas including local government, air transport, other forms of transport, and clerical and administrative employees generally (which is where I come from and about which I know most). I have also been involved in the training reform agenda for what seems to be an awfully long time now. I have seen bits of it come and go, but I have particularly been involved in the development of competency standards and, more lately, training packages for clerical and administrative, and now business service employees. This has included involvement through both the administrative training company, which is now Aspire Training and Consulting; and also through being on the Board of Business Services Training Australia; and as I said, in my spare time I do some work for the Australian Services Union.

Generally speaking, the trade union movement has endorsed the concept of lifelong learning from a policy point of view. I think we all agree that, as a policy approach, lifelong learning is a great concept for our times. It is a radical and appropriate departure from the idea that all learning is over for individuals by the age of seventeen or twenty-one or whenever they exit from the formal initial training system, whether that be at school or post-school institution and qualification. The approach in the past has clearly locked many school leavers, in particular, into unskilled jobs and locked them out of access to higher skilled and higher paid jobs. Equally the trade union movement clearly supports a concept of lifelong learning as a response to the needs of a changing workplace, including accelerating technological change. We believe it also should reflect the needs of workers in those workplaces, by enabling them to continue to increase their worth and their job security through the acquisition and use of new and higher skills. As has already been pointed out briefly, Chris alluded to it and so did Therese, lifelong learning in Australia from a policy point of view, is now increasingly well underpinned by a number of policy settings. They include such things as, and this is where I begin to feel very old, award restructuring, which seems to have begun in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It introduced for a great many workers, if not all workers in this country under awards and collective agreements, skill based classification structures that attempted to develop and enhance career paths (which meant improved pay, based on skill acquisition and use).

Secondly, as everybody sitting around this room will know, there has been a ten year or more period of reform of training systems and the development of competency standards and training packages, which set national standards and seek to achieve flexible skill delivery systems to achieve those competency standards, embedded now in training packages.

---

\* Presentation by Keith Harvey, National Industrial Officer of the Australian Services Union.

And finally we have the policy settings, at any rate, for assessment systems based on recognition of prior learning, credit transfer and recognition of current competency, which seems from the trade union point of view to actually meet the broad policy consensus that Chris mentioned in his outline. In Australia we have implemented what appear to be the policy settings that need to be in place to make it work.

So the question I posed to myself in thinking about this short presentation was, having put all those things in place over a period of ten years, and given that everybody seems to have signed off on the desirability of lifelong learning, the question is, is it happening in Australia? and in particular, in the areas and with regard to the workers that my union represents. And I am afraid that my initial, and even my considered answer to that question is probably a big “No”. I would have liked to be able to have come along and presented a number of case studies where I could point out that it is happening here and happening there and happening in the other place. But I am sorry, I do not have a bag of those examples that I am aware of. Generally, in the areas that I am most familiar with (and that is in clerical and administrative employment) workers have traditionally gained their skills mainly informally and on the job; and recognition of those skills, in the past and up until the present time, is still fairly limited or non-existent.

However, as Therese mentioned, there obviously has been a change to a considerable degree over the last ten years or so with regard to new entrants into the workforce. This is particularly as a result of the introduction of traineeships or New Apprenticeships beginning with the Australian traineeship system in the late 1980s. Career Start traineeships and Netforce traineeships in particular boosted the number of clerical administrative workers entering the workforce via formal structured training. These arrangements included on and off the job training, but also included fully on the job training through those traineeships. There are now a considerable number of new entrants who have qualifications, in our case probably at AQF Level 3. Initially, the entrants would have been at AFQ Level 2, but mainly employers now want (and employees want) AQF Level 3 qualifications as an entry level. There are a significant number of younger people, and some older ones, who have entered this workforce with which I am particularly concerned, with formal skills, certified and recognised skills. Nevertheless, that still leaves a huge mass of people without any formal recognition or qualifications.

So some things are changing and there is some progress. However, I still think the overall answer to the question about whether it is happening now, is “No”. Then the further question becomes “Why not?” despite all these policy settings and programs being in place. I think there are a number of inhibiting factors that can be identified. The first inhibiting factor, and I want to say this

quite clearly up front, is that there still is some employee resistance to ongoing training. I do not like to have to say that. However, I think it is true that in some places there is resistance amongst some employees to a need or requirement that they do continued training. It is also true that, despite the incentives that have been put in place, they appear in many cases to be relatively weak incentives for employees to continue to train.

In addition, there are a number of other motivators that still appear to be absent. Firstly, there is still, in some areas – it is not everyone, and there are some notable exceptions to this - but there is still an unwillingness amongst some employers to make a commitment to training, to make the training available, to pay the costs and to make available the time for workers to train. There can be a continuing lack of access to ongoing training, even where that may be theoretically available on the job. There are issues, which are important to note, with regard to longer and longer hours of work. Workers are finding it difficult to complete the work they have, let alone undertake training, even on the job or after hours.

I had personally thought that in clerical administrative and general office work in particular, online and flexible delivery of training into workplaces, via the Internet or whatever, directly onto people's desks, was going to be important. But it does seem that there is still some way to go before we can get that working. In any case, it appears that face-to-face interaction, which Rex Hewett will probably be happy to hear, with a human being and a teacher or trainer, is still preferred. Impersonal online learning appears not to be the preferred form of training, at least for the people that I am talking about.

The other thing that I want to say is that there is a big issue, which Therese also mentioned, concerning the lack of access to simple, cost effective assessment systems to assess, recognise and certify those skills that workers have gained on the job.

There are other issues, which I will only mention briefly now because of time. It seems that those individuals who haven't achieved or haven't had the ability to achieve, in formal or initial education, are those who are unlikely to take up lifelong learning, even if it is available in the workforce or who will need special incentives to get them into it. There is the double problem where an individual did not have a high level of initial education in the first place. It is difficult to get those workers into lifelong learning, and difficult for those workers to get into it on an ongoing basis.

Our experience has been that a commitment to ongoing training in awards and agreements has been an essential element in promoting a culture of continuing training. This requires a commitment from employers to provision of training, payment of the costs of training, assessment of skills on the job,



and facilitation of the external assessment and certification of skills where this can be achieved.

As I said before, while the policy settings are in place for the recognition of prior learning (RPL), including the possibility of a 100% RPL for qualifications, we think this is clearly not working in practice. Firstly, there is the issue of the cost of accessing an external or RTO sponsored assessment (ie. the question is who pays for that?); and secondly, there is the issue of accessing assessments, because in many cases RPL still seems to be a time consuming and costly process. In some cases it is as costly and time consuming as doing a course in the first place. Thirdly, RPL to date is still being seen too often as a credit transfer or advanced standing issue. Thus, it is seen as a course related issue, not a workplace based skills recognition and certification process. Given that lifelong learning must be a workplace based event and outcome in our view, the policies to deal with it must also be rooted firmly in the workplace, not in formal training institutions (and certainly not exclusively so). Lifelong learning, in our view, has got to get out of the classroom and get into the workplace as part of a learning culture. Existing workers cannot do full time training. They even find it difficult to do part time off the job training, especially those with family responsibilities.

We think that existing worker policies are very important, as Kaye Schofield knows. Existing worker traineeships, for example, might have got a little bit abused around the place, but we think it was a very important policy setting to encourage existing workers, our members, to do ongoing training. We may have thrown the baby out with the bath water there.

One example where this is happening concerns temporary workers. They are a group of workers who are accessing ongoing learning. Particularly in our area they can be flexible in the sense that they do not necessarily work the whole of the year or the whole of the week, but see a need to continually upgrade their skills. They are doing it on an ongoing basis, making themselves more in demand from employers and getting higher rates of pay for it. However, our experience is that the full time workers do not appear to be able to access it as easily (unless, as Therese said, they have got some other family backup or support).

## AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION UNION\*

This afternoon I am presenting on behalf of the ACTU, because Bill Mansfield is unable to be here since he is in Geneva at the International Labour Organisation. In my talk this morning I am representing the staff who work in TAFE institutes, the public provider. I am the Federal TAFE Secretary of the Australian Education Union. Prior to that I was an organiser with the NSW Teachers Federation; and prior to that, a TAFE teacher for about eight years; prior to that an electrician; and somewhere along the way, someone gave me an economics degree, and a political economy degree, from Sydney University.

The core of a lifelong learning system is a common acceptance of the benefits of continuous personal development and a commitment by governments to provide public education resources to achieve this objective over time. For Australia a key element of such a system is the national TAFE system, in our view. It is through TAFE that the majority of the population gain access to vocational education and training (VET) opportunities. Currently there are 1.3 million students who participate in the TAFE system annually and about 1.6 million overall. That gives you a measure of the extent to which people access the public system and the VET system more generally. Those people generally gain some form of post-school qualification or learning experience over time, although the NCVER claims that only about 10% per year actually gain a qualification for those that participate in that year. Now that may be simply because they do bits and pieces and eventually get a qualification.

Apart from the Dawkins reforms to higher education in the 1980s, TAFE is the sector which has been most affected by structural change and reform, dare I say it, and labor market deregulation over the last ten to fifteen years. The 1990s saw a period of reform in TAFE that changed vocational education forever. These reforms were driven by a genuine desire to develop a relevant and dynamic training system that met the needs of community, industry and individuals. A national competency based training system underpinned by occupational and industry competency standards set the framework for training providers. Achieving competence through the recognition of experience or non-traditional learning was an important feature of the reform. I do not have to repeat what Therese and Keith have said about that, because it is probably one of the major weaknesses of the system that not many workers actually are able to access recognition of their existing skills.

It did not matter that curriculum was the driver of learning in schools or higher education. What mattered was what industry wanted. TAFE had a monopoly on vocational education, yet would seem to be unresponsive, particularly to the needs of industry. TAFE critics argued that the demand

---

\* This presentation was by Rex Hewett, Federal TAFE Secretary of the Australian Education Union.

side of the market, the buyers or customers, needed much greater attention than they had been getting in the past. It was this, more than anything else, which changed the face of TAFE. The demand side was discussed and defined in industry terms. In the process the social objectives of public policy were diminished in the discussion. The creation of a training market became an end in itself.

The Australian National Training Authority oversaw the process of reform, which would see vocational education and training transformed into an industry driven system, although the term industry driven, industry led, seems to have been confused over the last ten years. I do not think that even Kaye Schofield has clarified whether it is led or driven. Contestable funding and user choice became the mechanisms for satisfying the needs of industry, but not necessarily the needs of individuals (and I will talk more about that later), even though the individual is the real end user. Underpinning knowledge and skills received a tick and for those of you who deal with training packages you will recall that at the bottom of the page of competency standards there are a series of boxes with numbers from one to three in them, which represent the level of key competencies that people are supposed to acquire. The Australian Education Union believes that a major failure of the system relates to having properly assessable underpinning knowledge, skills and broad competencies.

Many in industry were unaware that they were driving the system and industry itself is exceptionally narrowly defined. For instance, it could be argued that many training packages talk about competencies for the present and not for the future. From 1995 onwards the proportion of contestable funding increased and the number of registered training organisations expanded from 100 to 2,500. This represented a massive expansion in the space of five years. This environment has transformed the TAFE and the VET system. It is true, if sometimes difficult for those who work in the system to acknowledge, that there have been significant achievements over the past ten years. There is a system of nationally recognised vocational education and training qualifications. That has to be seen as a major advancement for the system. And there is mutual recognition in name, if not always in reality, between the States and Territories. There is enormous potential in the system to meet the demands of the growing economy and the challenges of a changing society. A greater number of Australians, I believe it is around 13% of those aged 16 to 64 years, are actually engaged in vocational education and training and in industry at a number of levels.

The issues that now confront us, though, are as challenging as they have been in the past. In a recent paper prepared for CEET called *Critical Success Factors for TAFE*, Peter Noonan discusses what he perceives to be the major issues. (That paper has been reproduced in the *Australian TAFE Teacher* issue for winter 2001.) Whilst applauding the achievements of the last few years - the

diversity of the market, the newly developed apprenticeship and traineeship system, and growth in the system generally - he pinpoints one of the consequences of the development of a training market. That is, it is insufficient for purchasers/owners to focus only on purchasing outcomes "without regard to the long term health of the public provider when as regulators, priority and strategy setters and through the political processes many constraints are imposed on what institutes can provide and how they provide it." He argues, "governments need to be more conscious of their responsibility, as the owner of the public provider".

It is true to say that, prior to the early 1990s, TAFE institutes across Australia operated almost solely on public funding, from Commonwealth and State governments. That has changed; later this afternoon I will provide some figures that show the extent to which fee for service and external arrangements now fund the TAFE system. At the heart of the matter is the lack of clarity about the identity of TAFE, although in 1976 Kangan gave TAFE a role within the public education system, and gave vocational education and training a status it had not previously known. Kangan put the "F" into TAFE without downplaying its relationship to industry and community needs. In doing so, he recognised, perhaps well before others, that lifelong learning was an essential part of a fair and just society. Modern day Kanganites claim there are some in industry who want to kick the "F" out of TAFE. TAFE has historically been seen as a post-compulsory residual system. Noonan says the "role of TAFE tends to be seen as doing those things that others can't or won't".

Noonan sees TAFE as having a crucial role in the so-called new or knowledge economy. In whatever form the knowledge economy evolves, it will require a rethinking of the skills and knowledge of all its citizens. Generic or "soft" skills, such as communication, teamwork and cross-cultural understanding, will become critical. Education and training needs will change as the new economy emerges. However, TAFE needs to meet the demands of both the new and the old, ensuring opportunities for its traditional client base to gain the skills and knowledge required in a knowledge economy. Noonan points out that, to be successful, TAFE institutes will have to be repositories and incubators of skills, knowledge and values required in a knowledge based economy. They will have to be capable of working with a diverse range of workplaces and with hundreds and thousands of individuals.

I was at Box Hill TAFE Institute yesterday taking some American teachers to look at an example of a two-year community college, as I think they call them in the States. They were amazed that there is effectively a private provider operating within a public provider. Cisco Systems has got a full training facility, which does not give a qualifications outcome, but nested with the diploma in IT gives a qualifications outcome for its students. I think that it is a good example of cooperative partnerships between the public system and the

private system. These partnerships are important for the future, for industry, for individuals and for the community.

However, there are a number of issues that I want to raise here in concluding this paper. They are issues that the Australian Education Union sees as critical to lifelong learning and to the continued development and reform of the VET system. There needs to be a restoration of a balance; there has been an imbalance in the way in which the system has developed. We could easily repeat the mistakes of the past if we allow narrow economic imperatives alone to drive reforms in the VET sector. The public TAFE system can and must play a pivotal role in shaping and meeting the needs of the emerging economy, whatever it is. But the system has to be much more. TAFE is a community asset. It plays a vital role in the social cohesion of many communities, particularly in regional areas. It is a real place, where real people work and learn and talk and discuss.

The system needs to be kept under regular review and monitored to ensure quality outcomes for students. A better balance needs to be achieved between quality teaching inputs and learning outcomes. Note here that the average age of a TAFE teacher is fifty-one years. In the next five to ten years these teachers will have left the system, which represents a massive loss of intellectual property. We believe, of course, that learning is more important than teaching. In the end, people can acquire knowledge and skills through a whole range of different methods. But quality teaching is certainly one of the factors that can have an important effect on learning outcomes.

A better balance also needs to be achieved:

- between a task specific and broad based education;
- between individual and industry needs;
- between training package developers and deliverers;
- between teaching and assessment;
- between curriculum and learning;
- between workplace and simulated competence;
- between the public and private investment in training; and
- particularly between the range of qualification outcome levels that now are produced from the system.

The system needs to be reclaimed by the real stakeholders. They are industry, the community and individuals. I include TAFE teachers and VET teachers generally, indeed all staff who work in the provider system. The system must be reclaimed from the bureaucrats and politicians as simply a tool of government or industry, and all its “stakeholders” must be allowed to have a say in its future. If we are to have the vibrant, high quality public TAFE system that we need, then we, and our students, and our communities and our industries, must become activists for public TAFE.

If industry is to maintain its “leadership role” it must be willing to invest in training. The latest ANTA Agreement excludes the reference to industry contributing or investing in training; and that needs to be rectified. It is clear that industry now is much more involved in decisions about the shape of the provider system, of competency standards and so on; and it has to put its money where its mouth is. The ANTA Agreement must restore the objective of increasing industry investment in training if industry is to maintain a credible role in shaping the system.

## **NATIONAL KEY CENTRE IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS\***

I do belong to a union, I am an employee and I am an academic, too. I have spent what feels like a lifetime, studying work and employment, employer relations, industrial relations issues. I think it was Clyde Cameron as Minister for Labour in the early 1970s who said that the average worker would have to retrain twice, maybe three times in their lifetime. At that point that seemed pretty much a seer's view to me as a young person. Reflecting back, of course, it seems strangely, like many things from the past, unperceptive of the way changes would occur.

In addressing this theme today, I think that two things are central: the quest for flexibility, including an increased willingness to learn and train; and the rise of unitary views on the way the workplace should be managed. In saying that I am underlining that the emphasis on flexibility is also about placing the responsibility increasingly on employees for their own learning. Indeed Keith has underlined that in his earlier comments.

In saying that there has been a rise of what we might call unitarism, I am trying to emphasise that there are parts of the economy and society where the dialogue which was possible when the union movement was stronger has been eroded and been replaced with a strong managerialist ideology, which emphasises shared views and the absence of conflict. Those kinds of views, which are associated with some strands of human resources management, are ultimately antithetical to the development of lifelong learning or the resolution of skill shortages at a societal level. I am treating lifelong learning as more than just the acquisition of formal qualifications or participation in training programs as such.

There are three issues which I want to consider. First, there is the quest for flexibility and the rise of non-standard employment. Secondly, there is what I call the "gold collar workers", the sort of individuals Keith was referring to, who are an interesting elite. Thirdly there is the idea of the learning organisation which has such currency, both in academic and managerial circles as a panacea for the way in which skill formation, knowledge retention, and so forth will occur in the modern organisation.

I do not intend to dwell on the rise of non-standard employment, but the bottom line is that the full-time male breadwinner model has been replaced by a situation in which most job growth is in part time employment and one of the most rapidly rising components of the workforce is full-time casuals. I also note the growth of the category of outworkers, agency workers and the self-employed. Between 1982 and 1998 full-time casual workers increased from 4.5% to 11.8% of total employment; outworkers, agency workers and the

---

\* Presentation by Professor Julian Teicher, Executive Director of the National Key Centre in Industrial Relations at Monash University.

self-employed rose from 4.7% of the workforce in 1990 to 6.5% in 1995; and most new jobs created over the past decade have been part-time. These developments set the stage for placing the responsibility increasingly on workers for their own lifelong learning.

A closely related development is the contraction of award coverage which is significant, too. Some years back, now Deputy President Ian Ross, formerly at the ACTU, claimed that award coverage had shrunk from 85 to 80 percent of the workforce between 1985 and 1990 (and he projected that by 2000 it could be 70 percent). We do not bother collecting these statistics anymore.

What are the implications for lifelong learning of those kinds of changes? Firstly, people who are not represented by unions, and that is an increasing proportion of the workforce, are also people who are not covered by awards. These include many people in new areas of the economy, and newly created jobs, particularly in the service sector. If you are not represented by a union, if you are not having an agreement negotiated, if you are not benefiting from being on an award, the chances are that no one is looking after your skill formation. The responsibility for lifelong learning rests increasingly with the individual. They are less likely to have the advantage of negotiated benefits such as skill-based career paths or opportunities for training.

Secondly, if in fact the onus is being thrown back on the individual and the individual is negotiating some form of individual agreement, whether it be an Australian Workplace Agreement (AWA) or whatever, how is the individual going to get skill formation onto the agenda? Another related aspect, if in fact we are increasing the individual's responsibility to negotiate with their employer in relation to their terms and conditions of employment, is whether there is not a responsibility on the state to ensure that the individual does in fact have the skills, ability and knowledge to negotiate appropriately. Isn't that a lifelong learning responsibility that you can't always expect the individual to fill without assistance and support? The Office of the Employment Advocate is there, ostensibly, to look after the individual in an AWA situation, but no one is there to ensure that the individual has the capacity properly to negotiate for themselves (and this is a competency that arguably is relevant in current circumstances).

A third issue, which arises in relation to the rise of non-standard employment, is that there is a disadvantaged group - and they are a rising part of the workforce. I am not referring here to students, although they are often in that category of non-standard workers. Rather I am talking about people trapped in non-standard employment, including part-time and casual work. These workers are made responsible for their skill formation and for their own learning, but the problem is, as very very peripheral workers, what are the incentives for them to engage in skill formation to make themselves more



marketable? That also highlights the gap created by the contraction of the public sector as a training provider.

Also the rise of outsourcing intensifies the withdrawal of responsibility from employers for lifelong learning. The rise of outsourcing in Australia, particularly in the public sector, has meant that work, which was previously done by large public employers, is done by small private employers (who get the contracts, often, because they have lower cost structures). Organisations with lower cost structures tend not to participate so actively in skill formation. Therefore, the responsibility is put back onto the individual. Why do we think the individual is going to have the foresight and resources, if in a low wage job, to engage adequately in skill formation? I am not saying that lifelong learning is not occurring, but asking what kind of learning is occurring. The recruitment of casuals and contractors is likely to be on the basis of the skills they possess.

The gold collar worker idea is probably familiar to you. They are specialist skilled workers in high demand, such as those in information technology, where shortages were estimated to be between 30,000 and 60,000 in 1999. For these workers loyalty tends to be owed less to their current employer than to their own professional standing, skills and career. That group, which is the creation of the knowledge economy, poses different problems. In a sense, for employers to retain this group of workers, there is an increasing recognition that what is necessary (apart from high pay) is exposure to a range of learning and development opportunities. It is only by providing learning and development opportunities that these so-called gold collar workers will stay for an extended period with an employer, so that the employer is then able to both capture that knowledge and maximise the productivity gains of that kind of worker.

That is the way forward, I suspect, for the gold collar worker. However, we should note at the same time, that the cases where this kind of process is currently in place are very few. By and large the Australian Government relies upon the immigration system as a policy response to trying to fill shortages that arise in the so-called knowledge economy. However, as we are competing in the global market for immigrants I do not think that is going to be a permanent solution. The United States is also seeking to attract skilled migrants on a temporary entry basis; and the lure of Silicon Valley is likely to be far greater than what Australia is able to provide. Unfortunately, the public university in Australia does not have the resources which are required to meet the needs in relation to gold collar workers.

This new category of worker and the associated psychological contract can be understood in terms of two dimensions: time and performance specificity. Gold collar workers tend to take a transactional approach, involved short duration assignments and well-defined performance standards. The

organisations hire workers who already have specialised education and relevant experiences. The workers are responsible for their own skill development and find it through transient opportunities.

But there is another model that may address skill shortages and employee expectations. This is the balanced approach, which is more relationship oriented, but with defined performance standards. The emphasis here is on providing challenging work and opportunities for skill development that may facilitate retention. An example would be a software firm that provides a partnering program with a network of distributors and customers. So maybe I am suggesting an enhanced role again for the State in lifelong learning, although the character of these interventions may well differ from the past.

The third point concerns the learning organisation. The learning organisation concept is another creation of the rise of the knowledge economy. It emphasises the notion that the organisation needs to operate in a coherent, need I say unitarist view, to capture the knowledge that is generated in the organisation through the implementation of new products, processes and services. The learning organisation is based on the premise that knowledge is the primary resource of the modern enterprise. It partly reflects the rise of service and information industries. Also there has been an increasing recognition that, even in manufacturing, there are a range of areas (such as design and sales) where knowledge is central. And that learning organisation idea requires teamwork and harmonious industrial relations. Indeed, there can be argued to be three elements for an effective learning organisation: a well-developed capacity for double loop learning; ongoing attention to learning how to learn; and a focus on key areas of organisational function, particularly employee relations, work organisation, skill formation and technology support learning. Now we have lots of teamwork, but I suggest that there has been very little development in the culture of organisations in terms of their capacity to deal very productively with difference. So, while the learning organisation is often presented as the key to sustainable competitive advantage and the way of the future, the necessary conditions for an effective learning organisation are met only in a few organisations. Indeed, the grafting on of teams in place of the older workgroups and arrangements does not change the reality of management.

If the learning organisation is to be a way of fostering lifelong learning within the organisation, then there needs to be a development beyond simple implementation of manager led teamwork. Learning how to learn involves individuals and organisations storing knowledge gained from addressing new situations. This means becoming aware of one's assumptions and thinking processes in order to devise new approaches. In terms of organisational functioning, there is no need to say more than that the existing literature on learning organisations proceeds as if differences do not exist in organisations. The reality is that differences are the norm and, if they are not

managed, the organisation cannot thrive because it devalues the reasons for these differences. One of the things which needs to be developed, and which is absent in the workforce by and large, is the capacity for effective communication. Again, this is a learning gap across the workforce at large. By effective communication I mean the capacity for a genuine dialogue based on mutual respect. Many organisations engage in all kinds of developmental processes, teamwork, job redesign etc. etc., but if you read the reports of the case studies on this material there really is not a genuine dialogue. Everyone is still in their boxes. People are threatened by change and indeed, threatened by any kind of challenge to the established order. It is fair to say that the idea of learning organisations is mainly a nice myth. It probably operates in some parts of the economy, but it is part of that unitarist ideology, rather than being a genuine vehicle to capture the knowledge and skills of individuals and to enable employees to participate creatively in the process of change. If the learning organisation is to offer a way forward, then a new workplace culture will need to be developed; and this will require displacement of the unitary views which have been on the rise since the quest for flexibility became a byword. We are a long way from lifelong learning in the positive sense that would probably be envisaged by some from the title of this seminar. Lifelong learning, to be real and meaningful, needs to be more than throwing responsibility back on the individual for their own skill formation, naively hoping it will all happen. Lifelong learning requires some supporting skills to be developed, such as the capacity to negotiate in your own right and the capacity to engage in a process of dialogue which will create the conditions in which productive, informal, lifelong learning can occur within organisations.

## DISCUSSION\*

**Steve Balzary** (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry): Rather than have a lengthy debate with Julian, I will direct myself to my comrades. It always staggers me, by way of preliminary, the broad agreement we have got between employers and the unions. Most of what has been highlighted by all the speakers today shows that again. It is important. There are also areas of difference. I would like to ask Therese, as the largest employing sector in Australia, about her view of the notion that States and Territories, by way of New Apprenticeships as an example, need to cap the resources that go into your sector. The argument would be that your sector is gobbling up the available resources, the perception that some of your jobs really aren't skilled. Therefore it is not real training, it is not new and emerging.

**Therese Bryant** (Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association): Probably unsurprisingly, the SDA are opposed to having the States cap the number of entrants into traineeships and apprenticeships which would be covered by the industry. And our organisation would not accept the view that this is not a worthy area, it is unskilled, so therefore you should not fund it. Putting on my other hat as women's officer, I am concerned about the gender implications, certainly at the lower levels of the industry and the impact of restricting their opportunities to take up formal training. Yes, funding is an eternal problem, but it is not appropriate to lessen the amount of formal qualifications and training that can happen in the largest industry sector in the country, especially if the objective is to achieve a more skilled workforce generally.

**Chandra Shah** (CEET): Keith mentioned that temporary workers are increasingly taking care of their own training and upskilling, while Julian Teicher argued that if you are a temporary, casual or part-time worker, you are less likely to be undertaking training for upskilling. Is this a new phenomenon or is there a contradiction here?

**Keith Harvey** (Australian Services Union): I do not think it is really a contradiction. I think we are talking about two different groups of workers. I agree with Julian if you are locked into a precarious casual part-time job, which does not appear to have anywhere to go anyway. I mean, you can't really afford to undertake training. The workers that I am talking about are temporary workers in the sense, you know, of labour hire in the clerical sort of area and who go in as temporary staff to a particular office (or other enterprise). And they are not exactly gold collar workers; I have not heard that phrase before. They are sort of intermediate. They may be IT workers, but they also may be clerical administrative workers, so they are in a sort of temporary employment market. But they are not the same as the people that Julian was talking about. I think that IT applications type people, who have

---

\* This section was prepared from the tape recording of the discussion session by the editors.

traditionally commanded a bit of a margin because they are considered to be more highly skilled, they have got the latest skills, the latest software packages and what have you. So they go in and out, some of them by choice. But in the process they seem to be updating their skills and making sure they are readily marketable to an employer. But it is not the same, I think, as the more precarious types of workers that Julian was mentioning.

**Julian Teicher** (National Key Centre in Industrial Relations): Can I answer that? I think you're right. It highlights the highly differentiated nature of the labour market. One of my colleagues completed a doctorate recently on this whole self-employed agency worker group. They did some fairly detailed survey work of the group of people who were managing their own career and what you find out is, depending on the industry and skill base and demographic, and a mixture of those things, of the individual, then their employment situation is quite different. Indeed then even their income and their willingness to invest in their own skill formation is quite varied, so when we talk about a self-employed or an agency worker, we are talking about a number of different creatures. Some of them are the classic subordinate, self-employed and others are in the intermediate category where, particularly in those IT and engineering type industries, there is enormous scope for personal skill upgrading. Nonetheless, it reflects that shift towards putting responsibility back on the individual.

**Peter Grant** (former Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs): I would like Keith and Rex to expand upon their comments about generic skills ie. those skills that are portable across jobs, employers, industries and so on. I may have misheard, but I sensed a degree of tension between one of Therese's comments, in which she seemed to suggest that generic skills are being imparted via training package delivery in the retail industry, and Rex's comments, which perhaps implied the contrary ie. that very little is being done to actually foster the development of these generic and portable skills and understandings. I would like to hear a bit more about their views on those issues.

**Therese Bryant** (Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association): I don't know that it is contradictory but perhaps there has been more emphasis, in developing the retail training package, to pick up those sort of things. That does not mean to say that is happening across all industries, of course.

**Rex Hewett** (Australian Education Union): I think I said that they were not being properly assessed. It is clear that there are different ways in which, for instance, the Mayer key competencies are being dealt with: very effectively in some training packages and not in others. My point was simply that it is very difficult to get consistency, if you want consistency, in the application of broad underpinning skills and knowledge in the key competencies when

there is no measure, or it is difficult to measure, the success or otherwise of those competencies.

**Keith Harvey** (Australian Services Union): We completely agree that generic skills are again coming back into their own. In the early versions of the clerical administrative competency standards the Mayer key competencies were all separately identified. They were embedded, for good reasons, that you could not deliver, train and assess except in some form of context. So we embedded them and reported on them in a table at the front of each training package. I think we embedded them so deeply that nobody could find them anymore and they weren't really being assessed at all, except by some sort of implication or inference. We clearly agree that they are at the forefront and they ought to be put back in some way, so that they can be identified and trained and assessed – absolutely and explicitly, not implicitly.

**Gerald Burke** (CEET): To what extent are we achieving lifelong learning already? I wonder if it is a question of for whom? Are people being left out? If we believe the OECD statistics, in terms of actual people participating, say, beyond the age of 30 or 40 years, Australia is probably up about top in the world. Maybe some other countries do not keep the sort of records we have from our VET system. However, in terms of participation in training in the workplace Australia is not at the top, according to the International Adult Literacy Survey. It looks as though we are about middle level there. What all the studies seem to show is that, for those who are poorly educated, there is not much provided for them in the workplace. They do not participate in the formal education system, in the TAFE or other VET system, very much at all. They are the ones who are left out continually. And the literacy levels in our population are a long way behind those of the countries of Northern Europe. According to the literacy survey again, about 45% of Australian adults are below literacy level 3 on the document scale. That is argued by the people developing this to be the level that just about everybody should be up to. Admittedly a lot of those are older people who have come to Australia with very low levels of English and so on, but Australia still has a long way to go for a large section of the population (even if some are participating and continue to participate at a high level).

**Robin Shreeve** (NSW Department of Education): We have done a very interesting study recently on the changes in the TAFE profile over the last twenty years. One of the huge changes in NSW is that general education – which covers a multitude of sins, but includes pre-vocational ESOL – has increased from 10% to 23% over that period. The study also shows some very interesting things in terms of the drivers to that profile change. In many industries there appears to be no causal link between employment growth and growth in VET. For example, one of the statistics is that employment increased by 36% and our TAFE enrolments increased by 100% over that twenty-year period. We are currently looking to tease that out, and some of it

is probably out of the growth funds and other things along those lines. However, in terms of the older workers coming in, I think you would find that a lot of older workers are going into general education programs in times of recession, as “storage” until employment opportunities pick up again. But that is not true of every industry.

**Keith Harvey** (Australian Services Union): Can I comment on what Gerald said? I do not want what I said to be perhaps interpreted as saying there is no training or anything happening in workplaces. I think there is, there always has been lots. The problem is, or part of the problem is, that it is informal, unrecognised, not certified, and it is not seen as a building block going on to do something else. When I say it is not happening there is no perception that I’m here, I’m going to go to there, I am going to get this ticked off and then move to the next step, go up to another further qualification and another level. Things like that. There is no concept of moving on a pathway of acquiring skills and receiving recognition for it. However, that is not to say that employers are not delivering lots of training and employees are not actually learning a significant amount on the job, because they are. However, I don’t think it is being viewed in any sort of context, of it actually being a lifelong learning process, culture, learning workplace, what have you. It is just incidental and what happens.

## **SESSION TWO: EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYER ORGANISATIONS' PERSPECTIVES: Current experience, opportunities for improvement**

**Chair:** Steve Balzary, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

### **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA\***

I am a divisional director with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia and my responsibilities are in the commercial services area. I am basically about making money for my organisation, but I also have a policy position in terms of our education and training activities. And I am giving this presentation at the request of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

I have a long history in the vocational education and training area. I worked for ten years in the Western Australian TAFE system, both in the colleges and in the State Training Authority, so I have got some understanding about how the system works. Like Rex I used to be a TAFE teacher and have similar credentials, although I was a boilermaker. I have got some understanding of what it means to actually do a real job.

My presentation will focus on three key issues: access to training and learning opportunities; choice as a basis for lifelong involvement in training and learning; and some comments about moving the vocational learning debate forward.

First, I am going to talk about access. It might seem fairly evident that State Training Authorities control the funding. However, we believe that it probably is an issue that has some impact on the access by enterprises and individuals to appropriate training outcomes. Nearly always, the State Training Authority's determination about what is required, in terms of industry training needs, results in a mismatch between what industry actually wants and what State Training Authorities think industry want. There are other models that exist elsewhere in the world where the funding is not controlled by State Training Authorities, but where funding decisions are made by employer groups and employee organisations. It may well be that there is an opportunity to think seriously about how we fund and control the funding of training in this country.

---

\* Presentation by Gary Collins, Director of Training Services, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, Perth. Originally, Peter Costantini from Commerce Queensland was going to participate in this session. Unfortunately, at the last minute, he found he was not able to be present. Gary Collins had some discussion with him; and incorporated some of Peter's thoughts into the material which is presented here.



Eighty percent of funds are allocated to institutional based programs that are quite often disconnected from what takes place in the workplace. There has been an ongoing debate for some time now about why it is that the States and Territories will not allocate more resources to the New Apprenticeship pathways and insist on providing the majority of the funds that are available to institutional based programs, many of which, as I said previously, have little relevance to what actually takes place in the workplace. Even though some of these programs are now linked to and allied to training package outcomes, the connection to what goes on at work is still a bit tenuous.

The allocation procedures that are used to provide funding in relation to vocational training are often unable to deal with immediate or emerging demands, even though States and Territories have moved to a competitive tendering arrangement for many of the programs that are on offer. Quite often those tendering processes have a lag period that does not allow them to deal immediately with issues in relation to skill formation. Peter Glynn is going to talk about skill shortages. This is one area where there has been a major issue. Individuals and enterprises cannot access appropriate training because the States cannot release the funds quickly enough, or they cannot make prompt decisions about flexible training, because of the processes they have in place in terms of allocation of funds.

In relation to overall access, particularly in relation to where the States get their information about what it is that individuals in industry want in terms of their training requirements, there is a lot of effort that goes into this. All the States and Territories have their own consultative arrangements to actually collect information about what they think industry wants. But quite often they get it wrong. Until last week I was the Chairman of the State metals ITC in Western Australia. I resigned last week, long before I knew what was coming out of the Budget process. The State metals ITC would develop a training priorities plan on an annual basis. In nearly every case over the last three or four years the decisions made by the State Training Authority were contrary to the proposals that were in the plan determined by the industry parties. The metals ITC in Western Australia basically mirrors the national ITABs, where there is a very clear contribution from the various unions that operate in that sector and the employer organisations. So the two industry parties were making statements about what they thought were appropriate training requirements for their industry sector and the State Training Authority was basically either ignoring them or choosing to do things differently. The priorities recommended by the industry partners were mostly overlooked and funding was allocated to areas in the industry that were of low or questionable demand.

Another issue in relation to access concerns the thin markets argument and how it relates to restrictions on access. Thin markets, as some of you are

probably aware, is where the State Training Authority makes a determination that they cannot allocate an open process, a user choice process or a completely competitively allocated process for access to training funds. They use it on the basis that the market is too small, there will be some threat to the public infrastructure in those areas and so on. The thin market argument has been used very successfully in Western Australia to limit access to programs across a range of areas. This relates to the comments that were made previously about the retail sector, as a good example. Thin markets is not just about saying that in certain locations people cannot access particular programs, which is one of the aspects that applies in Western Australia and other States. It is also about saying that we will cap the numbers of people who are allowed to gain entry into certain programs in certain industry areas. In many States and Territories caps are now put on the numbers of people that can gain access to particular programs in particular industry sectors. This is so even though the industry sectors have got an increasing demand for people to get into those programs.

Another issue in relation to access concerns the complexity of the system. Employers have been arguing for some time to make the system easier to understand and give some better description about how it all works. One indication of the system's complexity is the number of brokers that now exist in the training market. There are many people who make a living out of telling other people what to do in relation to training arrangements. There are issues in relation to territories and the way in which the training bureaucracy deals with individuals and enterprises that also contribute to access problems. A good example is the fact that national employers have to deal with eight separate systems and quite often the things that those systems tell them differ from State to State. A lot of work has been done in relation to national consistency arrangements, but there are still some problems in those areas. Some employers walk away from the system because it is just too complex.

Now I want to briefly look at user choices as a basis for lifelong involvement. I believe that competition is essential in the vocational education and training market, but I do not disagree with the comments that Rex made earlier about the need for a vibrant and dynamic TAFE system. ACCI represents about 350,000 employers through its various organisations around the country. The vast majority of those employers would have employees who have been trained in the TAFE system or are attending TAFE colleges now or sourcing services from TAFE colleges. Many of those member organisations also use private registered training organisations. And employers want a dynamic and diverse and responsive system. They want a system that mixes the best from the public provider and the private provider. In relation to our requirements, choice is a key element.

Choice is a key element in how successful the individual will be in terms of their lifelong learning activities. We want to see that the choice is made easy

for them, that they can access the provider that they want, that they can access the program they want, in the way that they want to access it. Some of the comments that were made earlier by Rex and Keith in relation to where training is being delivered, how it is being delivered, the opportunity for individuals to actually source it in a way that suits their individual needs, are also the sorts of requirements that employers have from the system. Employers want to be able to get into a system that is easy to access, easy to understand, flexible in its approach and responsive to their needs. One of the things that we think will help to achieve that, is to put some more transparency into the way that the system funds the various training programs. If you asked an employer around the country what they thought it cost to train one of their apprentices or one of their trainees or one of their existing employees in a particular VET program, the likelihood is that most of the employers would not have a clue about the cost of the training. And our view is that those costs should be published, there should be lists of costs determined on an individual State and Territory basis. For example, if you want to train a retail trainee in Certificate 2 in New South Wales, this is what the State Training Authority will contribute to the cost of that training. Of course, it might be different to the price that is allocated in Western Australia; and the price that is allocated for training in the north of Western Australia might be different from that in the metropolitan Perth area. However, once those costs are publicly available to all the users, then people can determine (either individuals or the enterprises involved) whether they want to contribute further to the price of training by topping up the costs, for example if they do not believe that the amount provided by the State is enough.

We also believe that initial employment based training will create a platform for future workplace learning. If people are given the opportunity to actually get involved, as part of their initial employment, in the learning environment it is more likely that they will continue that through their working life. All the studies in relation to the outcomes from apprenticeship and traineeship pathways show that the ongoing opportunities available from people who do those sorts of programs are better than for those people who are involved in fully institutional programs with no connection to the workplace. Again, there is no difference here to some of the comments that were made by my colleagues from the trade unions this morning in relation to the connection to the workplace and to the learning situation. We believe that that is a key element.

Our view is that individual learning accounts will overcome some of the access problems. If the individual is given some control over the process, if they are given some incentive and some motivation in terms of their ability to access appropriate training, they can make appropriate choices in terms of the training provider that they want to source that training from. If this account allows them to step in and out of the training environment, the learning environment, whenever and wherever they chose in terms of their working

life, it is likely that some of the access problems that I identified earlier will be overcome. These accounts could also be used, not just for the delivery of training, but also to purchase some of the recognition of prior learning and other skills recognition arrangements that Therese spoke about earlier.

In relation to thin markets, third party access is an important part of our position. There is an argument that says that we cannot allow people to make their own choice in regional areas because TAFE colleges will fall over. Third party access will allow other people to access some part of the TAFE college to deliver the programs. This is exactly the sort of arrangement that Rex described earlier in relation to Box Hill. There are other colleges that also allow independent providers to do similar things. All of this will be improved if there is an honest approach to aspects of the implementation of training packages. A whole lot of nonsense is spoken about training packages that is not honest. People make comments about some of the things that are wrong with training packages without giving due consideration to all the work that has gone into them from both sides of the industrial area. Lots of employer organisations and lots of trade union organisations have been involved in the development of these things.

I now want to make a few comments in terms of where we should go, in terms of moving forward. Employer engagement is crucial, because you cannot develop an appropriate learning culture in the workplace without employers being part of the process. They need to be involved in the exercise. Otherwise they are not going to do the sorts of things that we have spoken about this morning. Once you have got their engagement, then it will be far easier for employees to actually source the workplace learning arrangements that they need. The primary relationships should be between the employer and the registered training organisation (RTO), not between the employer and the State Training Authority. State Training Authorities are always nothing to do with the direct delivery of skills or skills recognition or assessment processes. The relationship should be between the RTO and the end user.

States and Territories should set priorities based on appropriate industry advice. Some of the advice that has been provided is not appropriate. I will give you a great example. I am a director of the MERS ITAB and as part of our requirements under ANTA's arrangements we were required to develop a business plan, a training priorities list if you like, setting out the training requirement for the industry. The document was circulated and the State Training Authority in South Australia said to us that they believed that the document was irrelevant and inappropriate for industry in South Australia. This was even though the major employer organisation in that sector, the Engineering Employers' Association of South Australia, and senior trade union officials, the State Secretary of the AMWU in South Australia and the National President of the CPU, were all members of the ITAB and endorsed

the document. That is the sort of nonsense that can go on in terms of industry advice.

In terms of regulation, the Australian Qualifications Training Framework (AQTF) will regulate the system, providing RTOs are allowed to make some appropriate decisions. TAFE colleges are big organisations with lots of resources. There should be no reason why they cannot manage the system in relation to their requirements under the AQTF. Those private RTOs who cannot do that in relation to the AQTF should not exist. In our view, if you are a private RTO and you want to be in the business you should make sure that you satisfy the requirements of the AQTF. We believe that State Training Authorities should have faith in the process and allow RTOs to offer the flexibility and responsiveness that is required. STAs need to relinquish control and allow TAFE colleges and other providers to get on with the job.

We think one of the key issues is that nominal hours should go, replaced with unit costs set on a State and Territory basis. That goes back to the transparency of cost that we spoke about earlier.

The key issue for us is that if you do not empower both the employer and the employee in terms of their understanding of the system, including the costs associated with it, the way things are priced and a transparent funding arrangement, they will not be able to make informed choices. Employer and employee engagement is critical for the successful engagement of Australian industry with the VET system.

## **NATIONAL ELECTRICAL AND COMMUNICATIONS AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION\***

My Association is a member of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. I participate on the ACCI Employment, Education and Training Committee, an internal committee that sets policy in these areas. I am also a member of ACCI's General Council, which is the organisation's peak policy-setting body.

I want to focus on three things: first, the skill shortage that Steve has spoken about; the issue of employer engagement; and the training package review. They are all here and now issues. They are not projecting what the lifelong learning issues might be, but issues that we need to and are addressing now. The national electrical and communication industry, the contracting sector of the industry, addresses one of the emerging markets. NECAA has 6,000 member businesses across the country. The industry has an annual turnover of \$6 billion. Roughly \$4 billion of that total is in electrical installations and the other \$2 billion is in communications and computer installations, although we expect that within the next five to ten years the proportions will be reversed.

Our industry is responsible for employing and training three out of every four electrical apprentices. We are now responsible for nearly all of the vocational training in the telecommunications and computer, voice and data communications sector. Fifteen years ago, Telecom had the responsibility for that. It now has zero commitment to vocational training and industry has had to pick that up. It has fallen within our sector, and rightly so. It is a responsibility we have gladly picked up. When we had the opportunity to raise this matter with the Federal Government about three years ago, we argued that there were significant skill shortages and that government policy had no capacity to address the needs of our industry. The focus had previously been on entry-level training, for those who had no training and very limited training opportunities, whereas increasingly it was a situation where they could start at the AQF Level 1 or whatever, and have their skills recognised.

The fact was that without a substantial review, the skill shortages that already existed were going to continue to exist and indeed, get worse. Our own projections, which were confirmed through the skill shortage work undertaken with the Federal Government, suggested that, whilst the apprentice growth in our industry would increase by 2% annually, demand for skilled tradesmen as a consequence of the expected increase in work would be 5%. That is, we already had a shortage and it was going to increase by 3% annually. We also argued that there was a problem with youth attitudes. Young people who had traditionally come into the trade now

---

\* Presentation by Peter Glynn, Chief Executive Officer of the National Electrical and Communications Australia Association.

thought it was a dirty trade and did not want to do it. They did not want to commit to a four-year apprenticeship. It appeared they would rather go for the one year qualification and during those early years swan around in sidewalk cafes, slick back their hair, get a traineeship from the retail sector and everything would be wonderful. They also believed that the industry paid low wages.

From the employers' side the situation was not much better. They complained about the poor quality of applicants. Shorter economic cycles meant they could not commit financially as they had in the past. Competition was also increasing, their margins were narrower and they believed that the cost of training apprentices was far too high. Group training was seen by employers as a good option, but certainly not the preferred one.

There appeared to be no strategy to address these problems by government. Neither was there the capacity within our own industry to do it; the capacity was not the lack of commitment, but the lack of resources to do it. We were fortunate that ACCI at that time was able to get the ear of the Minister and his response was: "You prove it. You prove that there are skill shortages. We'll do something about it". This was despite the advice from his Department that there were not skill shortages, that we were just trying to get something for nothing. The government made a very modest commitment in terms of resource, but it was enough for us to be able to substantiate our claim. As a consequence, the first three industries that we looked at have now expanded to nine industry sectors. Each of the sectors has committed to three-year programs. The first of them are now just about completed and we expect that will increase by a further two years. There has been minimal cost to government for that, while from the industry's perspective it has been extremely important and the outcomes have been very positive.

The first report on the NECAA/ACCI/Federal Government skill shortage initiative identified the critical emerging issues:

- How to attract more people to electrotechnology trade training?
- How to gain greater commitment from employers to increase investment in training and to reduce attrition rates during training?
- How to promote relevant and flexible training and facilitate responsible pathways to improve the skills base of existing electrotechnology trade persons; to decrease occupational wastage (measured at 36% for apprentices during training; and if my memory serves me right it was about 50% of people who dropped out of the trade by age 30); and to meet the rapidly changing needs for new technological skills, given the likely changes in demand for different skill sets in response to the current and projected needs of the Australian economy?

- How to facilitate cross-industry and/or alternative pathways for those entering or re-entering the industry? and
- How to cater for the needs of an increasing number of older entrants to training in electrotechnology?

The report made recommendations under four focus areas for action. First, increased marketing and promotion was recommended. Secondly, the report argued for more flexible and alternative training pathways, noting that roughly 60% of all those training at AQF Level 3 were training to be electricians. Thirdly, the report called for evaluation of the existing regulatory, legislative and systemic barriers to New Apprenticeships. There are systemic barriers, both in State training systems, but also in relation to the electrical license. Finally, the report suggested that there should be a streamlined response to demand for new skill sets.

In relation to increased marketing and promotion we looked at it from two sides: how do we change the attitude of employers? and how do we change the attitude of employees? We concluded that the action required among employees or prospective employees was relatively easy, following research among the schools and so on. We found that schools had relatively little information about traditional trades and that careers teachers, whilst generally willing and keen, had much less than they wanted and than was required. We sent out material to every school, supported by electronic e-mail. But that is really only a feeder into what is a web-based information medium. It is very sophisticated and will be kept up to date. We developed a careers CD that we gave to kids to take home and discuss with their parents. We do now have a strategy in place; the subject is discussed across the industry; industry leaders have taken up the challenge; industry media is supporting the initiative; target and performance criteria are being established for all of the objectives and strategies; and research has been conducted that allows policy to be developed on scientific rather than anecdotal information.

Interestingly, I was with the ITABs in our industry on Monday and I referred to these developments, because there has been a summary of these skill shortage reports released by ANTA. They said that this report does not make sense and that a 36% dropout result is not on. I said it was a survey done by NCVER and statistically valid. Their response was: "We'd like to talk to you about it over a beer in the pub". That has been a problem that we have had for a long time. The ITABs want to rely on the anecdotal and what you can solve over a beer. What I told them is that we will go to the pub, I love to drink beer, but if you want to change Government policy you have got to do something more substantial.

A very important employer engagement survey was conducted. It found that there are two principal influences impacting on apprentice employment and technology in our industry. They were: the size of the firm; and the



availability and continuity of work. Just under half (48%) of the 901 firms surveyed currently employed an apprentice.

A number of conclusions and recommendations arose from the survey and are being pursued with the government. First, there were the school to work arrangements. Employers are concerned with the level of skills for new entrants, especially in the early years of their apprenticeship. School to work issues are therefore a concern and need to be addressed. It was recommended that the resources be provided to support and build on the work already undertaken to improve the skills of new entrants to the industry.

Secondly, the survey advocated the development of alternative pathways. Whilst the traditional four-year apprenticeship has served the sector well and continues to do so, the increase in demand evidenced by this research demonstrated that more flexible arrangements are needed to widen access for new entrants to the industry. Work needs to be undertaken to identify possible alternative pathways so that new skill formation is not inhibited. It was recommended that: alternative pathways be further investigated, developed and trialled over the next three years; such pathways should encompass the need for skill levels at point of entry to the sector and alternative school-based to industry pathways; and industry should aggressively promote and advocate alternative pathways to business.

Thirdly, the survey examined the role of group training companies, which is evident in the industry. The predominance of large firms using Group Training Companies is evidence of the success of the scheme. However, as smaller employers dominate the sector, strategies are needed to attract them to use Group Training Companies. It was recommended that: targeted resources be provided to increase the number of Group Training electrotechnology projects under the Group Training New Apprenticeships Targeted Incentives Program for small or medium-sized firms; the benefits of group training be marketed to small and medium-sized firms in the industry; and further work be undertaken to establish the consistency between the survey findings of direct employment with employment through Group Training Companies.

Fourthly, the survey addressed targeted incentives and employer subsidies. Incentives can influence the engagement decision and 50% of employers thought that current incentives were insufficient. However, across the board changes may not be needed if incentives and subsidies can be targeted to specific areas of skill need. These areas should first be identified through industry and labour market analysis, which will ensure available resources are strategically applied and results can be monitored and evaluated. It was recommended that: a review of current levels of incentive and subsidy arrangements be undertaken to identify areas of under-supply; any such review should take particular note of areas of emerging skill need in the

electrotechnology areas, specifically in the vital areas of communication/voice and data; and a targeted incentives regime should be developed taking these factors into account.

I also want to comment on the training package review. NECAA has been involved with the ITAB for a long time. It was involved with the development of the current training package and supported its implementation. ANTA did not like it, but because it had industry support they let it go through. NECAA has information that says that maybe the training package is a barrier. The Association made this material available to the review, only to find that our letter, our submission, became an addendum to the submission and the major recommendations; and the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) took offence at some of our comments.

NECAA's submission sought to bring into the review the issues that had been found from the skill shortage initiative and from the employer engagement survey. In its submission to ANTA, NECAA commented that it remained disappointed with the report of the review of the training package. NECAA stated that:

“The review needs to accommodate the changing nature of the industry and the development of new skill sets by becoming more flexible and responsive. ... Account needs to be taken of the issues around:

- Pathways available to achieve qualifications;
- Qualifications structure in relation to skill needs and skill development; and
- Introducing the industry and building links through VET in schools to new apprenticeships in the package.”

NECAA also commented that redefining the current (long) units of competency into smaller units would: enable the learning to be more transparent and achievable; ensure greater portability and articulation of qualifications in response to any ongoing and emerging industry requirements for new skill sets; and bring the electrotechnology training package into line with the structure of the packages.

The ETU responded that NECAA was betraying the electrical trades. “The electrical trade is under attack from the Commonwealth Government and employer group, National Electrical and Communications Association (NECAA). NECAA, the supposed voice of electrical contractors in Australia, is using a Federal Government review of trade training to launch this attack on the licensed electrical trade. If successful, the electrical trade may well be a thing of the past”. They argued that various significant matters were at risk, including: full apprenticeship training; safe electrical work carried out safely

by competent tradespeople; a safe working environment for electrical workers; and public safety. The ETU concluded that: “Our craft should not be sacrificed by the NECAA leadership of accountants and industrial relations hacks who have lost touch with our industry and don’t respect the wishes of their members.”

The union’s comments are a reality check by a major sector, irrespective of its objective consideration of its marketplace, now and tomorrow. However, we cannot forget about changes in technology, new skill sets and work requirements, and how best to respond to them. There are serious issues to be overcome before the longer-term issues of lifelong learning can be integrated into industry strategy.

## VICTORIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY\*

I would like to come at the topic for the symposium from a different angle, the importance of early intervention in relation to lifelong learning. The Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI) is a multi-industry chamber and, probably because I have a teaching and education background, VECCI's approach is a little different. VECCI's approach to training and lifelong learning has been to try and educate employers about the importance of training. We have tried to build the capacity of employers to actually engage with the education and training system. I propose to consider the early intervention argument from three perspectives: the perspective of young people; the perspective of employers; and the perspective of schools and education.

VECCI looks first at what makes a lifelong learner and then works backwards from it. I think that a lifelong learner is somebody who loves learning, somebody who's got the ability to learn, somebody who has the motivation to learn, and somebody who understands the rewards of learning. If one works backwards from there, one needs to look at how young people engage with that; how employers engage with it; and then how schools perhaps reinforce and help it. For young people, particularly in an increasingly knowledge-based society, the price paid for missing out on learning can become a very high one. And this is made worse by the decline in low skill jobs, which have traditionally employed those with few qualifications. So the major challenge, I think, remains that lifelong learners tend to be those who have already done well in initial education, although those who did not do well would stand to gain most. The OECD research, and some of the local research that we have done, demonstrates that those making the greatest use of their skills at work are six to eight times more likely to have received company training than those who are low skilled. Thus, the better learner you are when you go in, the more likely you are to continue to be a learner once you are in the workplace.

Learning foundations for young people are very important; and VECCI spends a considerable amount of time and effort working on the school-to-work transitions area. Adequate learning foundations require access to more than just the basic school learning. In that context, the two things that I wish to emphasise are, first, linking general education to work and secondly, understanding the application of learning once young people are in the workplace. It is much easier to be a lifelong learner in the workplace if you have obtained an early understanding of how you actually apply your learning in the workplace. Many young people do not understand how they can apply their learning in the workplace; and we have found that there is not a good link between general education and work. Research that VECCI has

---

\* The presentation was given by Ms. Pam Jonas, the training and employment manager at the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Melbourne.

been involved with showed that many young people made no adequate connection between the part-time work they did and the work that they did at school, and between their part-time work and how that would impact on their future career.

Young people need to be better motivated to learn and they need to learn to be better motivated to learn from an early age. I am not sure, and I have been a teacher myself, that young people get better motivation from their schooling. They need to be encouraged to complete Year 12. We take it for granted far too much that it is acceptable for young people to leave school early. As employers, teachers and parents we need to be working with young people to keep them in the system; to keep them in the system doing relevant things; and doing things that motivate them to continue to learn.

Also, there are *major* issues with career advice and career guidance. In fact, that is not just for young people, but continues on into the workplace. I listened to Therese speaking earlier in the symposium about employers being responsible for assisting employees with their career aspirations. However, when one thinks about the number of employers who own small to medium-sized businesses, many of whom left school at Year 9 themselves, their capacity to manage the true aspirations of their workers is going to be fairly limited. There needs to be a bit of a reality check when we talk about learning organisations and managing career aspirations in these circumstances.

With employers, there is a real need to engage and re-engage them with learning. They do not generally come knocking on VECCI's doors, as an employer organization, asking to be involved in education. They only come to VECCI when they need training. It is not at the forefront of their thinking as an important thing for them. Consequently, we take it out to them, rather than wait for them to come to us. We get employers, as much as we possibly can, to work with education, so that they can understand it. And we do it from a number of levels. For example, we have employers working with teachers. We manage the Teacher Release to Industry Program, where we put teachers into industry, so that industry can understand what educators do and educators can understand what industry does. We piloted a program last year, which is called Principal for a Day, where we put twenty CEO's of big companies and community leaders into State Government schools, so that they could get an understanding of what a Principal's work involves. Many of those people had not been in a school for thirty years and did not know what education today is about. It is very hard to convince them that training and education are important if they don't even know what occurs in schools.

VECCI ran a pilot program last year, and we are doing it again this year, which takes career education and career information into workplaces. It involves setting up career displays about vocational education and training in businesses for parents who are employees, so that they can obtain the sort of

information that they are not getting from the schools. The overwhelming majority of people who accessed the information said they had never seen anything about vocational education and training in schools and that such material would be really great for their kids (and their parents).

Engaging employers in understanding what education is about and facilitating their participation in school transition programs, actually re-engages employers with learning, with schools and with training providers. Employers need the education sector to assist them to identify their needs; and that is particularly true for small businesses. The sorts of participation that employers can have through structured workplace learning, through work experience, through a range of engagements with education can go a long way to assisting them understand what lifelong learning is about and translating it into their own business.

Lastly, with school education, connections to lifelong learning need to be made early and then reinforced at the school level. There is still great resistance in schools to vocational learning, workplace learning and school-based apprenticeships. Resistance occurs because teachers, and as I said I was a career teacher once, do not understand the importance of giving kids lots of different contexts for their learning. I'm not blaming teachers. I think there are also structural difficulties within schools themselves, in terms of even allowing those teachers who have good ideas to work with kids and expand their horizons. Often the structural impediments are too great to actually allow those teachers to make much of an impact.

I'm very passionate about this whole area and particularly about career education. A recent OECD report on Australia that I have been part of, demonstrated that \$200 million of public funding is spent each year on career education; and I am skeptical of the measurable outcomes that are being achieved.

## **BUSINESS COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA\***

I am going to talk about lifelong learning in the context of the world of work, but more specifically about the nature of large enterprises and their role in ensuring the ongoing capability and skills of their employees. In that context you are talking about how lifelong learning actually contributes, not only to the individual's value and capacity to play a part in the community, but also about economic growth and sustainability, and about enterprise performance. The perspective here is slightly different from that of some other speakers. It is not focused on the individual as somebody in control of their lifelong learning, but rather based on conversations with a number of Business Council of Australia (BCA) members. The BCA members are the hundred largest companies operating in Australia. The perspective here is about how these enterprises and their training strategies provide an opportunity for the individual to gain one avenue into lifelong learning. From my perspective, lifelong learning goes well beyond the formal work based learning that may occur as a part of what has been discussed so far today.

The starting point for the large enterprises I spoke to in terms of training and development is how that contributes to their business sustainability or their business growth. It is usually viewed, therefore, from the perspectives of the enterprise rather than the perspectives of the individual. However, the individual is generally a beneficiary, not only in terms of how they operate better in the workplace, but in terms of developing a set of capabilities that are often generic. They build the individual's capacities for employment, not only within that organisation, but in other organisations as well. Certainly, in the conversations I have had, there has been a strong emphasis on generic skill development in the workplace, rather than just technical or specialist knowledge.

The enterprises I spoke to tended to look at training and development at one of three levels. First, the more sophisticated firms were making very specific alignments between their long-term business strategy and their training and development or education or workplace learning strategy (whatever they call it). And those decisions were being made at boardroom level.

Secondly, there were other organisations where the decisions were rather less sophisticated. They analysed the skill gap in their organisation and developed training plans specifically around those skill needs. The alignment of training to business growth tended not to be as explicit as for the organisations in the first group.

At a third level, there were a considerable number of the large enterprises where there was a significant amount of ad hoc decision-making about

---

\* The presentation was given by Ms. Maria Tarrant, Assistant Director at the Business Council of Australia, Melbourne.

training and development, for example because there is new technology coming in, or staff turnover has left them with gaps, or they are introducing a particular change in work processes that will require a different way of doing things. When people talk about the alignment of training and development and business strategies, what they are often talking about is how the enterprise is going to sustain control of a particular size or section of the market or how they are going to break into new markets; what organisational change processes they are undergoing; what the impact of technology is likely to be; or what is expected to be the impact of new products and services. That tends to be the framework in which the training decisions are being made.

It is interesting that the processes by which those decisions get translated and actually have an engagement with the individual are quite variable. They are variable within the organisation and they are variable across the organisations. In some of these large enterprises, and it reflects the cost efficiencies for them, there are quite sophisticated processes. Individuals' skills and capabilities and then their career paths are identified. Efforts are made to identify what sort of training and development should happen over a period of time. But it would be naïve to think that that was consistent across even the largest investors in training and development. Also, it is often that group of employees, both down and across the organisation, that are going to be critical to the enterprise's long-term sustainability that are part of that more integrated process. For other staff the level of investment does trail off; and that leaves a group of people who are quite at risk in the longer term.

Certainly firms are using annual reviews, position evaluations, job assessments, 360-degree feedback cycles and supervisor assessments to identify the training for individuals or groups of individuals (and linking that into work activities and developments). It is interesting that across the people I spoke to, at one end of the spectrum there is formal engagement with the national training framework and use of all the formal processes, while at the other end are people who say that this is part of our individualisation from our competitors, so that to the degree that the national framework will provide parts of the process we will use it, but a lot of what we do will be individualised. They are prepared to develop it themselves or contract people to develop it for them. They are not fussed about whether it fits neatly into the qualifications framework or not. At the end of the day, what they are concerned about is whether the training and development leads to better performance.

The work we have been doing with the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry was a study of employer needs, in terms of generic or employability skills. It was interesting that, in the thirteen or so case studies that were used, all of whom were large enterprises, every one was using some sort of performance management system. In most cases they were using it right through the organisation. All of them spoke about an expectation that



they were increasingly trying to recruit people with the skills of learning to learn. This included a lot of what Pam Jonas was talking about earlier, ie. people with the motivation and the desire to learn, even if they do not have all of the technical capabilities. And they therefore saw that there were some mutual responsibilities with regard to an individual's ongoing development. Thus, the firms would make business decisions about how much they financed the individual's ongoing development and supported it in terms of the corporate gain, as opposed to what might be the personal gain. There seemed to be quite sophisticated views about how they made that level of investment.

The training interventions being used were amazingly diverse. There were not only the formal, but also a lot of informal interventions. There was also use of a whole series of structured workplace interventions that may not be assessed, but were monitored for successful outcomes. They included such things as putting people into specific project teams for particular types of work, establishing common interest working groups across sites and linking people dealing with similar issues, in different parts of the organisation. The purpose was to facilitate informal learning. Mentoring, coaching and buddying were used, especially with new entry-level employees. Structured practice sessions were organised, particularly with new technology, outside production process time, so that people could see what was possible and what was not. There seemed to be a growing emphasis on trying to record the learning outcomes using all these different facets. However, there was widespread recognition of the difficulties that that posed; and, in some of the firms, a real recognition of the problems, if they did not work out how to solve these difficulties. For example, there could be a downstream risk that they would be over-investing in people's development, at least in one area, if they actually did not know what had been going on. The distance between the training decision and the training experience was likely to be too great, unless there was some formal way of recording what was happening.

Most of the BCA enterprises were talking about training in terms of generic skills, technical skills and theoretical knowledge; and emphasised the need to deal with all three of them. It was interesting, in talking to them around funding, that most of the enterprises actually saw it as an investment in business sustainability. So, whilst some sort of public contribution would have been likely recognised and very useful, at the end of the day the decision would be to go ahead with necessary training and development irrespective of the public investment.

## DISCUSSION\*

**Robin Shreeve** (NSW TAFE): I am interested in the connection between industry relevant training and workplace learning. We have put a huge resource into doing more work-based delivery, have totally changed our approach to the way we deliver training packages within the workplace and have a major push for the training partnerships scheme, where we hope to deliver more and more of our training in the workplace.

But I have to say that the number of full-time courses in the TAFE system has increased over the last twenty years; and it is largely employer-led. One of the biggest complaints I get is when we move a pre-apprenticeship course and things like that, which are very expensive to deliver, and we get lots of complaints from employers.

For example, we currently have a major problem in the hospitality industry, in commercial cookery, where employers only want to take people who have done a one year full-time institutional course. And people compete for second-year apprentices. They are not prepared to put on first year apprentices and they fight over the students who are coming out of full time programs. So it is not a simplistic relationship; and sometimes what industry associations tell us is not what employers tell us.

We have recently signed a deal with the largest retail bakery in Australia to do all their training. We envisaged we would be doing this in the workplace. What did they do? They actually paid for and built a training facility in one of our institutes. They send all their people to off the job training, because that is the way they want to do it. "Industry-led" has got a whole series of different connotations: it is not a simplistic relationship.

**Steve Balzary** (ACCI): It is interesting that you say that. We have just done a recent skill shortages exercise within cookery. We have had extensive discussions, including massive surveys with people. You are right. There are different needs of industry, in terms of employers. And that's a fact. If it was one size fits all across all industries or within an industry, this would be an easy game. We are all in heated agreement on that. I don't think you are actually getting one view from any organisation in terms of the way things should be delivered. To say that industry associations do not represent employers' views; I have an issue with that. We have always said that, in fact, there is a range of ways.

But one of the things we found in cookery, as an example, was that there were widespread concerns from many employers, particularly small ones, that the TAFE kitchens did not produce the reality of the workplace that a real kitchen

---

\* This section was prepared from the tape recording of the discussion session by the editors.

could. There were fundamental concerns about the amount of resources that were being put into that.

Now that is chefs and cooks, whose training needs are different from some of those elsewhere, say in the retail industry. Industry is diverse, so you have got to get really segmented about what the appropriate approaches are. For example, a retail bakery, in terms of their arrangements, is very different from what someone wants in a small cooking café, eatery or restaurant. But yours was a great example and I am pleased you used such a specific example about how we have got to make sure that the messages are there.

**Chandra Shah (CEET):** Extensive training in electrical trades and other trades like that occurred in public utilities ten or fifteen years ago (such as in Telstra or Telecom as it was known then). When they were privatised they reduced drastically the number of trainees and apprentices they took on. Many of those people that were trained were approached by other employers who saw it as a cheap way of getting trained employees. It was mentioned that NECAA is taking on more of the training of new entrants. My question concerns how the burden of training for those new entrants is spread across all employers in the Association. I assume you may have a similar problem, where some employers take on many trainees and others will simply poach from them.

**Peter Glynn (NECA):** That is largely continuing. The employer engagement survey found that the value of investment in training was appreciated by the larger employers. There is a gap that has been filled by group training companies, which have been a very valuable initiative. Despite that, there is still, amongst all employers, a clear preference to employ them directly. In terms of the change in the commitment by instrumentalities to training, some blame that as a great contributor to the overall skill shortage. Unions particularly, say that the decline in the number of apprentices is because governments no longer do it. They believe it is a government responsibility and that is an important feeder mechanism. They say that training no longer exists. We don't hold with that, because if there is a demand that will be taken up somewhere. There is still need at the low-tech end of the scale, but even if those institutions remain committed to training, the nature of the training that they will be doing differs from what it was in the past.

**Chandra Shah (CEET):** I would have thought that Telecom was not training at the low end of the scale.

**Peter Glynn (NECA):** Telecom, yes it was. I don't say the lower end, since I do not like to use that phrase. However, the range of skill and the range of applications has increased with the advances in technology. There is now a far more specialist range of skills required. They are a far better educated, far better skilled person than was produced by Telecom ie. that is produced by industry today. Much of the basic telecommunications installation work is

being done by electricians with some additional training. In fact the high demand is very difficult for me to meet satisfactorily. We often need someone who has got half the skills of an electrician and half the skills of a Telecom technician. That is where the major demand is at the present time, because that is the growth sector. It is the bundle of skills that the client wants; and they prefer it to be done by the one person.

**Steve Balzary (ACCI):** It is also the beauty of having fully taxpayer-funded training, which Telecom used to have.

**Rex Hewett (Australian Education Union):** A number of papers discussed who pays; and it cannot be assumed that governments are going to write a blank cheque. They are limited in the amount of money they can make available; and they face a number of other demands on their resources. There is an argument that some industries are simply substituting their own effort for government funds. I do not know the extent of that, but still the question for me is “who does pay” (including who contributes in kind)? Trainees and apprentices get a lower rate of pay because the time spent in training is not available for productive work for the employer. Thus, they contribute effectively to the total cost of their training. Employers who have adopted the training culture put their own time and money into it. In some cases the government pays for all of the training. It is a very mixed bag and I am wondering whether there has been any work done on motivation to train and willingness to contribute either time or money directly to training in the context of lifelong learning. This is tied up with the question of ongoing commitment to training and training culture; and who contributes time, money or other things.

**Steve Balzary (ACCI):** One of the key things we have lost is the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ survey that used to be undertaken. It was not a very good survey in my view, but at least it was a survey, about the extent of training effort in firms. It did not penetrate informal training, which represents both here and in the rest of the world, which people forget, the majority of training. They certainly looked at some of the formal training mechanisms. We do some surveys that do that; but we have not actually got down to that arrangement. It is something we are talking about at the moment.

My second issue is part of what Gary touched upon, about making the public funding arrangements transparent. The reason we have got our new user choice arrangement is precisely to begin this debate about making public funds transparent. At present this is not the case anywhere in the country. Once employers do understand the public funds which are flowing through into training we seek to allow employers then to articulate clearly how much extra they can contribute financially, if they want to. At the moment no one knows the level of government contributions to training, so employers cannot know what is their financial contribution and what contribution is being

made by individuals. Part of why we are leading that debate (which we do not want to have here today), is about moving it forward, so you can actually measure it.

**Moiria Scollay (ANTA):** The debate about who pays is at the core of the lifelong learning debate, as is the cross-sectoral debate, which has not been touched on yet. These are two fundamental questions: who is going to pay for it?; and how do you manage the divisions between schools, universities, VET, ACE? Many people cannot navigate their way through what, to some, appear enormous barriers between the different sectors, that we seem to make as hard as possible.

In relation to the work being done, to pick up on Steve's point, we have not been able to get an employer investment survey done since 1996. This is an acute embarrassment. In 1996 employers were contributing 45%, as were governments. Individuals were contributing the other 10%. The total was between about \$8 billion and \$8.5 billion. The reason we have not been able to find out the contribution of industry more recently is because, after the training guarantee ceased, industry stopped giving statistics. Now the Australian Bureau of Statistics has a respondent burden test to put on any survey; and industry tells us that the respondent burden for getting that information will be too great. We have been blocked by the ABS now for six years in seeking to do that survey. We have finally negotiated one survey that is about to start; and the results will be available next year.

Another aspect of your question relates to the marketing research that ANTA undertook a couple of years ago. You, of all people Rex, know about that, since you were on the steering committee. However, for the benefit of others, a very comprehensive survey was done on the attitudes and values of all Australians to lifelong learning (including employers). The employer survey was a quick one, whereas the employee or general community survey was an extremely extensive and well validated survey. Amongst the employer respondents there were three clear segments. First, there were those who valued learning highly and will support their employees to do any kind of learning because they believe that assists their bottom line. Secondly, there is another large group, largely the big end of town ("here and now employers") who really value the learning that someone will do in order to meet exactly today's needs, for example with the introduction of new technology. Thirdly, there was a very large segment that is not interested in training. A worrying element, to pick up on a point Pam raised, is that they are predominantly small businesses. The number of small businesses is growing strongly and many small business employers are not interested in learning of any kind, because they are so busy surviving. This is a big issue for lifelong learning and its relationship with work.

[**Steve Balzary** noted, though, that small businesses were always there for the GST sessions that associations ran. “They will definitely turn up” for things like Workcover obligations and other matters related to education about new legislation or changes to existing arrangements. **Moira Scollay** agreed: “Absolutely, [but] things outside of that, that becomes their choice.”

Another really important point is that, when we give the figures for people in VET, the 1.7 million that was quoted, that is actually only at government funded VET. So, for instance, there are 65,000 people in the Defence Forces who have been trained at their expense. They are an RTO in their own right and they are not charging on the government dollar. Another example is Woolworths, which is training its whole workforce at certificate level, except for where they have got apprentices. We have a view that the number of people getting nationally recognised qualifications is well over two million.

**Peter Grant:** Gary, you advocated a move towards individual learning accounts as a means of increasing user choice and influence over the training system. Have you given any thought as to how such a move might actually be implemented in practice here in Australia? It is interesting that the Blair Government has experimented with individual learning accounts. As I understand, they have largely terminated the experiment, particularly because of major problems, both of targeting and of cost control.

**Gary Collins** (CCI of Western Australia): Steve will give you some further advice on what ACCI have done. But as an example, take any of the traditional trade areas. There is a public investment of about 900 hours of training in an electrician (or a boilermaker or a fitter or any of the traditional trade areas). In most of those cases, much of that 900 hours of technical investment is not properly focused. Anybody who has been through the trade system will tell you that in lots of trade areas now, 900 hours is not required. What is to stop an individual taking that 900 hours of training, and the additional resources that are quite often made available in the post-trade area through taxpayer funded arrangements, and stepping in and out of the system when they need the skills, rather than making the assumption that everybody needs their 900 hours up front. I think there are a lot of possibilities in terms of how individuals should be able to use the money that has already been allocated out of the public purse.

**Steve Balzary** (ACCI): We are working on a range of those things and also in the context of the higher education review. In Geneva yesterday and today, there is a discussion from all the European countries about learning accounts. That is going to be fairly important work to look at; and not only about what the problems were in England, because I do not think they implemented it very sensibly. There are also other trials that have been happening; part of what we will do is build on those sorts of arrangements. But I do not want to talk too much about that, as other people have questions.

**Lynette Mayne** (nominee of the Chair of the ANTA Board): I have two hats here: first, I own and run a small business; and secondly I chair the ACTU-Lend Lease foundation. I know the chairman of ANTA has been visiting best practice in the different states, and there are some fantastic examples of partnership between industry and the education institutions right around the country. I am actually a bit surprised at Keith's comments, because a couple of those have been in the clerical area. I think one was Job Network in Sydney, where they are training 150 clerical people to AQF Level 2. It includes people doing small business management packaging in Tasmania; working in the Barossa Valley in South Australia; or in the fishing industry. There are some fantastic examples if you are collecting best practice.

In terms of the small business side, I was pleased to see that Moira mentioned small business. I am not sure that there really is such an apathy, with small business wanting to engage the whole training agenda. If you look at it, most of our businesses are small to medium size businesses (and over 50% of them are now run by women, which is terrific). The problem that I have, and I am fairly close to the whole education environment, involves a couple of things. First, small businesses often do not know what is out there and what some of the fantastic benefits are and what is actually going on. For example, you actually can have people come into the workforce; you do not have to let people go out. If people knew more about what is possible I think you would get a huge take-up from small business. The second thing is access to the system. Access to the system is very difficult, even with me knowing what is going on. Initially, I went to the public system, but that did not work. Then I went to a private provider. Then I had to come up with a combination of public and private, because I was quite firm that we wanted to get all of our employees qualified by the end of next year. It is great that we have come out with a small business management package. It would be really important to have a package addressed towards all employees in small businesses. If you could pick and choose different aspects that you would need in all of the areas of small business. This would make it easier, because today, you cannot just go and pick one package. You have to pull pieces from all over the place and that is very difficult. So my question is, can anyone tell me if you have got any information on the whole small business side of things? Not much was mentioned, although Pam mentioned something about it.

**Steve Balzary** (ACCI): It is a question of where to start. Implicit in everyone's comments here is that it is predominantly small business that we are talking about. There are differences between enterprises of different size; and Maria was the only one who concentrated on the large business sector. In terms of the range of things you have talked about, we know about lack of knowledge and information. That is a constant struggle. We know about issues to do with access and streamlining. I think that is probably part of our next challenge. I have just written to the head of the Federal education and training

department to say that we have got to reduce some of the red tape. We have got to get people who are interfacing with the system to work on how to reduce that red tape. Our assessment, through our New Apprenticeship Centres and other arrangements, is that the administrative processes that are required now, even though we are supposed to be reducing them, in some cases are two to three times more onerous than they used to be prior to the new streamlined system. We just have to fix at least part of that. The people who scream about that most are small businesses.



## **SESSION THREE: GOVERNMENTS: Steering And Rowing**

**Chair:** Moira Scollay, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian National Training Authority.

### **COMMONWEALTH DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS\***

I am pleased to be able to say some things here this morning that I never could have dreamt of saying a mere twelve months ago. I would like to split my allotted ten minutes into two halves. First, to suggest what seem to me to be four key requirements for effective government action in relation to lifelong learning; and second, to offer a quick assessment of how Australia is performing in relation to each of those requirements. I will focus my remarks at the national level for the most part, but I readily acknowledge the vital role and interests of State Governments in this domain.

#### **Four Key Requirements**

The first requirement is that, in formulating their policies and strategies on lifelong learning, governments need to take the long view. What does that mean? It means that Governments need to recognise education and training as long-term drivers of productivity performance, in an economy increasingly based on knowledge and skills. It means they need to be prepared to invest now for returns that may emerge only gradually over the next five, ten or twenty years. It means they need to recognise the value of our public institutions and public infrastructure, both physical and human, as key means by which the public interest in a high quality education and training system may be served. It means a preparedness to recognise that, just as the external environment and requirements for skills and knowledge are changing quite rapidly, so too must the policies set by governments be constantly reviewed and regularly reformed.

Second, governments need to take the wide view. Essential as they will be to success in the knowledge economy, investments in education and training will only be fully effective when they form part of a comprehensive suite of policies designed to foster economic growth, support the development of high performance industries and protect the interests of those who will be most vulnerable in the process of structural change. At a whole of government level the challenge is to ensure that a wide range of policies in education and training, employment, taxation, welfare, industry development, communications and industrial relations, not only interact effectively, but pull in essentially the same direction. Equally important is a commitment to

---

\* This presentation was given by Peter Grant, who had recently retired as a Deputy Secretary in DETYA.

joined-up policy within education and training itself, with a prime focus on the needs of individual learners.

Third, governments need to create an environment conducive to lifelong learning. There is a vital role for government to play in raising community awareness of the growing importance of knowledge and skills to Australia's long term interests, both economically and socially; in creating incentives for increased private investment in education and training, both by individuals and industry; in providing reliable information to guide the choices made on learning pathways and programs; and through its role as regulator and standard setter, ensuring that high standards of quality are established and maintained at all levels. In short, the objectives should be to stimulate and inform demand for learning in the Australian community.

Last, but not least, is the strong commitment to equity in education and training. This means that governments need to acknowledge the strong and well-established relationships between educational attainment, labour market performance and income. A widening gap between the skills-rich and the skills-poor would be a recipe for social division, increasing poverty and rising crime. For these reasons, and others, policies on lifelong learning need to be policies for the many, not simply for the privileged few. There needs to be an active effort to help those most in need, the children of highly disadvantaged families for example, indigenous communities and other severely disadvantaged groups and the many thousands of adults with limited basic skills, who are most at risk in the ongoing process of structural change in the economy.

No doubt there could be a debate about the validity of those requirements. I am happy to have such a debate later if that is wanted, but accepting them for the moment I think it is useful to consider Australia's report card against those sorts of requirements.

### **Australia's Performance**

On the first requirement, the need for a long-term view in policy formation, the record, I think, is mixed at best. Australia has a strong reputation in the OECD community as a country that has been prepared to grasp the nettle of change and implement bold, even radical, policy reforms in the long-term public interest. For the most part, however, that reputation is based on decisions which were taken ten years ago or even more and it is now increasingly at risk.

Over recent years, the political environment in our country generally has become markedly more short term in its focus, rarely moving beyond the dictates of the latest opinion poll or at best the next election. The *Intergenerational Report*, published as part of Tuesday night's Federal Budget,

was a welcome exception and at first glance a heartening sign, but look at the treatment of education and training in that report and hope quickly turns to disappointment. There is scant recognition of the importance of lifelong learning for future economic performance. The assumptions made on trends in education and training participation seem more relevant to the nineteenth century than the twenty-first century; and not surprisingly, given those assumptions, Commonwealth spending on education and training is projected to decline significantly as a proportion of GDP over the next four decades. As an exercise in financial arithmetic the report serves a useful enough purpose; as a statement of policy vision it fails dismally.

More generally, there has been a dearth of new policy development at the national level over recent years. For all of its significance and undoubted achievements, the training reform agenda, I suggest, has not fully kept pace with the changing demands of the modern economy and labour market. National higher education policy has been stagnant at best since the mid-1990s; and there is still no coherent view on a national policy for education in the vital early childhood years.

For all of those reasons, it seems to me, one of the most practical steps that can be taken to advance the cause of lifelong learning in Australia has nothing to do with lifelong learning at all directly. That would be to promote bipartisan support and community consensus in favour of a four-year term for future Australian Governments, mainly as a spur to a longer-term focus in the political debate and future policy development.

On the second requirement, the need for joined-up policy, it is fair to acknowledge that some limited steps have been taken in the right direction. The provision of training credits to certain categories of welfare recipient, for example, is a case in point. Likewise, the initiative announced in the 2002 Federal Budget to provide IT skills training to older Australians is sound enough in principle, even if the scale of this initiative, assistance to a maximum value of \$500 for a mere 11,500 people per year, falls far short of any realistic assessment of needs.

On a broader scale, however, it seems to me that our recent performance against this requirement has been less than satisfactory. Too often the focus of recent national policies has been narrow and disconnected rather than broadly based and joined up. In vocational education and training, for example, a preoccupation with the growth of New Apprenticeships seems to have diverted attention from the wider roles of VET and particularly from the role of our public TAFE institutions. Until recently, also, some key issues of quality played second fiddle to the relentless quest for growth through efficiencies. And, in implementing an industry-driven training agenda, insufficient emphasis has been placed on the importance of broad, transferable skills, portable across different employers, jobs and industries.

Even more tellingly, and Moira referred to this a moment ago, very little has been done to break down - or even to challenge - the sharp structural divisions which are still evident between the various sectors of education and training in Australia. There continue to be some clear, and often unnecessary, differences in the way that learning is organised, delivered, assessed and recognised between the sectors; in teaching and learning processes themselves; in the ways that education is funded and resources are allocated; and in the costs that students have to bear and the support they are given to meet them. None of that serves the needs and interests of individual learners well. On the contrary, it restricts mobility, it impedes transition and it leads to wasted resources. There is ample scope for national leadership on these issues, while accepting that any challenge to well established fiefdoms is certain to meet some stiff resistance.

The third requirement was to create an environment conducive to lifelong learning. There is no doubt, I think, that demand for education and training has risen strongly in Australia over the past two decades and that, thanks in part to the collapse of the full time labour market for young people, there is now far greater awareness among parents that investment in education and training will be vital for the course of their children's future lives. Less well understood is the reality that continuous upgrading of knowledge and skills will increasingly be essential for those parents themselves - indeed for workers of all ages - and that young people in future will need to be prepared for a lifetime of learning rather than a job for life.

Governments have a vital role to play in spreading that message, but their effectiveness in doing so has been decidedly variable to date. At one extreme is a Federal budget that makes virtually no mention of education, innovation, knowledge or skills. At the other are the notable efforts of several State Governments, which have highlighted the importance of education and training as a central whole-of-government issue, and are actively trying to link their education and training policies to their wider strategies for economic and industry development.

Finally, on the fourth requirement - a commitment to equity - I will simply point out the obvious. The relationship between education and training participation and socio-economic status remains clear and strong in Australia. The private benefits of education and training, and public subsidies at the post-compulsory level, still go predominantly to those from relatively privileged backgrounds. And, despite the impressively high rates of adult participation in education and training in Australia, as Gerald Burke mentioned this morning, relatively little has been done to help the many thousands of Australian adults who have serious deficiencies in their basic skills or are most at risk in the process of structural change. Education and training remains the major means by which policy can give expression to the

traditional Australian value of a fair go for all in our society. New approaches are needed to reach and help the members of those disadvantaged groups. Increased funding for private schools or even higher subsidies for employers of apprentices will not take us far in that direction.

I am sorry if those assessments are about as bleak as St. Kilda's chances of making the AFL finals this year. On both counts I wish it were otherwise.

## AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL TRAINING AUTHORITY\*

I have tried to work from the basis of the principles for the survey that were laid down by BIAC and TUAC. Australia's approach to industry-defined qualifications with responsive providers has the potential to meet the principles laid down in the OECD survey. It had the ability to do that and I think it still does.

What is working in the Australian VET system? We have got workforce coverage that is very high now through the reforms, industry-defined qualifications covering over 80% of the workforce below the degree level. This is a big achievement. The expansion of those recognised qualifications into almost all industries, including those that had very little training previously, such as the retail industry, tourism, financial and business services, property services, warehousing, distribution and so on, is something that is unique to Australia. There has been good take-up in most of the new industries as well. There has been a huge increase in the number of new workers under contracts of training. In the last six years it has doubled to 330,000. Almost half of all young people entering full-time jobs are now doing so under a contract of training because of the reforms.

Of those 330,000, a quarter of a million are getting qualifications at Certificate 3 or higher. There is a very large increase in the number of school students undertaking vocational education within the framework, perhaps 200,000 in 2002. It is hard to put a precise figure on that, because some of the people that are doing VET in schools are not actually inside the framework. Many of them are, probably 200,000, but only 10,000 of those are actually doing so through a contract of training (which is understandable; and may be a good thing). There are partnerships forming between workplaces and vocational education and training providers, both in terms of delivering VET and in setting up the qualifications, although the qualifications are most definitely industry-led.

Provider quality is improving and there is a growing market for vocational education and training. Both the market aspects and the establishment of the Australian Quality Training Framework are raising the bar for all providers, although we are working from the basis of having a very high quality public TAFE system that has been established for a long time. The public TAFE system itself recognises that the competition that has been engendered by the public provision and user choice has had the effect of raising customer focus to a higher concentration and improving quality. Certainly the combination of the competition and the regulation is producing quality of results, as we can already see. There is a fair shake-out occurring of the marginal operators, who are dropping out of the registered training organisation system. It is very important that the quality of providers is extremely high in this system in

---

\* This presentation was by Paul Byrne, General Manager, Australian National Training Authority.

Australia, because they have total responsibility for the assessment and issuing of qualifications in the industry-led system. This is a unique arrangement in the world. That responsibility is so high that the system will certainly fail if we do not have the highest possible quality of registered training organisations that have the confidence of industry to deliver the qualifications that they have set.

Another aspect of this arrangement is that there are multiple pathways available to the same qualification. It can be through apprenticeships, it can be through workplace exposure or it can be through institutional enrolment. Provided the registered training organisation (RTO) does meet the outcomes that are set by industry, the outcomes are equally valid in all those situations.

Access is good for beginning workers. It is also good for enrolled students. You have capped fees, public funding up to \$3,000 million a year, generous incentives for employers. There is excess demand, as Gary Collins said, in some workplace situations and some institutional situations and there is some competition between the workplace based place shortages and institutional shortages, but at this stage that is not a major factor. Group training companies provide apprenticeship places in small enterprises that would otherwise be unable to support them. There is a broad range of indicators that show that a lot has been achieved.

However, there are also some problems. The quality of the industry work in defining their qualifications needs to be improved (and it is being improved). Some qualifications reflect the status quo in terms of industrial issues, such as demarcation and licensing. They may not be optimal for the development of that particular industry into the future. Also the leading edge aspects of various industries are not always present in the qualifications defined by industry and underpinning theory is not always adequately defined in the way industry puts forward its qualifications and competencies. That can lead to problems, in some cases, where there is a lack of definition of the underpinning theory in the competencies. It may be assumed by industry that this will be provided by the training organisations when they bring their professionalism to bear on delivering the qualifications. However, that message is sometimes lost on the State authorities that fund the delivery of the qualifications. For example, they may not necessarily provide sufficient nominal hours or dollars for the delivery if there is not an explicit statement of what the underpinning knowledge is that must be imparted to VET students. The situation is improving as the training packages are reviewed. They have only a three-year life, so that the review period starts eighteen months into the existence of the training package. This was a shock to some industry and training providers, who were perhaps inclined to think that now these training packages had been developed, couldn't they put them on the shelf and leave them there for a few years. There is also considerable duplication of skills across the training packages, as might be expected when you have got

twenty-five industry bodies establishing their own industry qualifications. However, there is a growing trend to incorporate cross industry standards into the various qualifications, which is helping.

Industry based qualifications set by the twenty-five industry areas are not always adaptable to small business needs, although the actual competency in small business needs is probably there, especially in the regional areas, and often not even applicable in remote communities. A related issue is that bundles of skills are often sought by people rather than whole qualifications. All those bundles of skills, which particularly apply to small businesses, are potentially available in training packages. However, it can be hard to access them, for example, where the RTO does not have the funding ability to bundle them into what is required; and if an appropriate qualification system does not exist in terms of the recording of qualifications which would allow them to be more transportable (eg. a skills passport).

Existing workers have much greater problems than new starters in the VET system in that there is very little incentive for employers to put existing workers into contracts of training. There is a lack of agreement on the relative contribution of time, money and other resources by the existing worker, the employer and others to their training. Fees could be a barrier for an existing worker, especially when recognition of prior learning is concerned.

Moving between States, while a person is undergoing training, is a major problem. The registered training organisations generally cannot follow the employee, because the dollars will not follow them; and trainees themselves cannot move between States, because different laws require different contractual arrangements for apprentices and trainees. This tends to mean that, although the same form of contract is used, the old one has to be torn up and a new one developed when a worker in training moves between States. This is a substantial problem for both individuals and enterprises.

People with a disability have great difficulty accessing the system, particularly through contracted training. There are a number of reasons for this: because of limited places; because there are only a few intermediaries, such as specialist group training companies; and because of the disjunction between Federal and State support mechanisms. All of these factors make it hard for people with a disability to access what they need, to be able to successfully complete programs in the Australian qualification system. Quality is variable between providers. There is particular concern over VET in schools, due to the potential for the teachers not to have the required vocational qualifications or the competencies when delivering it. The difficulty of gaining access to workplaces or appropriate simulation opportunities also makes the gaining of competencies more difficult. However, the Australian Quality Training Framework is raising the bar for all providers; and the associated auditing through the Framework, together with



audits of the auditors and national reporting on what the auditors are doing, should help considerably in improving the quality and consistency of providers across the country.

Finally, the barriers between education sectors, specifically between higher education and VET, have not been removed by the reforms in any way. In some cases the barriers have become even higher. This is partly due to non-acceptance of a competency-based approach by the traditional university sector, partly due to a tendency for industry to find qualifications not being specific enough about knowledge, and partly because of the different funding and fees arrangements between the sectors. There is some work currently underway in this area. For example, the Australian qualifications framework advisory body has recently put on its website the outcome of ANTA's work with the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee on credit transfer and articulation between the sectors. However, in my view, it is not a wholly satisfactory document: it requires further work and negotiation.

## **NEW SOUTH WALES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION\***

I would like to start by identifying myself primarily as a rower than a steerer, which means that I am not the State training agency. In TAFE New South Wales we pride ourselves, however, on being “thinking” rowers. Although TAFE NSW as a public provider does have some input into Government policy, our principal role is doing.

What we have been doing over the past century is providing a wide range of opportunities for lifelong learning, which continue to change to meet industry and community needs. For example, in 1907 evening continuation school was open for people who had left school at the minimum age; itinerant teachers conducted classes in towns too small to justify the appointment of full time staff; and a class in motor vehicle driving commenced, marking the first contact between technical education and the motor car. We have been extending access and making the first contacts with new technology ever since Sydney Technical College opened in 1883. Currently, nearly 230,000 of our enrollments are people aged over 30. This represents about 45% of our total enrolments. About 24% of our enrolments are aged 19 or less. That bucks the trend, because until about four years ago the TAFE population was actually getting older. What that reflects is the huge growth in VET for schools and part time traineeships, which have been very positive.

But we also suffer from those Statewide barriers. One of the programs we have been very keen to push is the T3. It is a joint venture between TAFE New South Wales, TAFE in other states, Toyota and the Toyota Motor Corporation dealer network. We signed a deal whereby there would be a totally integrated convenient package. Our own New Apprenticeship Centre (NAC) was hoping to provide NAC services throughout Australia, but the NAC contract meant that, because the dealers were defined as small businesses, we could not actually provide NAC services in any other States. That was a bit of a difficulty.

The other issue is that we are also a mass provider and we take students from all socio-economic backgrounds. There is a skew towards people from a lower socio-economic background, in terms of their SES ratings, which means that we claim to be the people's provider. A few years ago you could say this profile was widely different from that of the university sector; and it still is widely different from some of the big eight group of universities. However, if you look at the profile of Charles Sturt University you will see that it is almost exactly the same. Regional universities are growing very near to the TAFE sector. I take all the points that have been raised about sectoral boundaries, but the university sector has, over the last thirty or forty years, annexed large parts of the TAFE profile. You might say that is just the growth of credential

---

\* Presentation by Robin Shreeve, Deputy Director-General, TAFE, in the New South Wales Department of Education.

creep, but for people who believe in a competency-based system and people who believe in an industry led system, that is a major issue. Huge parts of what was industry led will be provided by providers who do not necessarily subscribe to the VET philosophy or approach.

I was going to talk about some of the other things that we facilitate through credit transfer arrangements with universities, adult and community education providers and other VET providers. TAFE NSW has a wide range of arrangements in place to provide students with recognition for prior learning and to develop pathways and articulation arrangements between TAFE NSW and other educational institutions. TAFE NSW currently has standard credit arrangements with 206 education and training institutions across Australia. There are 9,285 standard exemptions listed on the database. In 2001, a total of 491,429 modules were granted as a result of recognition arrangements. Also, since 1990, there has been a concerted effort by TAFE NSW to promote credit transfer arrangements between TAFE NSW and the university sector: there are now approximately 1500 separate arrangements. A project to improve and enhance credit transfer between ACE and TAFE NSW was initiated in 2000. This has resulted in the establishment of a number of credit transfer arrangements from high demand ACE courses to TAFE NSW courses/modules. This is an ongoing project, with further credit transfer arrangements currently under consideration. By giving recognition for prior educational and life experience, these arrangements provide an incentive for people to return to, or continue in education and training. Unfortunately, in one sense, many of those were credit transfer between different courses rather than recognition of current competencies (which is an issue that we all have to face).

Like most other providers we have had a major initiative in terms of online, which is opening up a new range of improved facilities, infrastructure, and online learning resources for our clients. This initiative is providing an e-business interface and e-learning content, using the Internet as a tool to enhance, support and extend TAFE NSW's traditional identity and delivery methods. In August 2001, the new TAFE NSW corporate website (Stage 1), 'TAFE Connect' (a brand name for TAFE NSW Online e-learning modules and services) was launched. All TAFE Connect online materials are designed to be teacher-supported. In 2001 a large-scale professional development program commenced to prepare teachers, administrators and other staff to implement and support e-learning programs. In 2001, the first two hundred TAFE Connect online modules were completed. This first stage has provided one or more online modules in over 400 TAFE courses, with several entire courses available for delivery via the Internet. Work commenced on a further two hundred modules to expand the range in 2002. Also, the first of a range of extended student and staff Internet e-services, including online access to student registration details and student results, were piloted in late 2001 for TAFE-wide implementation in early 2002. An interesting finding has been

that online programs have been particularly suited to older workers, because the most successful online programs tend to be blended delivery, delivered to well motivated people who are actually looking and not necessarily the preferred means of delivery for some of our youngest clients.

However, despite our achievements to date, we do recognise that with the changing economic, social and educational climate, new initiatives are required to meet the challenges of the future and increase participation by all sectors of the community in lifelong learning. Everybody talks about lifelong learning, but what does it mean? In recent years the rationale for lifelong learning has been changes in employment and the nature of work resulting from technological and global change. Australia and other advanced nations are now often described as post-modern and post-Fordist as a result of incipient globalisation and the rise of an increasingly knowledge-based economy. Marginson defines “globalisation” as referring to the growing impact of world systems of finance and economic life, transport, communications and media, language and symbols. It is as much about the cross-global movement of people and ideas as about markets and money. In the global environment, national institutions co-exist with global ones and different national traditions become mixed. Cultural systems undergo a continuing process of reinvention. All forms of identity become unstable. In this context cultural institutions such as universities (and other educational institutions) are opened up to strategies of reinvention, whether of an economic, organisational or cultural kind, or all three together. In terms of the VET sector, increasingly we could not provide the range of programs to our domestic market if we did not have full fee-paying international students. They cross-subsidise our domestic provision in a fairly major way. And that is even more true of the university sector.

These changes are having a marked effect on the social and organisational structure of particular workplaces and the general workforce. Hierarchical structures are shrinking in both the public and private sectors as flatter management structures are put in place and ‘non-core’ functions are outsourced. Bureaucratic forms of organisation, that offered the individual security of employment and the chance of personal progression up a hierarchical structure, are seen as inappropriate in an innovative and global environment where speed of response is a critical success factor. As well as helping people to develop the skills required by the economy, there is also a need to build community capacity and combat social exclusion.

In looking at how things might be done in the future, it is important to recognise the changes that are already occurring, particularly changes in patterns of participation in education and training. In June 2001, the NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training hosted a conference on the future of work. Hilary Pennington, President of the national US public policy

organisation 'Jobs for the Future', identified some significant changes that were occurring in education in the US:

“Fewer than 20% of post-secondary students now meet the traditional profile: a person 18-22 years old who lives in college housing and attends college full-time. Fifteen to 20% of students in US community colleges already have a BA or more. One half of those enrolled in college in 1989 had enrolled in more than one institution by 1994. In other words, students are not following the linear model on which current institutions were built. They “swirl”. They drop in and out, take courses at both the community college and universities at the same time and transfer freely between the two.”

This trend is also discernible in Australia. For example, in 2001, TAFE NSW had about 27,000 students with university qualifications. Around 44% of current TAFE NSW students have previous qualifications, ranging from TAFE Certificates to degrees or higher. As the world of work changes, we can expect to see much more “swirling” and much heavier traffic between TAFE and other sectors of education. Students are cherry picking different modules and different competencies from a wide range of courses and a wide range of delivery arrangements. As an illustration of this, some of our short courses are marketed under the TAFE Plus banner. In New South Wales enrolments in those short courses have grown from 20,253 in 1998 to 105,500 in 2000, a 450% increase. And none of those are publicly funded: they are all full fee programs. The nature of what we are doing and how it is being funded are both changing fairly radically. Anderson (2001) likened university-to-TAFE pathways as being more akin to a snakes-and-ladders model of student movement rather than the sequential linear pathways embodied in formal models of student progression from education to work.

Recent Australian research reveals the emergence of informal pathways as a consequence of learners constructing their own routes from education to work. As Anderson says, such pathways are being constructed by learners according to their own specific needs, aspirations and circumstances, rather than by conforming to the former linear models of progression conceived by policy-makers. We are trying, to a certain extent, to position ourselves globally as an e-business. This is not for the sake of becoming an e-business in its own right, but because we believe that the key to success for mass providers in the future will be based on the fact that they are convenient. Convenience is the key strategy that we have to put in place, so that people can access our programs throughout their working lives, as they actually go in and out of the swirl. I was pleased to read in the *Sydney Morning Herald* yesterday (they were amazed) that the New South Wales TAFE system actually enrolled more people outside the conventional February enrolment period than during it; and it said that the university system is now taking a

leaf out of TAFE's book and having more mid-semester enrolments. Nevertheless, that is just a small step, we have many more steps to take and much more work to do to support truly lifelong learning in terms of making ourselves far more convenient. Some of that is within our own reach as a doer, but some will require significant policy change, at both the national and state level.

We are noting anecdotally almost a class division in some students' aspirations. We are finding that we get a whole swag of upper SES students who come to TAFE to get a Certificate IV in tourism and hospitality and then use that for their backpacking trip around the world, as a global qualification. In more disadvantaged communities students appear to have a great reluctance to move anywhere else; and that is particularly true of Aboriginal communities.

In terms of lifelong learning, TAFE New South Wales can say that we have doubled the participation rate of Aboriginal people. And if you have a look at the age spread, although I know that lifelong learning is about more than just an age spread of people, the Aboriginal community has always been one of lifelong learners. But if one was going to take a pejorative look at that, and I totally agree with Mark Patterson in terms of the conclusion on this, the really big issue for Aboriginal people participating in VET is the dearth of private sector employment opportunities once they have finished their courses. I am sometimes worried that some of the lifelong learning courses we are providing for those people are more in the nature of occupational therapy than anything else. I think we need to move forward from that.

The emergence of the 'knowledge' economy and changing patterns of labour force participation also require different responses by education and training providers to ensure opportunities are available for people to acquire the skills required to survive in the new economy. Kearns (2001) in *Review of Research: Generic skills for the new economy* says that "overall, an examination of literature based on the knowledge based economy highlights the way in which knowledge, skill, creativity and enterprise are widely seen as the four pillars for competitive success in this environment". He says this suggests a need to reappraise skill strategies for the new economy to examine how linkages can be forged between skill strategies and the generation, management and use of knowledge, creativity and enterprise. He also quotes Kegan (1999) as saying, "teaching skills or knowledge content without developing the underlying mental capacities that creates skills or knowledge leads to very brittle results".

Work area boundaries are blurring and many of the new jobs are not neatly contained in existing industry areas. A major concern of some people about training packages is that they do not put sufficient emphasis upon the development of knowledge, creativity and enterprise. The process is also not

sufficiently flexible to respond quickly to the skill needs of emerging technologies or multi-industry areas.

Ewart Keep (2002), in a paper called *Learning Organisations, Lifelong Learning and the Mystery of the Vanishing Employers*, says that much of the rhetoric about lifelong learning has stressed the critical role it plays in enhancing economic competitiveness. As a consequence, it has been widely believed that employers are willing to play a major role in equipping those they employ with enhanced skills. Not merely in terms of task-specific training to improve performance in their current job, but also by providing wider, generic, transferable core or key skills that can support employability within a more volatile labour market. In his paper, Keep contends that these assumptions are, in large part, mistaken and that large swathes of the adult workforce are not being provided with broader learning opportunities of any sort by their employers.

The training currently being provided, broadly speaking, represents what employers deem their workforce needs to know. Indeed, many employers perceive clear disadvantages in training those of their workers in lower occupational groups above and beyond the immediate task they are employed to perform. The problems include increased staff turnover, increasing dissatisfaction with boring and menial tasks and the raising of unrealistic expectations about opportunities for progression. Keep also says that, in the main, recent improvements in the UK workforce's stock of skills and qualifications has arisen from the efforts of the education system rather than from employer investment. He concludes that this means that there is a major discontinuity between the policy rhetoric of an employer-led training system and skills revolution and reality, at least as it applies to many of those at the bottom end of the labour market. Although this paper relates specifically to the UK, I am sure it applies equally well in the Australian context.

To address this situation, TAFE NSW Institutes are being pro-active in encouraging businesses to invest in upgrading the skills of their workers. We have had some noticeable successes, particularly in the food processing occupations. An example is the work TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute has been doing with Berry Ltd. Since 1996, Western Sydney Institute has been providing Berri employees with literacy and numeracy support. In 1997, training commenced with the Certificate in Food Processing (with 120 employees enrolled). In 2001, in addition to continuing with the training delivery in food processing, the Institute helped develop standard operating procedures and associated training manuals in conjunction with Berri Limited. Training is conducted in the workplace and TAFE has customised the training program to make it relevant to the Berri work environment and used real work examples. In addition to the food processing training for

operators, employees have undertaken studies in the Certificate III in Business (Office Administration).

When looking at the issue of lifelong learning, particular attention needs to be paid to the learning needs of older people, particularly older workers. It is important to recognise that negative stereotypes can act as a barrier to older people participating in formal learning opportunities. In an NCVER report, *Creating a future: Training, learning and the older person*, Misko (2002) discusses the negative stereotypes that abound concerning the abilities of older people. In particular, older people are being cast as slow to learn and adapt. Yet this stereotype has long been disproved in the literature.

Although there may be evidence of slight memory loss with ageing, older people often have significantly higher levels of relevant experience, which offsets any memory loss and can lead to higher performance levels than younger people who do not possess the same level of experience. This certainly seems to be the case with Mr. Fred Moore who at 108 is the UK's oldest learner and has been attending art classes for the past quarter of a century.

I recently read of a study that examined whether forgetting is a response to the culture's negative stereotyping of old age, rather than demonstrable cerebral decline. The study's findings suggested that when Grandma can't remember where she puts her keys, it is because no-one expects her to. However, as we have discovered in TAFE NSW, Grandma is perfectly capable of learning computer skills and accessing the Internet.

Although there is a lot of rhetoric about the value of older workers and how, with an ageing population, people are going to have to keep working for longer, the reality is that in recent years large numbers of people in their late forties and early fifties have found it difficult to find work after they have been made unemployed through redundancies or business collapses. This is likely to not only continue, but to increase as the economy and labour market changes. A high priority must be given to providing the necessary education and training support for up-skilling or retraining older workers, so that we utilise their experience and knowledge rather than lose it.

A good example of what can be done is the program that TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute provided for former BHP workers following the closure of the BHP steelworks. With a \$50,000 contribution from BHP, a year-long program of training was devised in cultural industries production and management. The program was designed to provide a new career path for students and to support sustainable job creation in the cultural, tourism and heritage sectors. The program's primary focus was on the personal development of the individual. Through practical projects, it also modelled the development of small business initiatives.



As well as special programs to meet special circumstances, TAFE NSW also provides a range of programs specifically for older workers. An example is the Wyong Mature Worker Program, which is an educational model based on outreach policies and principles, developed to meet the needs of mature-aged unemployed people in a new and flexible way. The program aims to offer mature-age unemployed people the opportunity to: update their skills and knowledge; try a variety of new skill areas to see if they have a liking or aptitude for any of them; add sought-after work-skills to their resumes with short accredited courses like Workplace Training Category 1, First Aid or Occupational Health and Safety; and develop personal and vocational skills to survive until they gain employment. The Wyong Mature Worker Program is now regarded as an example of best practice; and resources have been developed that are specifically designed for this target group, to facilitate implementation by other Institutes.

In recent years, there have been a number of papers that call on the VET sector to develop and implement coherent policies and strategies to advance lifelong learning opportunities for all. Although the VET sector in general, and TAFE in particular, is the major provider of opportunities for people of all ages to participate in education and training opportunities, lifelong learning should not be regarded as solely a VET responsibility. Industry, governments, other sectors of education and community organisations all have an important role to play in promoting and investing in lifelong learning. It will be even more important in the future to foster partnerships between education and training providers, and businesses and industry groups, to increase the level of private investment in training and to increase pathways between education and training providers.

As far as TAFE's contribution to improving opportunities for lifelong learning is concerned, I believe the key to future success is customer service and innovation. The changing patterns of participation in education and training mean that institutions must recognise that people no longer progress in a linear way through the different sectors of education, if in fact they ever did. Therefore, education and training institutions must be even more customer-focused and flexible to be able to accommodate the diverse demands of individuals who are following their own, personal pattern of learning.

We also need to concentrate more on teaching people how to learn, so that they can take responsibility for their future learning needs. This will involve a move away from an emphasis on the attainment of specific competencies to the acquisition of a range of generic skills, such as communication, team skills, problem-solving and information technology.

I would like to conclude with an anecdote. We received a letter recently from an eighty-five year old gentleman who was awarded a TAFE Certificate for

Art many years ago. He was very proud of his achievement and had the Certificate framed and displayed it on the wall of his art room. Later in the 1980s he got another award, a statement of attainment, which was of a really poor quality and not suitable for framing. Last year his wife died after they had been married for fifty-seven years. For the last twenty years she had been saying to him “You should ask TAFE for a proper Certificate like your first one, so you can frame it as well”. So, to be true to her wishes he wrote to us, told us his story, and requested a better Certificate. He concluded his letter by saying, “may I say that, when one attains the age of 85, as I have, it is good for the ego to see such STATEMENTS and for me to be proud of attaining the highest standards required by your College”. In my view, that is what lifelong learning is all about. We have produced a parchment “Confirmation of Award”, which looks very grand. TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute has been advised and they have arranged a special function for his new “Certificate” to be presented. How’s that for customer service!

## References

- Anderson, D. (2001), *Project 2001-02: The nature and implications of choice in VET and lifelong learning. Report to ANTA*, Monash University-ACER Centre for the Economics of Education and Training, Melbourne.
- Kearns, P. (2001), *Review of research: Generic skills for the new economy*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide.
- Keep, E. (2002), *Learning Organisations, Lifelong Learning and the Mystery of the Vanishing Employers, Working Papers of the Global Colloquium on Supporting Lifelong Learning* [online], Milton Keynes, UK: Open University. Available from <http://www.open.ac.uk/lifelong-learning> [Accessed 6/05/02].
- Kegan, (1999), in *Comments on the DeSeCo expert opinions*, OECD, Paris.
- Marginson, S. and Considine, M. (2000), *The Enterprise University: Power, Governance and Reinvention in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, p. 46.
- Misko, J. (2002), *Creating a future: Training, learning and the older person: Executive Summary*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, NCVET website ([www.ncver.edu.au](http://www.ncver.edu.au)).

## ADELAIDE INSTITUTE OF TAFE\*

As government I think that we have to be both steerers and thinking rowers. If we pick up the concept that lifelong learning is a co-investment, where governments, agencies, private providers and individuals all have a vested interest, then increasingly we have to be both of those things. All of those organisations that are involved in the co-investment in lifelong learning, whether they be government agencies or otherwise, all are in one way or another funded to some extent by government. We need to look at what that means by way of our responsibilities. The majority of funding comes in all sorts of ways. Many people have talked about the complexities in administering the distribution of funding and, more importantly, in establishing the policy drivers that funding ought to be resulting in. The debate about what are the most desirable outcomes from that funding is constantly ongoing and very political. What is clear is that the role of government continues to change. As Don Tapscott said recently, the basic institution of government is changing through the Internet and through networking. It was not about taking government online. He was talking about the new model being based on partnerships and citizens, offering transparency to citizens and value to citizens at a lower cost. We are then talking about the citizen as a stakeholder or a shareholder in government. What I want to look at is what that citizen and those people in government have a responsibility to achieve.

This, alongside the view that is frequently expressed, that learning is what most people will be doing for a living this century, leads me to the view that citizens, as individuals, groups and organisations, are going to be increasingly demanding access to continued learning or lifelong learning as a matter of course. This will require an increased sophistication in setting directions in employment and training through partnerships and alliances; through establishing credibility; through transparency and creativity; and increasingly through keeping our finger on the pulse of change. It will involve consistently engaging with the next generation of possibilities, with a degree of necessary risk taking in what lifelong learning will mean in the future, and how people have access to it.

One of the major areas of need and responsibility concerns how we can develop all of those things in a climate of mutual respect. How are we going to ensure that all of the organisations and individuals involved value the principles that have been contained in the draft framework for lifelong learning for BIAC-TUAC, which we are considering today? We all have to understand how that mutual respect can or should work; and what gets in the way of a lot of that is competition. The constant or continuing divide and difficulty in breaking down the barriers between the education sectors, in

---

\* This presentation was by Madeleine Woolley, The Director of the Adelaide Institute of TAFE in South Australia.

developing the co-operation between industries, and in particular the value of what the individual is demanding in continuing education has got some of its roots in competition and who is getting what value out of the dollar, who is paying for it and whose jobs are on the line.

Because of that position, I want to look at a case study in the legal and justice area and draw attention to some of the principles in the BIAC-TUAC framework. It is an example of some ideas about what we need to move forward with. The particular program concerns the awarding of a Certificate IV in Inter-agency Practices (Child Abuse) and refers to the agency's role in investigating and assessing child abuse and neglect. The course is offered to selected employees of government agencies involved in the investigation and assessment of child abuse and neglect. It is offered for eight days four times each year. The training is based on a code of practice that establishes best practice guidelines for professionals in this area.

I picked this example because it has such a specific focus. In looking at lifelong learning and how we cooperate, how we establish mutual respect and move forward, if we can look at a particular case where there is no argument about the need, in this case child abuse, we can learn a lot about what can be achieved. Because, in this particular exercise, there are lots and lots of government agencies involved. The difficulty we have been facing for some time in this particular area of learning is that a child continues to be abused disastrously; in some instances they die. And part of the reason for this occurrence is that the agencies are not valuing other contributions to the activity. They have not respected each other's contributions, whether it be from the education sector, the police sector, whether it is social workers, whether it is teachers, whether it is parents and so on. In order to get the co-operation, which is essential for achieving the best outcomes, much of what we have done is consider those principles that are embodied in the BIAC-TUAC framework.

Before I attempt to deconstruct how we have been operating over the last year, may I say something about the term 'best practice' that is used both as the grounding document for the certificate as well as on the second page of the BIAC-TUAC survey on lifelong learning. 'Best practice' as a term can lull all players into believing that the thinking has been done and there is only one valid practice method. Where it rests on a document or framework it soon becomes meaningless when social realities, government exigencies and employee motivations are not constantly readdressed. Accordingly, 'best practice' is not an outcome as much as an ideal. Like justice it is something you have to keep working for and about which every player has a different and valid perspective.

One of the BIAC-TUAC principles is the notion of shared responsibility. All parties in this particular exercise have really come to grips with their shared

responsibility in undertaking the necessary learning. Whilst not expressed explicitly, it has been revealed by all the parties operating consistently with the principles enunciated at the first point of the BIAC-TUAC framework. Whilst we talk about shared responsibility, it is in fact the case that, while that is a core motivation in determining who does what, it is not necessarily the case that each agency has an equal role. It is very possible, and in fact probably very good, that in reality a particular agency actually takes a leading responsibility, although with the understanding from all of the others that that is a good thing to do. But this is based on an understanding of the other players, including their motivations and the overall exercise objectives. Understanding the motivations of each of the other participants has been absolutely fundamental to achieving success. We have found that if the police officer at Coober Pedy or the teacher or the social worker or the Department of Public Prosecutions understand that everybody is involved, and also understand that their motivations in being involved need to be clear, then the learning will follow; and this ensures that we have a process of mutual respect.

The willingness to take responsibility on motivations is critical. As it says in the BIAC-TUAC framework, the willingness to take responsibility is based on motivations. In our case study example it has involved constant contact with each of the government agencies at all levels. We have had to identify what the needs are; and in doing so, what we have also identified is the requirement to offer the program in a different way. For example, we are now looking at developing this program on line, working with a university to do this, and again respecting each other's contributions. In relation to the third point in the BIAC-TUAC framework, it has been essential to acknowledge that the 'public authorities' engaged in the program do not necessarily share an agreement on the methods and approaches to be used. They have had to be brought to a position where they can see it in partnership terms. Although difficult, this has led to one of the most exciting aspects of the training. The current eight day face-to-face course requires participants to be absent from their workplace for this length of time. This causes difficulties, as all participants are highly trained in their area of expertise and removing them from their workplace for such a long period of time can place heavy demands on their colleagues. Therefore, the Adelaide Institute of Technology and the participating agencies have had to consider how the course content may be offered using more flexible delivery options.

In summary, as government agencies we are leading and we have to lead, but we also have to row. In doing so, there is the critical notion of building mutual respect, whether it is within government organisations (as in the example I have provided) or in other industry examples I could give you, say in tourism. Unless we address those aspects of what it takes to get all of the parties understanding what they can contribute, then the learning to be gained is limited.

## MURRUMBIDGEE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE\*

Chris, of course, is correct geographically. As you are all aware, Yanco is halfway between Adelaide and Sydney; and that is why I have been chosen today to follow Robin and Madeleine. With the name Creek and Murrumbidgee, of course, there is some connection. Another reason I was chosen, apart from the name, is that we are a very small tributary as far as public provision as a registered training organisation is concerned; and so I genuflect to Robin. Another reason, of course, why Chris chose this heading of steering and rowing, is because, as you know, we are Moira's boat people. Robin was a boat person last century and my grandfather was a boat person in the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, Robin and my grandfather got a better reception than boat people do today.

We have a broad spread among our student population. We do have some from Sydney (9.7% of our total students in 2001), but most of them come from rural (75.8%) and remote locations (8.2%). Only 1.2% of our students come from capital cities other than Sydney. (For 5.1% of our students their region of origin is not known.) Most of them are employed (85.4% in 2001), although we do have some unemployed students (3%) and some are not in the labour force. We also have quite a cohort as far as VET and schools are concerned. Considering our 2001 students in terms of the highest school level they had completed, 39.4% had completed year 12, 32.8% had completed year 10, 15.2% had completed year 9 or lower, 7.9% had completed year 11 and for 4.7% of students the highest school level they had completed was not stated.

Being from the country, 72.8% of the VET students at the college are males, whereas only 27.2% are females. There is a range of students by age, as Table 1 demonstrates. We have quite a number of students who are school children and we also have quite a large number in the older age ranges. These figures relate to total enrolments, not the number of hours of training. However, it is quite an interesting mix; and we actually have some students who are older than I am, which is a relief. I work for the New South Wales Department of Agriculture, in case you do not realise it; we are not within the NSW education and training portfolio. Our full-time students are generally young, but we have quite a spread of students by age, including a large number of part-time students.

---

\* This presentation was by Geoff Creek, The Principal of The Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture at Yanco, New South Wales.

**Table 3.1: Age Group by Sex 2001 Enrolments (VET clients)**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
14 years or under	9	4
15 years	3	39
16 years	116	52
17 years	64	22
18 years	50	12
19 years	38	6
20-24 years	123	55
25-29 years	205	85
30-39 years	473	187
40-49 years	608	224
50-59 years	455	157
60-64 years	99	25
65 years or over	75	17
Not Known	85	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,403</b>	<b>899</b>

I have been a teacher in the past, so we proceed to the 3 A's, the 3 R's and the 3 E's. Perhaps I should ask who can guess what they might be, but Captain Moira will throw me overboard if I talk too long. They are a mnemonic to assist learning. In relation to the 3 A's, the person who typed this up for me mentioned that market did not start with an A but an M. Actually, it is because my grandfather, who, when he was on the ship coming out from the UK, had trouble talking, so he dropped his M's. He would talk about the 'arkets. He died when my father was three, so I have difficulty remembering much more about him.

**Table 3.2: Lifelong Learning: The 3 a's, the 3 r's and the 3 e's**

3 a's	→	access	- accredited VET	
			- articulation to	- technology
				- higher education
			- markets	
3 r's	→	rural		
		regional		
		remote		
3 e's	→	economic sustainability		
		environmental sustainability		
		educational sustainability		

From where I am sitting, lifelong learning has to do with access. This includes access to accredited VET programs. No matter where people are, no matter what their age is, it involves articulation and accessing technology and higher or further education. For many of the people we deal with, it is linking them into things that the Department of Agriculture might be doing with regard to technology transfer. It is also about access to markets and, whether in Sydney, in other cities or across the State, getting a product that is acceptable into the marketplace. For example, we have Non English Speaking Background (NESB) students who are getting very worried that they will not be able to sell their produce to retailers such as Woolworths, Franklins or Coles. Lifelong learning and VET are very important in that area. The rural, regional and remote areas, as far as I am concerned, are very important. They are also very important as far as the New South Wales Government, the NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training, and ANTA are concerned. And then there are other issues, particularly in the agricultural and horticultural areas, where a wide range of matters are relevant. Economic sustainability, environmental sustainability (an issue for government as well as for individuals) and educational sustainability are particularly important.

The sorts of clients we have are similar to those for other public providers. There are some areas that I think are specific with regard to lifelong learning. There are family farms and businesses in rural and remote New South Wales. There are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. When I went to the college fifteen years ago, I do not think any Aboriginal person had ever been game to come onto the campus. When I first started I was warned by departmental folk how dangerous that was and how the place would be smashed up. I had someone come up to me, the father of one of our full-time students, who was a rural farmer or grazier. He said we could have problems; they had heard about these Aboriginal students, about the place being smashed up and unruly students. I said "oh yes, that's right". Obviously, he knew all about that. I said: "To be quite honest, keep this quiet, but they are the sons and daughters, but mainly sons, of farmers and graziers. They are the ones who cause us the problem. It's not our Aboriginal students. They are the ones who look after the place". He did not talk to me after that.

We are also involved with training for NESB vegetable growers in the Sydney basin, as is New South Wales TAFE. It is a very important area and access and equity issues are important. And also training for inmates of correction institutions, so that some of our students are unable to attend graduation ceremonies (although some do). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are about 2% of the total Australian population. They represent about 4% of our enrolments (132 students), which means that we are accepted as an institution by them. 7% of our students (257) are people born overseas, which was rather a shock to some people in the Department. 206 of them speak a language other than English at home. Their countries of birth, which are mainly South



Pacific Rim countries, are shown in Table 3. The College is very pleased about these enrolments.

**Table 3.3: Countries of Birth of Students in 2001 who were Born Overseas**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number</b>
Cambodia	50
Vietnam	35
Italy	25
Western Europe	23
United Kingdom	22
Lebanon	17
South Pacific	17
China	14
Eastern Europe	9
Africa	8
South-east Asia	8
India	7
Americas	6
Middle East	3
Pakistan	3
Sri Lanka	3
Other	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>257</b>

The flexible labour market, issues with regard to family farms, these are the sort of issues that are important as far as farmers and rural businesses are concerned. They include market access, quality assurance training and smart training, which we are doing with TAFE. They include this suite of very important quality assurance courses, and we also work collaboratively with TAFE in that area. There are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the non-English speaking growers. We do not really fit in well with regard to an employer or employee perspective. Many of the people that we deal with are outsiders, including the people in correctional institutions. It is a bit of a challenge, we are trying to do something about it and we think it is very important.

We seek to engage with clients, to develop lasting linkages and to facilitate institutional change. In our attempts to engage with clients the college seeks to build relationships and trust, to provide immediate training solutions and also for longer term needs, to demonstrate continuing commitment and to act as an honest broker. In developing lasting linkages the college has sought to facilitate lifelong learning, to provide follow-on learning as required and advice in particular circumstances where we have expertise and, where appropriate, provide referrals elsewhere for technical advice and connections.

In terms of institutional change we have tried to provide scope for it, to develop the college's profile in relevant areas, to develop our trainers, to engender an outward focus and to be flexible in our delivery methods.

We have found that we have to be flexible in meeting training needs, just as our clients have to be flexible in meeting the needs of their clients and the market generally. Family farms, for example, are using less outside labour, have to be increasingly multi-skilled, to seek technological solutions and focus on business opportunities and market needs. They are often asset rich, but income poor. And, for almost all of them, continuing access to appropriate markets is crucial.

We also have to be sensitive to the special requirements of particular groups of college clients. For example, communities and individuals are both critical for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and we have found that the Community Development Employment Program has often been significant. Training is important in terms of their ownership of land and in terms of efficient operation of their agricultural enterprises. Unemployment levels tend to be high and past educational experiences unsatisfactory, which influences their approach to education and training, what the college can provide and how we can best interact with ATSI individuals and communities. ATSI communities can be asset rich and income poor.

Similarly, we have found that the non-English speaking growers with whom we have contact have special requirements that affect what education and training they require and how best we can provide it. Family labour is important to the viability of their enterprises; and they often work long hours at low margins. They can have language and literacy difficulties that need to be addressed, if they are to derive the maximum benefit from the vocational education and training which the college can provide. Some of them have had poor educational experiences in the past. Market access is a critical issue for them, including the appropriate handling of chemicals, as in sprays, and training in quality assurance procedures for their products.

We have community service obligations, we are in public provision and we are brokers with regard to helping regional development. There are thin markets out there that we deal with, perhaps in a different context to others. There are literacy and numeracy issues to be addressed. It is human social capital, which is very important for rural, regional and remote communities (and for individuals). Engaging with clients is important for us, including acting as brokers. People see public RTOs as honest brokers. We need to assist people who do not really understand all this educational jargon, and they do not know how to access funding. They do not have an employer association to liaise with or an employee association to engage with, so government has got a very important role. There are linkages encouraging people to participate in lifelong learning. For example, one day I had a telephone call and I could not

work out who the caller was. He proved to be one of our Vietnamese growers in Sydney, who wanted to know when we were going to run the quality assurance training. He wanted to get into it, because it is pretty good training for his business. Even though he was 700 kilometres away, he rang us, he saw us as being his institution.

## DISCUSSION\*

**Steve Balzary (ACCI):** How do people who are not in government, whether they be employers or employees, employee organisations or employer organisations, think governments can be engaged on the issue of funding? Every time you try and engage governments on the issue of funding, it is an easy way to clear a room or, it is none of your business (that is, not really anything to do with you, or you would not really understand that, or that is not up for discussion). It is a question that we have grappled with on our side and I know the union side have, as well. Has anyone got any ideas, especially on what the issues are or why governments will not engage in that discussion?

**Moira Scollay (ANTA):** I will have a go, as a start. It is something that I have been grappling with for a couple of years; and the OECD has been really helpful in terms of the papers it has produced on the issue of who pays in relation to lifelong learning. I think there have been difficulties for governments in knowing how to engage the population in a debate about the three players and what their contributions should be, given what seems to be the immaturity of the response. From the point of view of the nine Ministers to whom I report, at any given time one or other of them is likely to be facing an election. The last thing they want, as a headline, is a proposal for a fee increase for individuals, HECS for TAFE, or something like that.

I honestly believe that we are in a position at the moment to be able to have a mature debate about who pays for what in the lifelong learning context, particularly in relation to VET. It happens very publicly with universities. I think that the timing is now right, from my perspective (in between ANTA Agreements), to have a proper conversation about what is a valid contribution for the employee and individuals, and what industry and employers should be paying. Relatedly, from my perspective, given the \$4.5 billion that is committed by governments, how can we get the best leverage on the other two contributors, to maximise the contribution that everybody makes. I know that we have not got that right now. I am very keen to have the debate and I think it will be had in the context of the development of the next national strategy for VET. But I do think we have to be really mature about how we conduct that debate and not run off with stupid solutions too quickly, without having properly worked out who the players are and what some ground rules might be for having that conversation, because Ministers will be nervous about it.

**Robin Shreeve (NSW Department of Education):** I engaged CEET about eight years ago to do a research study on this very issue. What programs within TAFE New South Wales should be publicly funded and what should be on a full fee basis? It is a very complex issue and we did not necessarily come up

---

\* This section was prepared from the tape recording of the discussion session by the editors.

with all the arguments. I totally agree with Moira that it is a political issue, especially in terms of TAFE fees. There have been all sorts of debates, all sorts of internal studies done, but it is always too near an election or whatever for anybody to want to address it.

At the moment we are quite pragmatic. Industry is quite good in terms of lobbying, whereas individuals are in a weaker position. We run, within our Sydney Institute, a world class program on silicon graphics, which is animation: a Certificate 4 and a Diploma. The only way you can do that program is by paying \$10,000 for the Certificate 4 and \$22,000 for the Diploma. If it was not run on a full fee basis, we could not afford to do it. There is an important argument there. Why, if you want to train in silicon graphics, do you have to take it on a full fee basis, whereas, if you want to do a diploma in human resource management, you can do it for \$700 and the administrative fee (and potentially be exempt, as well)? The reality is, if we are going to go into some of these high technology areas, that is the only way we can do it.

**Moira Scollay (ANTA):** That is the debate we have now got to have. I think there are some relatively easy principles that we could work with. For instance, what are the skill needs of the nation and is the nation prepared to pick winners? That flies in the face of the question to Therese this morning about whether we fund apprenticeships in retail when we are not funding apprenticeships in silicon graphics. The skill needs of the nation is one important and relevant area where we have done insufficient work. We do not, at the moment, from a whole-of-government perspective, engage enough with industry policy and a range of other whole-of-government policies. That needs to be addressed. Should there be the notion of basic entitlement? and, if there was, what would it be? We know that in the school sector there is a notion of a basic entitlement, but we have not really grappled with it in relation to vocational education and training. Is every adult in the country entitled to a Certificate 2, no matter what their age? Britain is going towards that position in the context of funding for lifelong learning. It is really worth considering in this country.

Another possible principle concerns whether the individual and industry should pay according to the return they get on their investment in training. If so, how do you work that return out, so that the government pays where the community benefits most? That is hard, but should not be beyond our wit.

Finally, there are the access and equity arguments. Where there are high fee paying courses, who are we excluding from an access and equity point of view? If we had a more rational approach to the cost of handling disadvantaged groups, and proper recompense, you could take that issue forward more effectively. I think it is possible for us to structure a way of

thinking about the debate that would not make it so political that people would walk away.

**Robin Shreeve** (NSW Department of Education): In addition, it has to be a debate about post-sixteen education and training. It has always struck me as illogical that, if you are at school post-sixteen, it is demand based funding, but if you leave school and do your Higher School Certificate in TAFE, we are in a capped funding pool. Potentially the State loses twice. It does not get the demand based funding from the school system and you are potentially occupying a place that a material worker could occupy as well. That strikes me as a nonsense.

**Gary Collins** (CCI of Western Australia): It is worse than that, because in your situation, the funds are capped for certain arrangements, but if you take on a traditional trade apprentice, anywhere in the country, you can access funds. However, if I wanted to take on a retail trainee in certain places, I could not get access to those funds. There is no uniformity in relation to the arrangements.

**Moira Scollay** (ANTA): I think you will find that there is now going to be this debate. It gets picked up also in terms of the cost shifting that Rex Hewett raised earlier. In some areas companies that have done the training are picking up both government funding at the State level and incentives at the Commonwealth level. There are other areas where training in the traditional trades has still got government funding, but new areas have not got government funding. We are really pushing to get some of those things sorted out.

**Steve Balzary** (ACCI): We have been pushing this now for a number of years. We are quite prepared to open up the debate on industry contributions and how they are layered. In relation to all of these matters there are winners and losers. One of my themes is about pushing stuff back to industry and making industry more responsible. That is industry defined broadly, including both employers and employees.

**Peter Grant** (formerly Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs): Just a quick comment in response to your opening question, Steve. In terms of influencing government decisions about levels of public expenditure, and that is only one dimension of this debate I accept, my view would be that it is a waste of time fronting up to government two months ahead of a forthcoming budget and seeking to influence their priorities and decisions. By and large, it is a waste of time dealing directly with government on these matters. The challenge is to influence public opinion and the wider political debate, so that governments will respond to what they see as an imperative from the people. In that regard, the Treasurer invited public debate about his inter-generational report when he released it

the other night. I would hope to see an active engagement by industry groups in that debate, particularly in terms of the treatment of education and training in the report. Views might vary, but it seems to me that the propositions put in that report are very much open to debate. There is plenty of scope for alternative views; and I would hope there would be an active engagement by ACCI, BCA, AIG and other industry groups in the debate.

**Moira Scollay (ANTA):** Not to contradict you Peter, but I think it would be possible to conduct the debate without making assumptions that governments would spend more money. At the moment there is a lot that could be improved about the way the resources are allocated and the leverage we get off the individual and the employer. Without putting it in a context of going forward for more money, which may be something that needs to be done as well, even in the context of keeping the cake the same size, there are different ways in which it could be carved. I think that is a really important debate to have in its own right. [Peter Grant: Yes, both issues need to be addressed. I agree.]

## **SESSION FOUR: THE THREE PERSPECTIVES: Commonalities, differences**

**Chair: Chris Selby Smith, CEET.**

We have had the three perspectives, that is employer organisations, unions and governments, separately before lunch. This session seeks to see where those three perspectives have commonalities and where they are different. Rex Hewett, who has kindly agreed to stand in at short notice, because Bill Mansfield could not come, to do that from the union point of view. Then Steve Balzary will do it from the employers' point of view. Then Moira Scollay has agreed to do it from the government point of view. There will be something like 10 minutes, hopefully not much more than that, from each of those three and then there will be time for general discussion. We are particularly looking for what is similar between the three main parties identified by the OECD and what is different between them in relation to their perspectives on lifelong learning and the world of work.

### **EMPLOYEES AND TRADE UNIONS\***

In terms of the issue that I want to address, which is funding, I think there is more common agreement about this than there probably is difference. I am using this opportunity to present an argument about funding, how Governments can be convinced to increase funding and on what basis. I have some information to present about the existing funding arrangements for the VET sector and then I am going to draw a number of conclusions about ways in which we could look at a new funding arrangement. At the moment, roughly, the Commonwealth provides about 30% of all funding for the VET sector. However, that has gone up and down over the years as Figure 1 shows. About 27% of recurrent funding is from the Commonwealth and nearly 56% capital. Figure 1 shows that the contributions of the Commonwealth and State/Territory governments have fluctuated over time. In the 1980's, for example, the Commonwealth's contribution declined; and at the same time its role decreased.

Kangan was the person who wrote a report in 1976 that first triggered Commonwealth funding to the TAFE/VET sector. The bulk of that initial funding was in capital, building TAFE institutes around the country. The States still provided the operational funding, employed the staff and so on.

Figure 1 draws on a project undertaken by the Australian Education Union on the history of funding of the TAFE sector and more recently the VET sector. It is interesting to note that, while the States withdraw at times (some of them at

---

\* This presentation was by Rex Hewett, Federal TAFE Secretary of the Australian Education Union.



different times) and the Commonwealth similarly, in general, over the twenty year period we measured, the actual total amount of funding has continued to increase. It has not always increased at the same rate as enrolment demand, but it has increased in real terms over the last twenty years since Kangan.

Although you cannot see it from the Table, there were periods when there was a change of government in particular States and, depending on the nature of that government, funding either went down or up, but generally the Commonwealth maintained its relative share until recently. TAFE funding structures since the Kangan Report have generally recognised the complex educational, social and economic roles of a VET system. I mentioned this morning that Kangan put the "F" into TAFE, although someone reminded me that, prior to Kangan there were technical high schools and vocational high schools in various States and some semblance of a broad non-vocational as well as vocational range of opportunities in the post-compulsory sector. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on the role of TAFE Institutes, which was chaired by the current Minister, Brendan Nelson, made some very interesting comments and recommendations in 1998. None of them have actually been implemented, but the report highlighted the role of the public provider. The report stated that "TAFE institutes have a clear sense of their role and mission, Governments at both Commonwealth and State/Territory levels have not clearly articulated their vision for and expectations of TAFE". However, the recent public focus on VET has tended to be narrow, with a focus on an industry-driven system and on New Apprenticeships.

The first large amounts of growth funds occurred as a result of the Commonwealth-State settlement in 1992, the formation of ANTA and the ANTA Agreement. The first ANTA Agreement provided an initial additional funding allocation of \$100 million for the VET sector, I think it was in the year 1993/94. An additional \$70 million was provided for growth funds annually for the length of that agreement. The point is that the Commonwealth decided to take a major role in the shaping of the system, through its funding powers, through ANTA and in terms of the development of strategies and the identification of areas of growth. That \$70 million was provided to the States each year on the basis that the States maintained their 1992 effort, whatever that was (and it varied from State to State). Unfortunately the agreement was written, not in terms of dollar effort, but in terms of enrolment; and some States actually reduced their dollar amounts, but maintained their student enrolment levels during that period. That is still a flaw in the current ANTA Agreement.

In 1996/97 the Budget cut nearly \$240 million, both in 1996 and in following years, out of VET funding (although there was some funding that rolled on, I think for labour market programs, into the following year). Essentially \$1.8 billion over the four years from 1996 was cut out of labour market programs. A lot of it, though, went into employer incentives and the maintenance of

other programs in the labour market area. The important thing to remember about this is that the growth funding from the 1992 agreement was cumulative. You got \$100 million in the first year additional to the States, and then in 1993 it was \$170 million and so on in the following years. It raised the level all the time, which meant that there was genuine room for funding of enrolment growth during that period.

With the 1998 ANTA Agreement, growth funds were cut out (for the first time in five years essentially) and so the base was effectively reduced. Commonwealth funding for enrolment growth was abolished. The States were required to achieve “growth through efficiencies” in the 1998/2000 ANTA Agreement. In return, the Commonwealth undertook to maintain its funding in real terms (which really was just CPI in those three years). The NSW Department of Education and Training estimated the loss of cumulative growth funding at \$138 million for New South Wales, which meant a loss across the country of \$377 million.

However, something funny happened. The outcomes for 2000 exceeded planning expectations and there was additional growth. Total growth during that 1997/2000 period was about 32.4 million adjusted annual hours curriculum, and 290,800 additional student places according to the NCVER. During the period 1997 to 2000 the Commonwealth contribution to VET operating revenue fell by \$112 million. This effectively “neutralised” most of the increase of \$152.2 million from the States and Territories. During this period the States actually increased their funding, while Commonwealth funding decreased. It is a constant problem when you are talking about funding in the VET sector, the substitution problem.

Figure 2 shows the Commonwealth share of VET operating revenue. Overall, the Commonwealth contribution to total VET operating revenue fell from 25% in 1997 to 21.1% in 2000. I wish I could give you more detail, but surprisingly, student fees and charges remained essentially unchanged. However, there were variations between States once again. South Australia was one which had significant rises, but that was countered by other States that reduced their fees and charges. In relation to fee for service, note that after 1999 they went to an accrual basis, so that it is hard to compare expenditure before and after 2000. In relation to student fees and charges, NCVER notes that included in this section is \$170 million over that three-year period which was provided for redundancies. This period was the greatest period of change in the mix of staffing within most TAFE and VET systems around the country.

During the period 1995-2000, with the introduction of user choice and contestable funding, the amount contributed to non-TAFE providers went from \$58.6 million in 1995 to \$268 million in the year 2000. Figure 3 shows the funding for non-TAFE providers for Australia as a whole for each year from

1995 to 2000. I understand that the figures indicate that there has now been a leveling out of the flow away from the public provider.

The unit costs are interesting. They are shown for each State and Territory (and Australia as a whole) for each year from 1997 to 2000 in Figure 4. The unit costs have been reducing since 1997. It varies between States once again, but overall the cost per annual hour curriculum fell from \$14.22 in 1997 to \$12.67 in 2000 (in 2000 prices). That is a very substantial decrease. Do not ask me why the Northern Territory was the major area of reductions; there is no explanation in any of the ANTA reports. But it comes up consistently in the Productivity Commission reports and in the States Grants reports, that Northern Territory has reduced its costs – in schools, TAFE and higher education.

Overall the unit costs reduced during this period, while enrolments increased. The cost per adjusted annual hour curriculum fell 10.9% from 1997 to 2000, in terms of 2000 price levels. Over the same period there was an increase of almost 180,000 student places in TAFE. Employee costs fell from \$2,456.9 million to \$2,397.7 million or from 66% to 64.2% of total expenditure (excluding depreciation). Expenditure on student services fell even more sharply, from \$164.7 million in 1997 to \$95 million in 2000, which was from 4.3% to 2.3% of total expenditure. While there was an increase in student places, the actual employee cost reduced.

Our surveys show that there are a number of reasons for that reduction in unit costs. There was a reduction in the hours per course. With nominal hours there was much more flexibility for providers to say that the nominal hours are 200, but we will only deliver it in 150 or we will use contract casual labour rather than permanent staff. I cannot allocate particular effects to each of the factors, but that certainly was part of the effect. I really don't understand why the expenditure on student services fell so sharply; and if anyone has got any ideas about that, I would like to know them.

Unmet demand for TAFE remained relatively stable during the 1998/2000 ANTA Agreement. Unmet demand was estimated by ANTA to be 35,200 student places in 1998, 45,800 in 1999 and 40,500 in 2000. The previous Minister, Dr. Kemp, emphasised that there was a reduction from 1999 to 2000, by nearly 5,000 places. The ANTA estimates of future enrolment growth beginning this year vary substantially, from 2.8% to 5.7% per year, which in terms of Commonwealth and State funding would be about \$240 million per year. The ANTA Agreement last year provided an extra \$50 million for this year, so you can see that there are certainly pressures in terms of funding on the system.

We have identified the impact of the resource pressures through a number of areas. Kaye Schofield's reports on Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria were

the main source of this information, but there also were our own internal anecdotal information. There appear to be higher class sizes. They varied quite significantly. For example, nominally there were theory classes of thirty students, but teachers would over-enrol, sometimes enrolling as many as 35 or 40 students. They may have thought that students would drop out, but they did not do so. Partly this was because they were now paying fees, more significant fees than they had in the past, and there was real motivation once they had put their own dollars forward. Other effects of the reduction in funding were cuts in TAFE courses, the spread of TAFE courses and the cuts to student services that were mentioned before. Also there were amalgamations, restructuring, colleges facing significant financial difficulties, and so on. The overall withdrawal rate has stabilised now, but it rose during that period (mainly in the traineeship area). According to the NCVER statistics, the overall failure/withdrawal rate for students increased from 13.7% in 1997 to 17.3% in 1999 and increased again to 18% in 2000. There are many possible reasons for that. NCVER is undertaking a survey as to why people drop out or do not complete. It may be simply because they get a job; or because they are unhappy with their employer or their employer is not happy with them.

Our survey showed increased workload and stress for teachers and a growth in precarious employment. A major thing here is the erosion of professional standards. It good to see, in the AQTF, the recognition of a need for a national standard for people who are delivering vocational education and training courses, but I think that is the first time in which there has ever been a national standard developed for deliverers in any sector, whether it is universities, TAFE or schools. Also my union says that the standard is too low. The Australian Education Union regards Certificate IV as a very basic level qualification. That is not to say that it is not a good qualification; but it is the minimum; and that the AQTF should be designed to ensure continuous development.

The current ANTA Agreement is essentially the first time, after four years, that growth funds have been reintroduced. For this year, there is an extra \$50 million, which accumulates. While that figure says \$25 million for 2002, it is actually \$50 million + \$25 million, because once you introduce growth funding, you get that accumulation effect. There are three main conditions which the States and Territories have to meet: they have to match the increased funds to be provided by the Commonwealth; they have to fully implement User Choice; and they have to increase the number of New Apprenticeships by 20,000 by 2002 (which I think they are on target to achieve). In relation to State matching, some States have said to me that they already put in large amounts of money prior to the ANTA Agreement being concluded. They question why they should have to put in more, because they have already lifted their effort.

**Table 4.1: ANTA Agreement 2001-2003  
(as agreed at the June MINCO meeting 2001)**

	2001 \$m	2002 \$m	2003 \$m
1) Base	931*	1,001**	1,046
2) Indexation	20	20 (est)	20 (est)
3) <i>Sub Total</i>	<i>951</i>	<i>1,021</i>	<i>1,066</i>
4) New Growth Funds	50	25	25
5) Total	1,001	1,046	1,091

\* Already legislated in the VET Act of 2000

\*\* \$70 million in forward estimates to lift base for 2002 (\$1,001m - \$931m = \$70m)

The Australian Education Union has developed an alternative ANTA Agreement. We are campaigning to get support from the States for it. Table 4.2 sets out its major themes.

**Table 4.2: AEU Alternative ANTA Agreement**

Major themes:

- Role of TAFE as community and industry training provider as well as meeting its community service obligation and ensuring access and equity.
- AEU representation on ANTA Board and NTQC to ensure a voice and quality, continuity and reliability of system.
- Student representation and recognition of other groups in decision-making bodies.
- Education ITAB to set national standards and plan for the needs of the system.
- Requirement for industry to contribute to funding training.
- National plan for TAFE underpinned by ANTA Agreement.
- Growth funding to compensate for three year funding freeze to be matched by the states.
- Co-operative rather than competitive training arrangements.

We believe we should be represented in various key elements of the national system, such as the ANTA Board and the NTQC. An issue that was raised by Steve Balzary concerns the development of alliances to get governments

involved, including for increased funding for our sector. We have also been involved in trying to actively involve students (and other groups) in decision-making bodies. Students are well organised in the higher education sector, but as clients of the VET system they are very quiet and do not have much of a voice. I have to say that ANTA has done a lot to get young people who have been students, for example, to awards night and that World Congress, and more generally expressing their views. There is a real problem, I think, about ensuring that the clients actually have a say. Industry has a say and the unions in general have a say, but the millions of students who go through the system are relatively disorganised. We support more involvement of students in the various decision-making bodies in the national VET system.

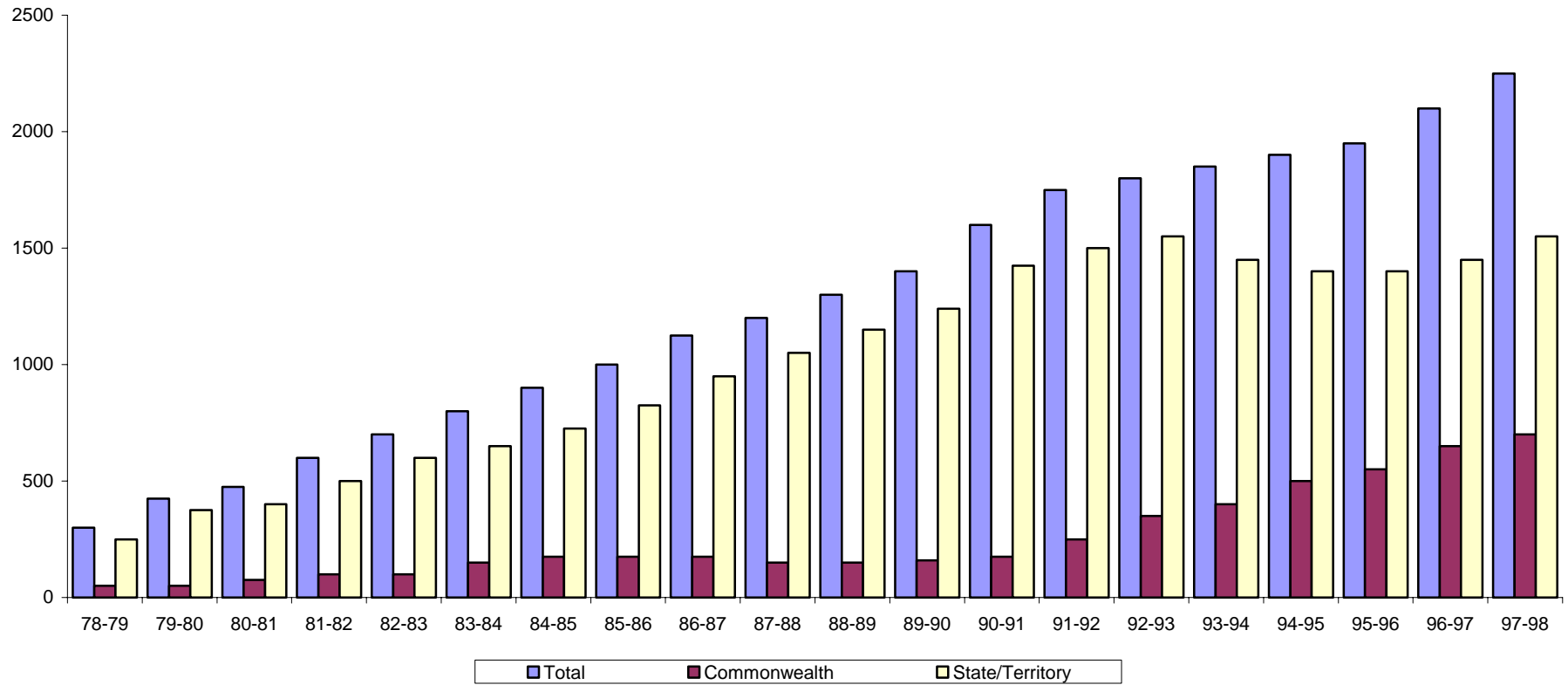
In the last ANTA Agreement the requirement for ANTA to pursue an objective of increasing industry contribution to or investment in training was deleted. That is a pity. While there are varying industry contributions to training from industry to industry (and even within professional organisations and groups) the idea of encouraging industry to invest should be maintained.

We think there should be a much more developed plan for the TAFE system, the public provider, and we also believe that there should be compensation for the lack of growth funding over the period of the 1998/2000 ANTA Agreement.

We also believe that the best way forward for the VET sector is for more cooperative arrangements and that that is going to produce, in the end, the best outcomes for the students and industry. In our view there needs to be a lot more work put into that area.

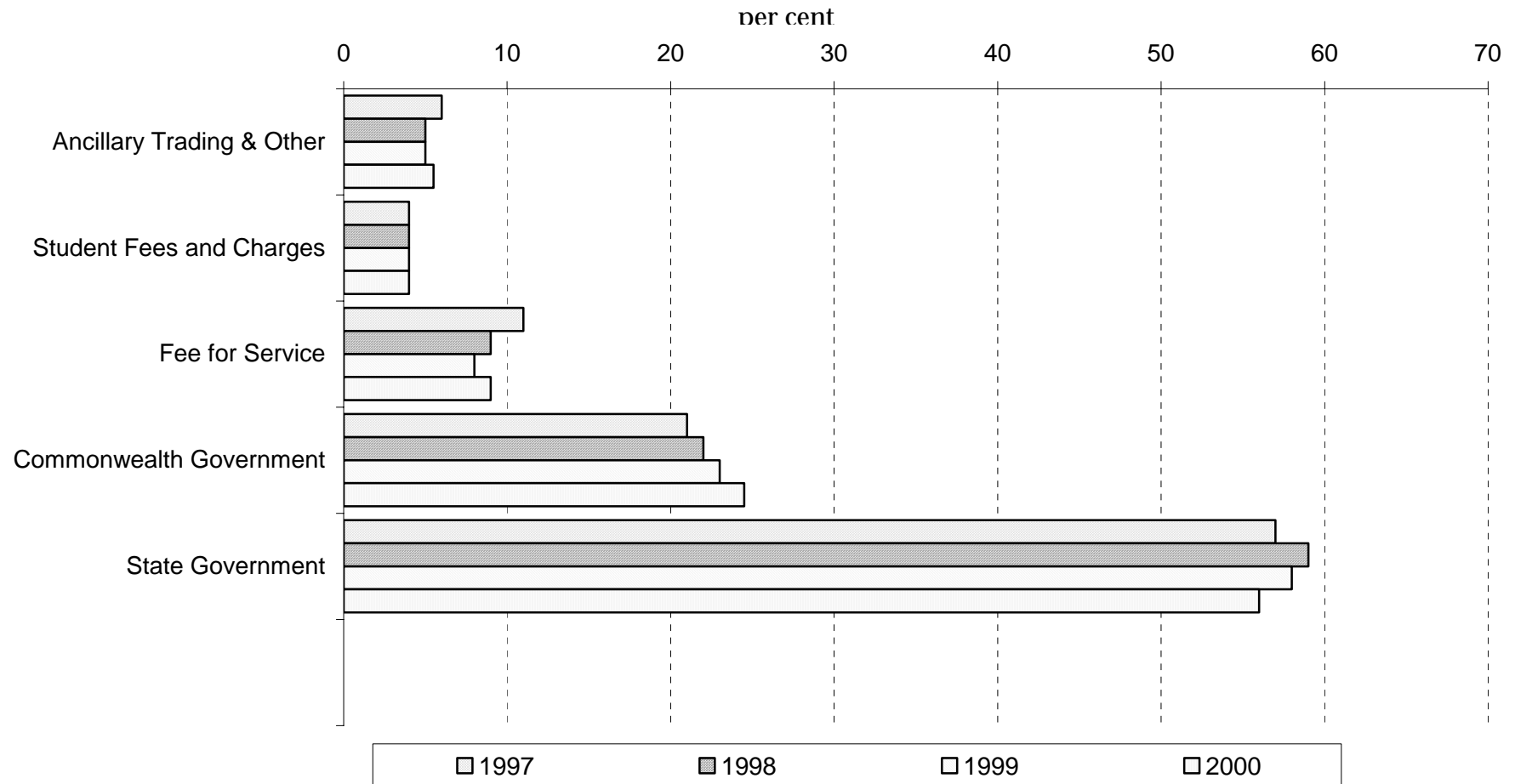
I have not talked about the nature of the system itself or passed any comments on that. Unfortunately, my other two colleagues from the trade union movement are not here, but I am sure that we all agree that the reforms that have occurred over the last ten years have been generally positive in making RTOs generally, and TAFE in particular, more sensitive to the needs of industry and the community. The structures that are in place now provide the opportunity to develop it further. One big thing we all, both employers and unions, agree about is that recognition of prior learning and access to the formal system by existing workers are real problems, as is a guarantee of entry by school leavers into the VET system. Finally, there is a key issue in relation to national consistency and variations in the quality of provision from State to State. A lot of work has been done on these matters; and hopefully that will be extended in the coming meeting with Ministers next week.

**Figure 4.1: Current Outlays on TAFE in the States and Territories**



**Source:** Australian Education Union (ABS 5510.0).

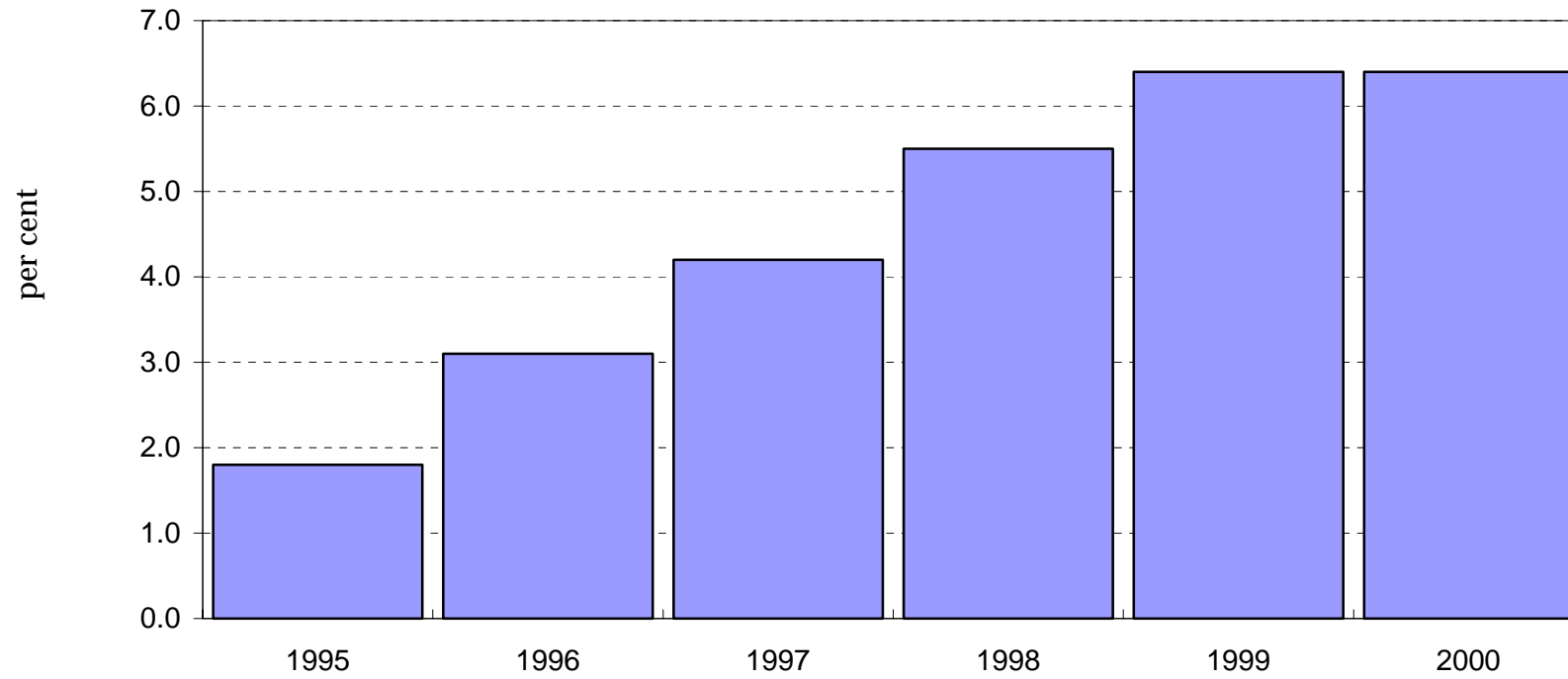
**Figure 4.2: Commonwealth Share of Operating Revenue**



Source: NCVET, 2001.

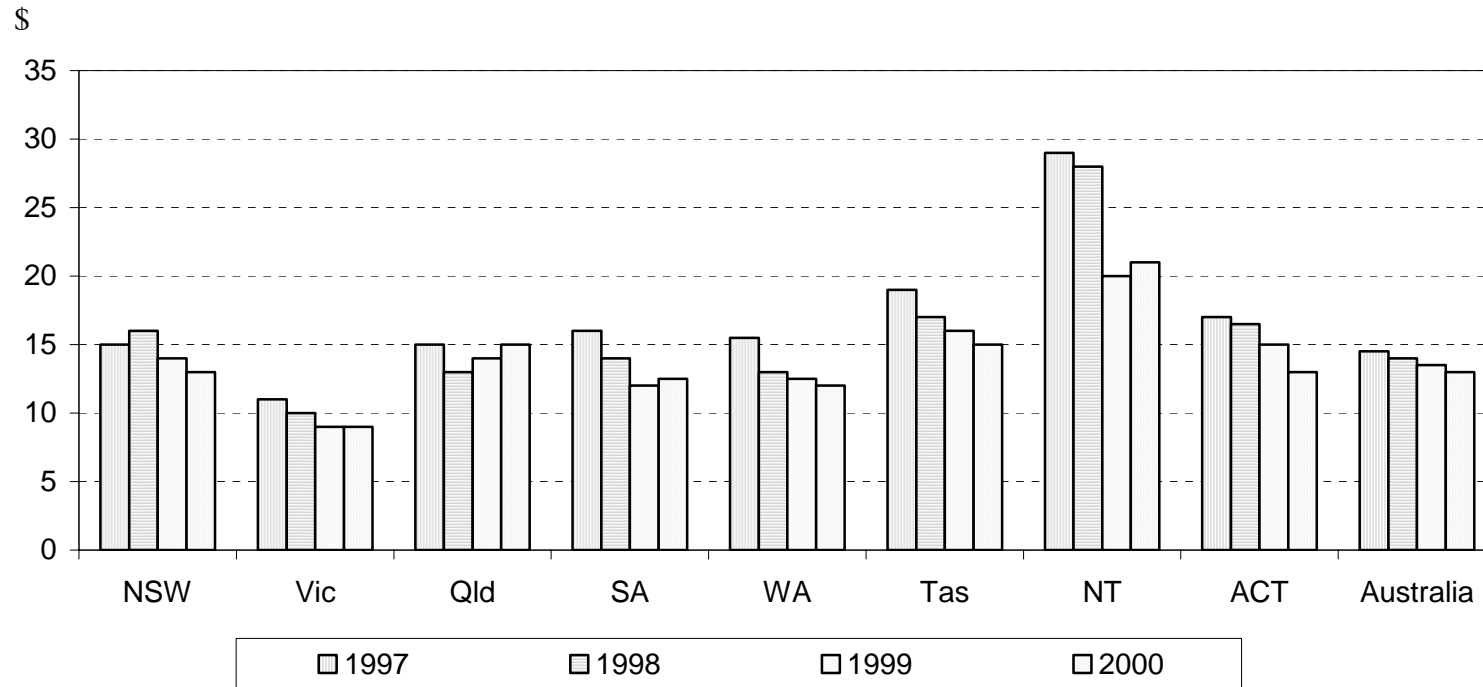


**Figure 4.3: Funding for Non-TAFE Providers, Australia 1995-2000**



Source: NCVET, 2001; Data for 1997-2000 is in accrual format.

Figure 4.4: Unit Costs per AHC in 2000 Prices (Accrual)



Source: ANTA, 2001 (see report for note concerning Queensland).

## **EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYER ORGANISATIONS\***

I am going to use some priorities that ACCI has; and contrast those over the discussions we have had here. We have written to the Federal Minister, we have written to the Chairman of the ANTA Board and we have written to all State and Territory Governments on these matters. You will find there are commonalities in terms of what we have been saying. I am not going to talk about our policy positions on each of these, but I am going to talk about the commonalities. I am going to stick to what the discussion has been here.

The first heading concerns resourcing. Setting aside our views about user choice, there has been general agreement about the need for greater transparency of funding. Certainly there are different views about where funding should be directed; there are different views about the role of the State in determining how funding should be determined; and there are different views about the role of institutions or providers in the allocation of that and who should be in the driver's seat. But we all know it is a problem. In the end we have got to work out who is driving the system: in particular, whether it is the clients (and I see clients as two parties, the employers and the individuals). Often employers drive it in a different way than individuals do, but our job is to empower employers to understand what they can get out of the system. When we talked to the Prime Minister and others about New Apprenticeships and the ANTA Agreement last Budget, and just prior to the last Agreement, he made his view quite clear. Mark Patterson and I saw him on a number of occasions. The Prime Minister emphasised that, basically no one was knocking at his door about New Apprenticeships or about VET funding. He was not getting inundated with submissions, details or letters about what this means and what should be done. I think that one of the issues is because no one actually knows, from a bottom line point of view, about the training dollars that go into their organisation unless they are very large, sophisticated companies (and some of them are my members as well as the Business Council's) that are very good at it and have got sophisticated mechanisms in terms of mapping the money in and the money out and what they do with it. The problem is that employers and individuals are not actually recognising the huge contributions that are being made by governments. Gary touched on some of the key elements of what we are talking about, but transparency in our view is the key in terms of user choice.

The second area under resourcing concerns what we do with general VET. What do we do in terms of the government dollar, the \$4.5 billion per year and how States determine priorities for those resources. Is it the Commonwealth's responsibility to fund New Apprenticeships because they are pushing it, or is it in fact a shared responsibility? Depending on where you sit, people have got different views. Our view is that VET money is VET

---

\* This presentation was by Steve Balzary from the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Canberra.

money; and it needs to be determined by demand. But at the moment I think there are too clear delineations between how you do institutional training (and what the articulation is for that within an apprenticeship) and what are the off-the-job and on-the-job components and what are other institutional VET type arrangements. We are not very good at it, and I do not know what the answer is. Rex has put up some historical arrangements. I don't think anyone actually knows and all the studies I've seen say different things. But we have to talk about it. And that is just the government side I'm talking about.

On top of that there are other issues, which we have talked about today, concerning what the individual contributes and their role. Also, that needs to be put together with what employers contribute and how they contribute. ACCI is talking about user choice allowing a clearer distinction between what governments provide. You can actually have three components that are quite clear. This is our mechanism for doing that in relation to New Apprenticeships. Whether we can do that with broader VET, I do not know. I think it is more difficult. What I do know is that nominal hours are not the answer.

The third element is about what we do with all of post-compulsory education. At the moment Queensland is a bit different, because they are talking about Year 10 being part of this, but certainly in terms of Years 11 and 12, vocational training and higher education. Our press release on the higher education review said that it was a great opportunity for the higher education sector to learn the lessons we have learnt in VET. One of the things that a couple of speakers talked about, including Robin Shreeve, is how do we get higher education to be industry-led and industry-responsive? That is part of what we are doing in our work on the higher education review. It is not just about research. We are actively involved in research, but it is also in terms of the vision and what that means. I think it is a problem, including articulation and similar arrangements. It is staggering in terms of the lack of connectedness between each of the three sectors. Schools and VET are moving closer together, but higher education is still out there, even though some of the institutions do have their own vocational education and training component.

In terms of the discussion we are having between the employers and employee organisations, we know we have got to do something here. Whether you go to a learning account arrangement or vouchers or whether you put resources into the hands of the ultimate consumer or not, are options. That is something we want to actively explore. Whether you can do that through institutional funding arrangements is one of the key elements in the whole debate. At the moment the Commonwealth department is still operating through a schools division, a VET division and a higher education division. In terms of what they do, the lack of connectedness between the three divisions is staggering. And they are all in the same building and two of

the divisions are on the same floor. This is a problem federally; and in the States it is similar. It's madness if you are looking from a client perspective, irrespective of whether it is employers or individuals, they do not look at it like that at all. Again, I think everyone is agreed on the problem. How we reach the solution is another issue.

ACCI is also concerned about what is being done with the infrastructure, particularly in regional areas. This includes the connectedness between higher education, schools and VET infrastructure, whether it can be rationalised and whether you end up with community learning centres and different ways of doing things involving the workplace. I think there is a lot of interesting work we can do on this in the post-compulsory sector. Some of the things Victoria is trying to do are, in fact, trying to address these matters.

The second element after resources is what we are doing with national consistency and effectiveness. Some of the speakers this morning, particularly from the employee and employer organisations, touched on various elements of this. In the end, if we do not fix up the access aspects, making VET a nationally consistent and easy to access system, then we are all having a lend of ourselves. We do not need employers and individuals to understand everything about the system, because that is just nuts, but it is difficult to access. That is a fact of life. We are all trying hard to make sure it becomes easier, but I still do not think we have got it right.

Group training is a mechanism we are working on. In relation to employer incentives we have certainly got a proposal on that. Basically we have tried to split up entry-level type arrangements from the training of existing workers. Unless we provide an incentive to existing workers to secure a qualification, and we need to do that through the employer, then I do not think we are going to address anything that is in that transitional report that was released from the government. In terms of the ageing population, the people we need in the workforce in five years are already at school; and we already know we will not have enough people coming out of our schooling system to meet the employment demands in five years. We are going to have to do something about all of that, which means putting pressure on how we train the existing workforce. Part of the response, in the short term, will be what do we do in terms of some form of learning bonus to get people to have qualifications? There is some interesting work that has been funded, looking at qualifications and employer views. It is basically showing what we all know, that employers do not value qualifications. Individuals do sometimes. That is a problem, because the whole VET system is predicated upon qualifications. Last week I spoke, with Brendan Nelson, to a group of science professors and others and talked about these findings. They were staggered. They thought that was really strange. It was very interesting talking to people within universities about their lack of understanding about what their real clients are there for, whether they are just buying some time, and about the articulation

arrangements back from universities into VET (and particularly New Apprenticeships). It was an interesting little discussion we had over lunch.

The thing that Rex mentioned in terms of RPL is really important. Also what we are not doing, both in terms of resourcing, because we are so structured about the way we fund things, and what we fund. RPL, including how we organise, fund and provide it, and whether we reward it through some sort of bonus or similar arrangement, are things we need to explore further.

Employer engagement is important from our point of view; and it can be approached in different ways. The issue here, to me, is how do you engage employers and how do you engage industries? My view, in terms of what we do at ACCI, is through our thirty-five constituencies we have a debate about a position. Maria has the same thing. The States and the Commonwealth, and to a certain degree, but a much lesser degree, ANTA, let industry off. What I'm saying is don't. The weakness in the system is not about consultation and industry led. The weakness in the system is the States and Territories want control and do not want to pass it over to industry. They do not want industry to take ownership. That's the problem. We can talk all around it and all be polite with each other, but in the end, you have got to make people responsible.

My view is not to give it to a group that, in the end, does not count and has got no standing. Go to each of the industry associations, to the employee organisations and tell them what you have got in terms of what you are planning to do. Ask them to validate it, to give you their views. Encourage active, direct discussions between Ministers and representatives of employers and employees. We do not pretend to cover the entire economy. We have never done that. But we cover a fair whack. Two people here have attended some of those meetings, when we have to develop an ACCI position. When we developed our incentives position there was blood on the floor. Three or four sectors lost money through that, but we had to broker an arrangement, and make it our responsibility. In the end, apart from user choice and being demand-driven, this is the second most important issue we have all talked about.

I am not saying that employer organisations and employee organisations will not sit down and develop training products. I think that is a completely different issue. We will participate in that, but we will not be doing it. But in terms of industry advice, proper industry advice, then we need to do it. And if it is not right, come back and get stuck into us. That is what I would do, if I was sitting in with them. In terms of State Training Boards, have a look at who they are; and I have got some of my members on them too, by the way. I will not go on, but I am serious.

Skills shortages were talked about by Peter Glynn. An important component of skills shortage is not about skill shortages. Skill shortages have been much the same for the last fifteen years, although the occupations have changed slightly. The issue about the skills shortages process was making industry associations responsible. It was saying: "This is your problem. Fix it." Basically Tony Abbott said to us, behind closed doors, but he won't mind if I say it: "Just pay them more. It's your problem." And we said, "No, because if that happens da da da." But in the end, it is only a minimum wage. People can be paid more if the employer wants to do so. However, there are issues about creep, what that means, and how those things are linked to qualifications, which is where we differ from the unions. The connection between training activity, industrial relations and wages is always an issue for us. We have managed to set some of that stuff aside in our discussions and tend to agree with the unions on a lot of what I have just put on the table, although there are some differences in emphasis, some differences in focus. But in the end, that is still one issue that remains contentious.

## GOVERNMENTS\*

I have not prepared anything in advance, because I was asked to summarise what my other colleagues said. But I do want to say a couple of things. One is that when ANTA was identified as representing government, while it was very neat from the point of view that there are three participants – employers, employees and government – my boss is a private sector board represented by employers and employees. Through that board I report to all the nine Ministers for Education and Training in Australia. So am I government or industry? an educator or industry? public or private? I can be all of those things. From the point of view of governments, certainly what the Ministers are seeking to do, is look at the macro area that involves industry and social policy. You would know that in the existing VET national strategy the vision is for an internationally competitive economy and social cohesion ie. the agenda is both to make sure we have the workforce skills that are required by the nation, and also that each individual is able to achieve their optimal potential.

From the point of view of all the players ANTA's remit is broader than simply providing a narrow view of the skills acquisition that the economy needs. The basis of VET has always been, and continues to be, a very broad agenda of both industry, economic and social policy. Governments also are wanting to look at the national positioning of Australia in a global context; and given that the Ministerial Council is made up of eight State and Territory Ministers, they too are clearly wanting to look at the positioning of their State and Territory in competition with their colleagues in other States and Territories. So we operate at all levels. And increasingly note is being taken of what is coming up from rural and regional Australia and from the community level. Another of ANTA's roles is identifying and trying to anticipate future trends; there was some discussion about that already this morning. Paul Byrne made the point that ANTA is constantly trying to find what leading edge industry is going to be needing five years into the future and gearing the world of training providers to be able to deliver on that ahead of the requirement for it in the workplace. That is pretty much a challenge that everyone is facing globally; and through all of this, certainly from ANTA's perspective, there is a very strong social cohesion agenda. You heard a lot this morning from the government side about equity. Any system can deliver to the privileged individuals and companies in the system, but to bring the disadvantaged groups along and have successes in those areas is a much harder task. We can't be proud of our system unless we're actually doing that.

Thus, there are broad areas of national interest and public interest that governments are looking at. When considering the ways in which industry, including both employers and employees, interacts with the community of

---

\* This presentation was given by Moira Scollay, the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian National Training Authority.



which they are a part, there is a public interest lens through which they look. Clearly it does not always meet the needs of the industry, either from the point of view of the employer or the employee.

It seemed to me that there were many commonalities in the positions this morning. There is a view that many of the fundamentals of the system are right; and there is no question that there are some very good stories out there, lots and lots of excellent case studies, including wonderful partnerships between providers. Many TAFEs and their communities are doing extraordinary things. Clearly we have got a lot of things right.

Opportunities for improvement, where I see us focusing our attention over the next eighteen months, include the next national strategy for VET. The current strategy runs out next year and ANTA intends to go to Ministers next Friday to start the processes of consultation around the development of the next national strategy. All the issues that have come up today should be able to be put on the table and addressed through that process. You have heard me say before that people in VET are very good at talking to each other within VET, but for the development of the next national strategy, a much broader tranche of the Australian (and potentially international) community needs to be engaged. The standing of VET in the public eye might increase as a result of such a process.

When we look at the next national strategy we can pick up on many of the things that have come out today. In going forward, what would you want to say about the things that we have got right, that you would want to keep in the next strategy?; the things that are pretty right that need some fixing (or quite a bit of fixing) in the next strategy?; and the things, which because of changed circumstances, you would want to do that are completely different? Those are the things that need to be identified early on in the process. There has been a fair bit of discussion today about our national system being industry led, which has been the mantra of the existing strategy (and the one before that). It is clear that in the next strategy, industry led system and one national system are likely to remain fundamental, but that there will be a great deal of refinement and better understanding of what we mean by that. Clearly the definition of industry is going to be much broader than in the past, and more thought will be given to where the individual sits in relation to that definition of industry. The ANTA Board has never perceived that an industry led system was exclusive of notions of the learner. I am sure several of you heard Stuart Hornery, the Chair of the ANTA Board, say at the World Congress that within an industry led system, the student or learner will move to centre stage. Those sorts of debates will be central to the development of the next national strategy for vocational education and training.

As well, the notion of one national system is absolutely critical for a country with only twenty million people. But at the same time, we need to be much

more flexible still in terms of local variation: in terms of speed of adapting to changes in the world of work, particularly changes in new technology; to the extent that people want a nationally recognised and portable qualification; and taking account of the capacity for companies to niche market themselves. On the one hand, we are going to need greater variation, but on the other hand we are going to need a great deal more consistency across Australia. It is the issues about which you have consistency and then the issues about which you have variation which will need to be the subject of ongoing debate.

One of the things that has come out most strongly today, in the context of lifelong learning, is who pays for what outcomes. A particular pre-occupation of mine that has been mentioned a few times already, is the barriers between the different sectors of education and training. Kaye Schofield has mentioned, and I completely agree, that VET has been cornered in a little pocket for too long. I think the last national strategy for VET has been interpreted as being more inwardly focused than is good for the country and that we need to open up a much more whole-of-government examination of vocational education. VET really is at the crossroads of employment policy, industry policy, social policy, health policy, aged care policy, youth transition, youth at risk, you name it; everybody says VET will fix it. VET needs to engage better with the policy makers in those other areas instead of, to some extent, being on the receiving end. When you get down to quite specific issues, there are several that have come out today that ANTA is currently working on, such as policy in relation to existing workers and in relation to small business. Another example is recognition of prior learning (RPL), which is not so much a policy about RPL, as a policy about funding; the same applies with generic skills. If there was money for generic skills, the issues about what it is, I think, would go away quite quickly.

A bigger issue on which I would like to comment concerns the role of VET in the changing world of work. There are some who have the view that we need to be providing the skills for the world of work. There are others who have the view that we could be doing more to change the nature of work for which we are providing the skills. Should VET be saying, well this is the way the world of work is, we will provide the skills for that. Here I am thinking about the extent to which companies have got choices in the way they organise their work. And when you put all those companies together who have got choices in the way they organise their work, that means the overall society has choices in the way it organises work. I have a picture that shows an hourglass, a pyramid and an onion. You can organise work in different ways in organisations. For example, if work is organised as an hourglass you trap people at the bottom; there is a skinny waist they can't get through. If gold collar workers at the top fall down through the waist of the hour glass, they may not be able to crawl back up, especially if they are male and over 45 years old. Alternatively, organisation structures can be created in the shape of an onion. They can maximise people's opportunities for learning at work and

provide prospects for changing the ways in which they are able to progress through different workplaces and different elements of the society. Or you can have organisation structures which are like pyramids. To some extent at least, they can also allow for a much greater level of growth than do the hourglass structures.

Up until now, VET has tended to take the view that whatever the work is, VET will design the skills for it. Now it is very clear that the training packages are actually having a much bigger effect than just the skilling of the workforce. An example is Taylors Wine, where the whole production of wine from the planting of the grape to the marketing in London has been re-engineered as a result of adopting the training package. Every part of their business, the whole human resource management of their business, their supervisory layers, their career structures, their performance appraisal, everything has been changed by what has happened in training the workforce, starting off with training packages. There is a great deal of opportunity there for VET to think much more broadly than it sometimes has in the past.

Finally, there is something that has not come up today, but which I think is extremely important. That is the changing world of the mind and the changing world of learning. There is an enormous amount of research that is happening throughout the world by neuro-scientists and psychologists and in the human genome project. There is examination of a whole range of factors about how people learn, including changes in the brain that come about as a result of different ways of learning. In my view, these will impact fundamentally on VET's core business, which is lifelong learning.

## DISCUSSION\*

**Steve Balzary (ACCI):** How do people who are not in government, whether they be employers or employees, employee organisations or employer organisations, think governments can be engaged on the issue of funding? Every time you try and engage governments on the issue of funding, it is an easy way to clear a room or, it is none of your business (that is, not really anything to do with you, or you would not really understand that, or that is not up for discussion). It is a question that we have grappled with on our side and I know the union side have, as well. Has anyone got any ideas, especially on what the issues are or why governments will not engage in that discussion?

**Moira Scollay (ANTA):** I will have a go, as a start. It is something that I have been grappling with for a couple of years; and the OECD has been really helpful in terms of the papers it has produced on the issue of who pays in relation to lifelong learning. I think there have been difficulties for governments in knowing how to engage the population in a debate about the three players and what their contributions should be, given what seems to be the immaturity of the response. From the point of view of the nine Ministers to whom I report, at any given time one or other of them is likely to be facing an election. The last thing they want, as a headline, is a proposal for a fee increase for individuals, HECS for TAFE, or something like that.

I honestly believe that we are in a position at the moment to be able to have a mature debate about who pays for what in the lifelong learning context, particularly in relation to VET. It happens very publicly with universities. I think that the timing is now right, from my perspective (in between ANTA Agreements), to have a proper conversation about what is a valid contribution for the employee and individuals, and what industry and employers should be paying. Relatedly, from my perspective, given the \$4.5 billion that is committed by governments, how can we get the best leverage on the other two contributors, to maximise the contribution that everybody makes. I know that we have not got that right now. I am very keen to have the debate and I think it will be had in the context of the development of the next national strategy for VET. But I do think we have to be really mature about how we conduct that debate and not run off with stupid solutions too quickly, without having properly worked out who the players are and what some ground rules might be for having that conversation, because Ministers will be nervous about it.

**Robin Shreeve (NSW Department of Education):** I engaged CEET about eight years ago to do a research study on this very issue. What programs within TAFE New South Wales should be publicly funded and what should be on a full fee basis? It is a very complex issue and we did not necessarily come up

---

\* This section was prepared from the tape recording of the discussion session by the editors.

with all the arguments. I totally agree with Moira that it is a political issue, especially in terms of TAFE fees. There have been all sorts of debates, all sorts of internal studies done, but it is always too near an election or whatever for anybody to want to address it.

At the moment we are quite pragmatic. Industry is quite good in terms of lobbying, whereas individuals are in a weaker position. We run, within our Sydney Institute, a world class program on silicon graphics, which is animation: a Certificate 4 and a Diploma. The only way you can do that program is by paying \$10,000 for the Certificate 4 and \$22,000 for the Diploma. If it was not run on a full fee basis, we could not afford to do it. There is an important argument there. Why, if you want to train in silicon graphics, do you have to take it on a full fee basis, whereas, if you want to do a diploma in human resource management, you can do it for \$700 and the administrative fee (and potentially be exempt, as well)? The reality is, if we are going to go into some of these high technology areas, that is the only way we can do it.

**Moira Scollay (ANTA):** That is the debate we have now got to have. I think there are some relatively easy principles that we could work with. For instance, what are the skill needs of the nation and is the nation prepared to pick winners? That flies in the face of the question to Therese this morning about whether we fund apprenticeships in retail when we are not funding apprenticeships in silicon graphics. The skill needs of the nation is one important and relevant area where we have done insufficient work. We do not, at the moment, from a whole-of-government perspective, engage enough with industry policy and a range of other whole-of-government policies. That needs to be addressed. Should there be the notion of basic entitlement?; and, if there was, what would it be? We know that in the school sector there is a notion of a basic entitlement, but we have not really grappled with it in relation to vocational education and training. Is every adult in the country entitled to a Certificate 2, no matter what their age? Britain is going towards that position in the context of funding for lifelong learning. It is really worth considering in this country.

Another possible principle concerns whether the individual and industry should pay according to the return they get on their investment in training. If so, how do you work that return out, so that the government pays where the community benefits most? That is hard, but should not be beyond our wit.

Finally, there are the access and equity arguments. Where there are high fee paying courses, who are we excluding from an access and equity point of view? If we had a more rational approach to the cost of handling disadvantaged groups, and proper recompense, you could take that issue forward more effectively. I think it is possible for us to structure a way of

thinking about the debate that would not make it so political that people would walk away.

**Robin Shreeve** (NSW Department of Education): In addition, it has to be a debate about post-sixteen education and training. It has always struck me as illogical that, if you are at school post-sixteen, it is demand based funding, but if you leave school and do your Higher School Certificate in TAFE, we are in a capped funding pool. Potentially the State loses twice. It does not get the demand based funding from the school system and you are potentially occupying a place that a material worker could occupy as well. That strikes me as a nonsense.

**Gary Collins** (CCI of Western Australia): It is worse than that, because in your situation, the funds are capped for certain arrangements, but if you take on a traditional trade apprentice, anywhere in the country, you can access funds. However, if I wanted to take on a retail trainee in certain places, I could not get access to those funds. There is no uniformity in relation to the arrangements.

**Moira Scollay** (ANTA): I think you will find that there is now going to be this debate. It gets picked up also in terms of the cost shifting that Rex Hewett raised earlier. In some areas companies that have done the training are picking up both government funding at the State level and incentives at the Commonwealth level. There are other areas where training in the traditional trades has still got government funding, but new areas have not got government funding. We are really pushing to get some of those things sorted out.

**Steve Balzary** (ACCI): We have been pushing this now for a number of years. We are quite prepared to open up the debate on industry contributions and how they are layered. In relation to all of these matters there are winners and losers. One of my themes is about pushing stuff back to industry and making industry more responsible. That is industry defined broadly, including both employers and employees.

**Peter Grant** (formerly Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs): Just a quick comment in response to your opening question, Steve. In terms of influencing government decisions about levels of public expenditure, and that is only one dimension of this debate I accept, my view would be that it is a waste of time fronting up to government two months ahead of a forthcoming budget and seeking to influence their priorities and decisions. By and large, it is a waste of time dealing directly with government on these matters. The challenge is to influence public opinion and the wider political debate, so that governments will respond to what they see as an imperative from the people. In that regard, the Treasurer invited public debate about his inter-generational report when he released it

the other night. I would hope to see an active engagement by industry groups in that debate, particularly in terms of the treatment of education and training in the report. Views might vary, but it seems to me that the propositions put in that report are very much open to debate. There is plenty of scope for alternative views; and I would hope there would be an active engagement by ACCI, BCA, AIG and other industry groups in the debate.

**Moira Scollay (ANTA):** Not to contradict you Peter, but I think it would be possible to conduct the debate without making assumptions that governments would spend more money. At the moment there is a lot that could be improved about the way the resources are allocated and the leverage we get off the individual and the employer. Without putting it in a context of going forward for more money, which may be something that needs to be done as well, even in the context of keeping the cake the same size, there are different ways in which it could be carved. I think that is a really important debate to have in its own right. [Peter Grant: Yes, both issues need to be addressed. I agree.]

## **SESSION FIVE: OTHER INITIATIVES: A wide diversity**

**Chair: Fran Ferrier, CEET.**

We are almost at the end of this long day. This is the last session of our speakers. However it is not, and I really want to emphasise this, not the least of the sessions. It is very important. Some of the issues that we are going to talk about have come up already today. In my introduction I was going to give you some facts and figures about the diversity in our community. However, I have decided not to do that, so as to give some more time to our speakers. Greg, for example, who is all set up there ready to go, spent four hours in a plane to be here and he is very keen to get on with it. We have already had, around the room today, an indication of some of the major diversity issues that we face in education and training. Those of you who read *The Australian* will know that, over the last two weeks, there has been a big debate about diversity issues. Our discussion here now is very timely.

### **EDGE TRAINING SOLUTIONS, PERTH\***

This presentation is in three parts. First, I want to present some background information on disability with respect to VET and lifelong learning. Secondly, I want to provide a quick overview of a case study. Thirdly, I want to talk about a promising cross-sectoral strategy that is emerging in relation to disability and VET.

In relation to the background information, people with disabilities represent 10% of the working age population in OECD countries. Employment participation rates for people with disabilities are 30-40 percent in the OECD, which is chronically low. The participation rate for people with disabilities in Australia is higher at 53%. I understood it was 80% for the general workforce, but reading the Budget papers the other day, they were quoting a figure closer to 65%. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities in the labour market in the USA and Europe is two to three times higher than that for the general workforce. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities in the labour market in Australia has been as high as 33% in recent years. Thus, there is a significant under-employment and unemployment situation for people with disabilities.

11% of the general working age population participate in VET according to a reference I've read that seems reputable, compared to 2.5% of people with disabilities. VET students are less likely to be enrolled in high level courses, Certificate 3 and above, and as was noted earlier in the symposium, employers prefer their employees to be trained to AQF Level 3 or above. VET

---

\* This presentation was by Greg Lewis, The Executive Director, Edge Training Solutions, Perth, Western Australia.



students with disabilities are not experiencing the same training outcomes, progress or indeed satisfaction as other students; participation rates for people with disabilities in apprenticeships and traineeships are significantly lower; less than half of VET graduates with disabilities find employment within six months of graduating (which is pretty poor) and if VET graduates with disabilities do find employment, their wage levels are no higher than those of people with disabilities in unskilled positions. You have to ask why people with disabilities would enter the VET system.

General policy pronouncements indicate the importance of equity in the mind of various world bodies. For example, the G8 Summit, the Cologne Charter of 1999, said everyone should have access to learning and training; special attention should be given to the needs of the disadvantaged; and it stressed the importance of combating illiteracy. ANTA's three necessary conditions for lifelong learning were a culture of learning; a culture of innovation; and universal access, which is where the disability elements fit in. In the BIAC-TUAC survey framework principle two was wide, equitable access for all. Thus, the commentators, the research bodies, the representative groups, are all saying that there is a need to make better accommodation for people with disabilities (and from other equity groups) within the whole lifelong learning system. Also in the five areas for lifelong learning which Chris Selby Smith talked about at the beginning of the symposium, number one was lifelong learning implementation, and number three was access and equity.

Secondly, I would like to talk about a case study that I have been involved in. Keith Harvey emphasised that lifelong learning has to get out of the classroom and into the workplace. That is a particularly important strategy for many categories of people with disabilities, given issues such as the transfer of training and the transfer of learning. We have completed the two year project recently, but people still go on in their apprenticeships funded by the WA Department of Training. After we have found people with disabilities who wanted to do apprenticeships and traineeships, which is one task that often defeats employers or group training companies and the like, and after we secured apprenticeships and traineeships for them, which is also a task that defeats many people, once we actually had them in the apprenticeships and traineeships, I want to emphasise the support process, to give you an indication of the importance of the coordination, the cross-sectoral planning and coordination that is required.

The project manager, who works with me and who is running this particular project, which is now a program, arranged for the on-the-job support required. Thus, employers know that there is full-time, on-the-job support for as long as they feel they need that person providing support; and to back up the new apprentice with the disability. The job coordinator then meets with company personnel, describes the role, finalises the duty statement, task analyses the various aspects of the job, arranges any workplace or training

venue modifications by one of our occupational therapists, before the apprentice commences work (with full-time on-the-job support). The training co-ordinator, who is also employed within the project, utilises disabled apprentice wage subsidy funding to locate a mentor, interpreter, note taker or tutor where required. If you think it is difficult to access VET and group training arrangements, you ought to try accessing DAWS funding: that would make anything seem like an absolute cakewalk. Yet we have managed to get twenty out of twenty people onto it, which I thought was fantastic, after having appealed against a few whose applications were refused.

The training coordinator then liaises between the workplace and the training venue on training and assessment matters. Between the two of them they maintain regular contact with the employer, with the apprentice, with the apprentice's family, with the job coordinator, with VET lecturers, TAFE disability officers and group training organisations. It is a huge orchestra that you are actually conducting to make this whole thing work. The point is, though, that if you do conduct it, and if you do conduct it well, it does work for people with disabilities.

In the two years of the project we have secured twenty-nine supported apprenticeships for people with disabilities. They have involved quite a range of different apprenticeships. We chose to focus on apprenticeships. Again, echoing the comment that was made earlier about employers and employees focusing on AQF3 levels rather than AQF2 levels, it was probably a good decision on our part. For the people with disabilities who are filling those positions, there are a couple of issues here, from a lifelong learning standpoint. It is good to see that twenty of the thirty-three were over the age of twenty; they were people who probably had not participated in post-secondary education, so they were going against the grain in that regard as well. The types of disabilities represented, including intellectual, specific learning and cerebral palsy, are groups that many would say would not be able to get through TAFE and all the other things associated with an apprenticeship. I believe we have demonstrated that, given the right blend of support, good co-ordination, and good cross-sectoral partnerships, people with disabilities can successfully proceed through VET in relation to apprenticeships and traineeships.

Thirdly, I would like to mention a project we have done that was funded by ANTA through Group Training Australia. It looked for key success factors in placing people with disabilities through group training arrangements. We surveyed all the of 190 odd group training companies around Australia. We did structured interviews with about 25 of them and we did case studies on six of them, to try and tease out what were the critical success factors. It will be published in the next month or two. One of the key messages that comes out of the study is that the failures of new apprentices with disabilities to successfully complete training is more due to lack of communication, poor

transition planning from school to work and inadequate or unavailable information rather than skills or commitment on the part of the person. It comes down to structural things, the systemic things that Moira Scollay talked about earlier today.

Finally, I want to pick up something else that Paul Byrne said earlier, that there was a need for specialist group training companies to support people with disabilities. I disagree with Paul. I know that group training companies indenture people with disabilities at twice the rate, proportionately, of private or public employers, so they are probably doing the best of the three sectors, even though they can do a lot better. But I think it is more about cross-sectoral collaboration between VET, group training organisations, and disability employment agencies, rather than setting up specialised, read marginalised, group training companies just for people with disabilities or just for Indigenous people or just for people with English as a second language. What came out of this particular group training study, is that in both Western Australia and Queensland, group training companies and disability employment agencies, two very different sectors, funded by different Government departments, are signing up formal memoranda of understanding now to actually co-operate in recruiting, placing and supporting people with disabilities in apprenticeships and traineeships. Also there are memoranda of understanding being signed with the registered training organisations (RTOs) as well, because that is another important element to link in. If one can persuade the RTO, the disability employment agency and the group training company, all to sign up on a memorandum of understanding you have achieved a really tight, formalised, cross-sectoral partnership.

## **MAYNE HEALTH\***

Nurses need to be lifelong learners in the ever-changing environment of health. There is a need for ongoing continuing education and professional development in the health care setting. I do not think employers, much as we'd like to think so, think of lifelong learning as part of the greater good. They are more likely to see it as having a highly skilled workforce, a rather selfish view.

The concept of lifelong learning has certainly not been endorsed by nurses nor, I believe, by health. This is largely controlled by cost. In an environment of resource scarcity in both the public and private sectors, if there is a cut in the health budget that flows down to the hospital level, the first thing that managers cut is any sort of professional development. In fact, when nursing education was transferred into universities about eight years ago, depending on what State you were in, the first thing, because universities are Commonwealth-funded, that was pulled out of the hospitals was the professional development units. The hospitals are State-funded and the States referred the issue to the Commonwealth. That change was the beginning of some of the issues surrounding nursing at this time. A number of those issues are now compounded by nursing having a national shortage and a crucial shortage. Indeed it is an international problem. The average age of nurses in Australia is forty-five years. In specialist nursing areas the average age is about forty-eight years. As somebody mentioned earlier today, all that intellectual knowledge we have is in danger of disappearing unless we do something about it quickly.

There are a number of factors that influence nursing, and the need for lifelong learning. To be honest, we can't afford to make many mistakes in health. It has the potential for dire consequences and right now health in Australia is the most litigious industry in the world. The litigation is higher here than even in the US and New York. We really need to ensure we have a highly skilled workforce to minimize risk.

There have been huge changes in technology and techniques in nursing, or in health really, over the last ten years. The industry has had to keep up with the change in terms of education. One of the most dramatic things that has happened in the last two or three years is interventional cardiology, where it is pleasing to note that we'll all be able to have a stent instead of a long scar down the front of our chests, in the future. But it means that nurses have to change the way they practice and the way they're educated; and they need to understand what's happening. Information technology can be critical and we still have nurses who don't understand Microsoft Word, let alone Excel. Older nurses especially in the industry are badly or poorly trained (or not trained at

---

\* The presentation was given by Jenny Duncan, National Director of Nursing at Mayne Health in Sydney.

all) in managing information technology. Improving diagnostics, substantial innovations in radiology and pathology over recent years, has required nurses to work differently, to understand new things constantly.

Health models have been changing. There have been numerous different ways in which we are changing the health system and how we deliver care to patients. Also patient expectations have become higher. Patients now expect to have choices; and they expect nurses to inform them about those choices. There is a globalisation of information and our patients often come to us quite misinformed (or informed) about their particular problems. Nurses have to sort that out. Perhaps you have been involved when the doctor comes along and afterwards the nurse actually explains to you what he said. Nurses have to keep abreast and be educated to make informed decisions. Decreasing length of stay has involved nursing becoming much more efficient. We have a smaller window of opportunity now in which to care for patients. We have to admit them into our organization, care for them within a shorter period of time, and have them ready for discharge. The shorter length of stay has substantially changed the way that nurses practise their profession. There are cost implications for health and nurses of the care they deliver. In this respect health and education have had a similar experience.

The nursing industry and the shortages are another important element. We are experiencing some issues that affect other industries, especially those with a high proportion of female staff. There has been no increase in the male population in nursing for about the last ten years. It remains about 8% and we are not attracting men into the industry. Nursing is also family unfriendly, with twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week service. A lot of people think nurses are underpaid. Nursing also has a poor image and nurses often have a poor image of themselves.

An important thing for nursing and lifelong learning concerns the career paths which are open to nurses, and how we educate them. When we had enough nurses the industry did not take too much notice of these aspects. The industry has had to relook and reinvent themselves. One of the most important things concerns the articulation between the sectors of education and training. It is really important that nurses have flexible entry and exit points; and the industry is increasingly looking at trying to nurture people through the learning points. Mayne Health has a career path, where we're supporting people through all levels of entry and seeking to provide a career path. We have examples in our organizations of people who started at certificate level 3, and are now in senior nursing positions.

Some of the blockages to lifelong learning in nursing have concerned lack of opportunity. About 30% of nurses coming into our undergraduate courses are older people, so we are not attracting the younger generation into nursing sufficiently. We will continue to have a higher average age of nurses and

maybe the life experience that older nurses bring to the profession is positive. The opportunities are there now with the certificate levels. If we can nurture younger nurses through the different levels and provide opportunities for older people, whose families have grown up, whose children have left home and who always wanted to be a nurse. This, as I said, is positive for the health industry and for patients, because of their broader life experience.

Cost to the individual nurses can be a barrier to lifelong learning for undergraduate nurses. However, it may be more of a barrier for full fee paying postgraduate courses. All of our postgraduate courses, including those specialty areas that nursing is short of, like coronary care and intensive care, are full fee-paying courses. Once the nurse has incurred a HECS debt they are unwilling to incur another debt. Many of those people are still reasonably young and maybe have families. It is a big barrier for postgraduate courses in nursing. In fact, it is a major reason why we are short in those particular areas. The other reason is that those people, once they have finished their undergraduate studies, do not earn any more money if they do a postgraduate course.

We are now changing the skill mix in nursing and we are actually wanting a lot more people at the certificate 4 level. Because in the past we have not wanted them, there has been a 40% drop in the training of Certificate 4 nurses in the last ten years. There now is a shortage of nurses at that level as well. There is a different curriculum in different States, and there is no national framework of curriculum for them. When Certificate 3 nurses wish to convert to a Bachelor of Nursing degree, some have to do bridging courses at an additional cost to themselves. Failure to recognize prior learning and lack of satisfactory articulation arrangements are ongoing issues for nursing. On the job training is not necessarily recognized across the board, especially by the higher education system, and the individual has to do certain bridging courses.

Funding for traineeships in different States also varies. In some States, the funding is only available for parts of the health system and is not open to other sectors. Geographical locations are an issue for nurses. For example when nurses are offered work in a rural or remote area, it can be difficult for them to gain access to appropriate education, training and learning opportunities. There are still not many on-line courses. In fact, a nurse to whom I spoke in Gove a few months ago said that there was not even a line there, let alone an on-line course. Some universities are starting to develop on-line courses; and that can be a particular advantage for the Certificate Level 4 nurses who live in rural areas and can't leave their families and move. It is also an added cost. We do, however, have some success stories as I mentioned before, of people going through the system and working their way up.

Often there is no allocation of time for nurses' professional development. In a climate where there is an extreme shortage of nurses, managers will not release them for professional development within their organization. That is a major issue for nursing. A culture of lifelong learning in hospitals is not really there and individual nurses are often not supported to a great degree. In some cases it is purely controlled by costs rather than any other issue. However, there are good stories too. I was speaking at a new graduate program in nursing recently. One of the students said she had been a Certificate Level 4, now she was an RN, she had done her new graduate year. She said she took my point about lifelong learning and was actually going to go and study law. The Chief Magistrate of NSW started her career as a nurse. And there are wonderful examples of nurses, who lacked opportunity when they were younger, progressing through from Certificate Level 3, to Certificate Level 4, to registered nurse, and then becoming specialist clinicians and senior nurse executives.

## **ADULT MIGRANT EDUCATION\***

The New South Wales Adult Migrant English Service (AMES) is an off budget organisation under the State Department of Education and Training. We are a registered training organisation, which has been delivering quality language and literacy service for the past fifty years in New South Wales. Our major focus is on development and enhancement of language and literacy skills of newly arrived migrants.

I would like to talk, from a training perspective, about how our organisation contributes in a small, but very significant, way to the lifelong learning opportunities available for skilled migrants. Specifically I will be talking about the particular program that we have, which is funded by the State Government, on communication and training for overseas qualified professionals.

It is widely accepted that the full wealth of talent and skills that comes with our overseas skilled immigrant, is not fully utilised to the benefit of our society or our economy. On arrival in Australia, these overseas qualified professionals are confronted with many hurdles in gaining employment at levels that are equal to their skills and qualifications and the experience that they have had overseas. Most of these obstacles that these migrants face are mainly due to the fact that they lack the awareness and understanding of the Australian workplace culture and ethics; their inability to communicate proficiently in the workplace context; and most importantly, their lack of local work experience. New South Wales AMES provides ongoing learning opportunities for these overseas qualified professionals through our State funded program called Skillmax. Based on these migrants' continuing educational needs, unemployed professionals as well as employed skilled migrants can access this program free of charge. There is a range of modules that they can access through two different strands under the Skillmax program. The first strand is the job seeking strand, what we call it for the job seekers, and the second strand is the workplace communication strand, which is for the employed or under-employed people. Through this second strand we try to enhance their employability and their career development.

The Skillmax program is a State program funded by the NSW Department of Education and Training. New South Wales AMES has been delivering this program since 1988, so it is over fourteen years now that we have been doing it. Skillmax assists migrants from language backgrounds other than English to maximise the use of their overseas skills and experience by facilitating their entry to employment at levels equal to their previous experience. I believe very strongly, and I'm sure Robin will agree, that this program is one of the best practice training programs that is happening quietly under the

---

\* This presentation was given by Thit Tieu from the NSW Adult Migrant Education Service in Sydney.



Department of Education and Training. When I looked at the OECD framework that I got from Chris, I saw that it meets almost all of the criteria or principles that are laid out there.

Under the Skillmax program each year we have been providing direct assistance to over 1,000 unemployed skilled migrants by offering courses through the Skillmax job seeking strand. This program provides information on the labour market, work and study options. The course is structured in such a way that the participant will develop an awareness of the Australian job market, knowledge of the Australian workplace and culture, as well as job seeking skills and strategies and workplace communication skills. We also provide assistance in organising up to eight weeks of work experience placement, in both the private and the public sector, for all the participants. In a sense we give them a foot into the workplace. What we found was that over 80% of our participants from Skillmax normally obtain employment within the area of their skill. Most of the time they get employment from the organisation that has taken them on for work experience, which in fact shows the wealth of knowledge, skill and experience that our clients bring. Through this local work experience, the participant increases their competitiveness for jobs more relevant to their overseas training and skills. Participants sometimes also review their skills and it can open up further new career development for them.

Another aspect of the program is the Skillmax workplace communication strand, where more than 300 public sector employees would access the program each year, and these employees come from over 80 different public departments. Their main aim is to improve their workplace spoken and written communication skills, so that they can enhance their participation in the New South Wales public sector. These courses are structured to promote the career development of the employees from language backgrounds other than English and to help them find more fulfilling work that really matches their previous trades and professions. That is the benefit for the participants.

For employers and managers, the feedback we have got from them is that Skillmax really opens the door to the rich source of skills and talents the overseas trained immigrants bring to Australia, which may otherwise have been overlooked, mainly because of the difficulties in English language communication. Access to these skills, they said, and the growth of a cohesive and culturally diverse workforce helps both private and public sector organisations to increase productivity, improve customer service and enhance overall business performance.

Now I would like to show you rather more about the Skillmax curriculum and the methodology that we use. The Skillmax program is actually a competency-based training program and, depending on the course or the modules that the participants complete, they would achieve a Statement of

Attainment or Certificate 4 in spoken and written English (CSWE IV accreditation). CSWE IV is the nationally accredited curriculum developed by New South Wales AMES. You are probably aware of the CSWE I's, II's and III's that we have, which are adopted as the curriculum by the Federal Government for all the AMES programs as well. The curriculum is organised in modules to ensure flexibility.

We have chosen two modules from the CSWE IV job seeking strand (shown in Figure 5.1).

In the job seeking strand we have found through experience that module B, orientation to employment in Australia, is extremely important for our newly arrived migrants. Many of them come with preconceived ideas, with great expectations, and this is the module where we try to show them the true nature of what they are going to face working here in Australia. Also it is designed to help them, perhaps rethink their plan of what they want to achieve, and how much they can achieve. That is where we have our educational counsellor involved with the trained teachers for their re-assessment and try to help the participants set up their pathways of what they want to do and what they want to achieve. That is a pre-requisite.

We have four other modules. The communication skills module is mainly for those migrants who come with English at not a very proficient level. That module is intended to give them an opportunity to improve it. Then we have skill development areas: telephone skills for job seeking; writing skills for job seeking; and interview skills for job seeking.

We have two different pathways that students can follow, as show in Figure 5.2.

The most important thing from the participant's point of view is that the whole program is based on the participant, on what would be most beneficial for the participant. The benefits the participant gets from this modular approach curriculum are as follows:

- They have flexibility to choose the modules they feel are right for their own improvement and do not have to be locked into structured long courses.
- They are able to choose their own pathways to become job ready.
- They have the opportunity to repeat modules if they feel that they have not done well enough.
- They get an opportunity to RPL the competencies or modules within these programs to reduce their contact time, if appropriate, and can leave if they so desire. However, participants are encouraged to do a combination of modules leading to a CSWE Certificate.

- They do not have to achieve the CSWE Certificate 4, but we do encourage them to achieve it if at all possible. Upon completion of each module the participants receive a Statement of Attainment in the module. In that sense the flexibility is there.
- Under these modules we have face-to-face teaching, we have workshop mode, we have the distance learning mode. Currently AMES is working on the e-learning mode, so that the program will become more accessible for those migrants who are in rural areas or those who want to enhance their skills while they are doing other jobs which they need for their living before they get into the profession that they want.
- Participants receive a training handbook for each module they undertake.
- Skillmax also provides learning in the workplace by working in collaboration with organisations and employers.

Figure 5.3 shows the modules in the workplace communication strand of the CSWE IV. I do not propose to talk about them at length, but note that the modules can be delivered in various models, including through workshops, distance learning or e-learning. A Statement of Attainment is awarded to all participants who complete three out of three competencies in any module. A Certificate IV in Spoken and Written English – Workplace Communication Strand is awarded to all those participants who complete three out of three competencies in five modules ie. a total of fifteen competencies.

AMES is fully aware that, in this day and time, for any program to be able to perform and maintain the success we need, we have to work in collaboration and in partnership with a variety of other programs. There are two other programs which also provide assistance to skilled immigrants. They are: the Skilled Migrant Placement Program; and the Migrant Career Development Program. Both these programs are funded by the State Department of Education and Training under the guidance of the Migrant Skills and Qualification Advisory Committee. All these three programs are important components of the New South Wales Migrant Skills Strategy.

The Skilled Migrant Placement Program is designed to help migrants from language backgrounds other than English to find a place in the workforce in which they can use the skills, experience and qualifications that they gained overseas. In other words, what they really do is provide overseas skilled migrants with work experience and employment that is relevant and related to their overseas acquired skills.

The Migrant Career Development Program is also funded by the State Department of Education and Training, but it is run by the Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment (ODEOPE). This program is designed to do two main things. First, it offers work experience placements to migrants from non-English speaking countries with under-

utilised overseas skills and/or qualifications. Secondly, it promotes the productivity agenda, by enhancing the productivity of agencies through skill transfer and facilitating the provision of better services to the diverse community of New South Wales. This program provides work experience placements within the public sector and the universities.

There is a cross referral procedure for participants between the Skillmax and the Skilled Migrant Placement Program. Skillmax refers its participants who have completed the course and are job ready to the Skilled Migrant Placement Officers (SMPO) for work experience placement or for attainment of relevant jobs. The SMPOs refer their participants, who require further training in order to become job ready, to Skillmax. Participants of the Skillmax and the Skilled Migrant Placement Programs have the opportunity to apply and compete for the paid six months work experience placements made available by the Migrant Career Development Program. It has become evident to all parties that such collaborative work maximises training, support, advice and opportunities for the overseas-qualified professionals.

Thus, Skillmax produces the training, the Skilled Migrant Placement Program provides the work experience and we refer clients as well; we are working in a partnership to assist overseas qualified professionals to utilise their skills and talent more fully, for their own benefit and also that of the wider community. In conclusion, working together in this collaborative way, we find that the participants, providers and funding bodies are able to maximise training, support, advice and opportunities to the skilled migrant. The most encouraging part for us is the ongoing commitment of the NSW State Government in funding the Skillmax program, which allows the ongoing learning opportunities to be available for overseas qualified professionals.

**Figure 5.1: Modules for Skillmax Program  
CSWE IV – Job Seeking Strand**

**Pre-requisite**

(Mode of delivery – workshop or class)

**Module B – Orientation to employment in Australia**

1. Can research Australian employment context
2. Can set realistic employment goals
3. Can read an information text
4. Can participate in a group discussion

Proposed time frame: (8 – 20 hrs)

+

**Skills Development for Job Seeking**

(Mode of delivery workshop/class)

**Communication Skills**

(Mode of delivery – Class)

**Module B – Communication Skills for the workplace**

1. Can deliver complex spoken instructions
2. Can give a spoken description of a work-related matter
3. Can write a note or message
4. Can write a formal letter

Proposed time frame: (20-100 hrs)

**Module C – Telephone skills for job seeking**

1. Can prepare for a job seeking telephone call
2. Can negotiate a complex transactional telephone conversation
3. Can take a telephone message
4. Can leave a telephone message

Proposed time frame: (10 – 30 hrs)

**Module D – Writing skills for job seeking**

1. Can read and interpret an advertisement for employment
2. Can prepare a resume/CV in response to an advertisement
3. Can prepare a covering letter
4. Can complete a complex job application form

Proposed time frame: (60 – 100 hrs)

**Module E – Interview skills for job seeking**

1. Can prepare for a job interview
2. Can interpret interview questions
3. Can respond to interview questions
4. Can seek information in a job interview

Proposed time frame: (20 – 40 hrs)

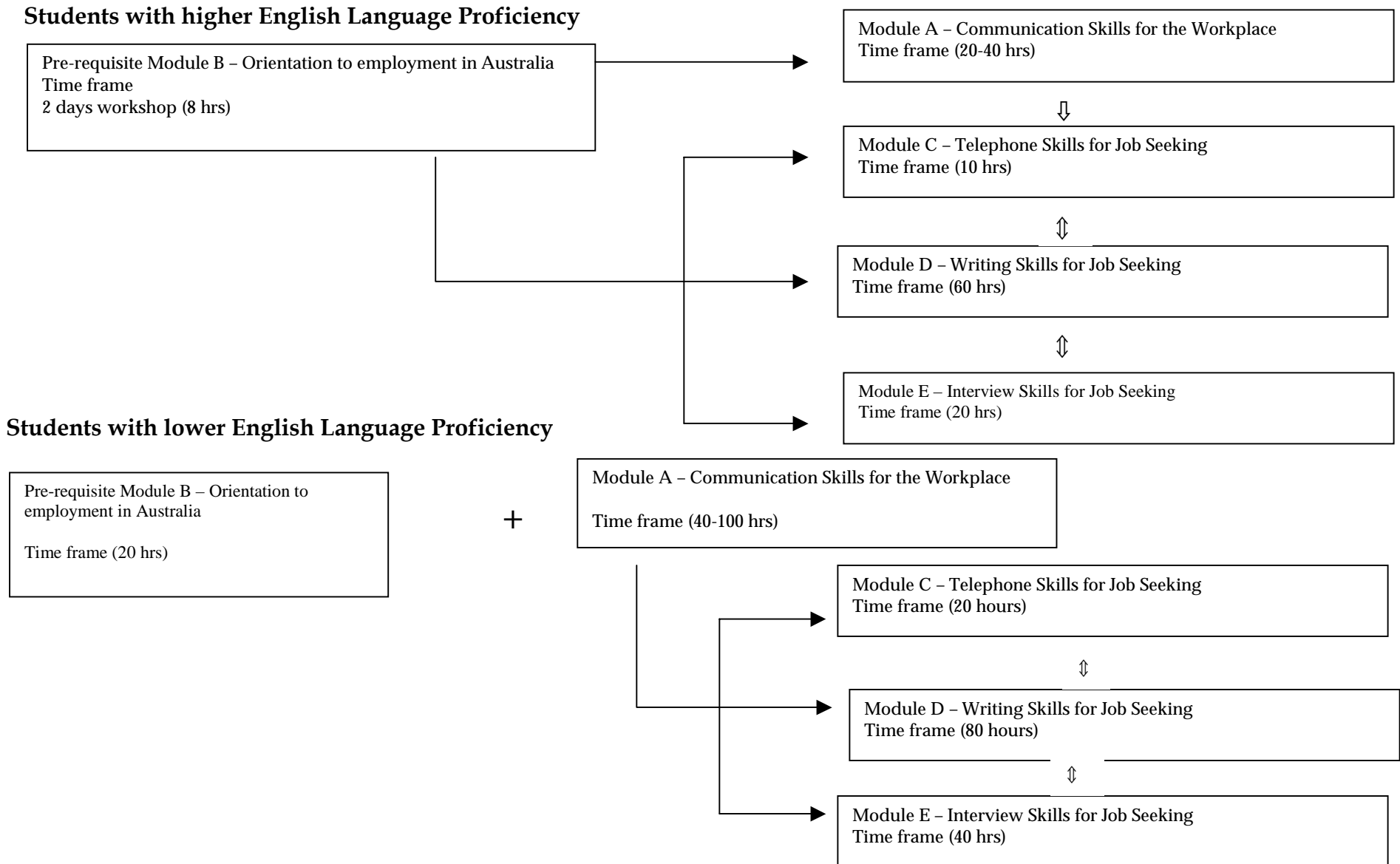
**Credentials**

**Statements of Attainment** on completion of 3 out of 4 competencies in a module

**Certificate IV in Spoken and Written English – *Job Seeking Strand***

Completion of 3 out of 4 competencies in 5 modules (ie. 15 competencies)

**Figure 5.2: Possible Pathways within Job Seeking Strand**



**Figure 5.3: CSWE IV – Workplace Communication Strand  
(Skills Development for Career Enhancement)**

**Module A – Essential grammar for the workplace**

1. Can construct effective multi-clause sentences
2. Can use appropriate tenses and modal elements
3. Can apply a range of spelling strategies

**Module F – Communicating with customers**

1. Can understand the role of customer service within the workplace
2. Can provide appropriate response to customer enquiry/complaint
3. Can provide appropriate written response to customer enquiry/complaint

**Module B – Advanced grammar for the workplace**

1. Can recognise the structures and language features of a range of texts
2. Can combine grammatical features in a paragraph
3. Can write a workplace text

**Module G – Networking strategies in the workplace**

1. Can investigate the role of conversation in the workplace
2. Can participate in a casual conversation with topic changes
3. Can take an extended turn in a casual conversation

**Module C – Pronunciation skills for workplace communication**

1. Can use the stress, rhythm and intonation features of English
2. Can use the phonemic systems of English
3. Can use a range of strategies to monitor own pronunciation

**Module H – Meeting skills**

1. Can prepare an agenda for a workplace meeting
2. Can participate in a workplace meeting
3. Can take minutes for a workplace meeting

**Module D – Writing for the workplace**

1. Can write an e-mail/memo
2. Can write a note or message
3. Can write a formal letter

**Module I – Negotiating skills**

1. Can research contexts for negotiation in the workplace
2. Can negotiate the resolution of a problem/issue
3. Can participate in a negotiation meeting

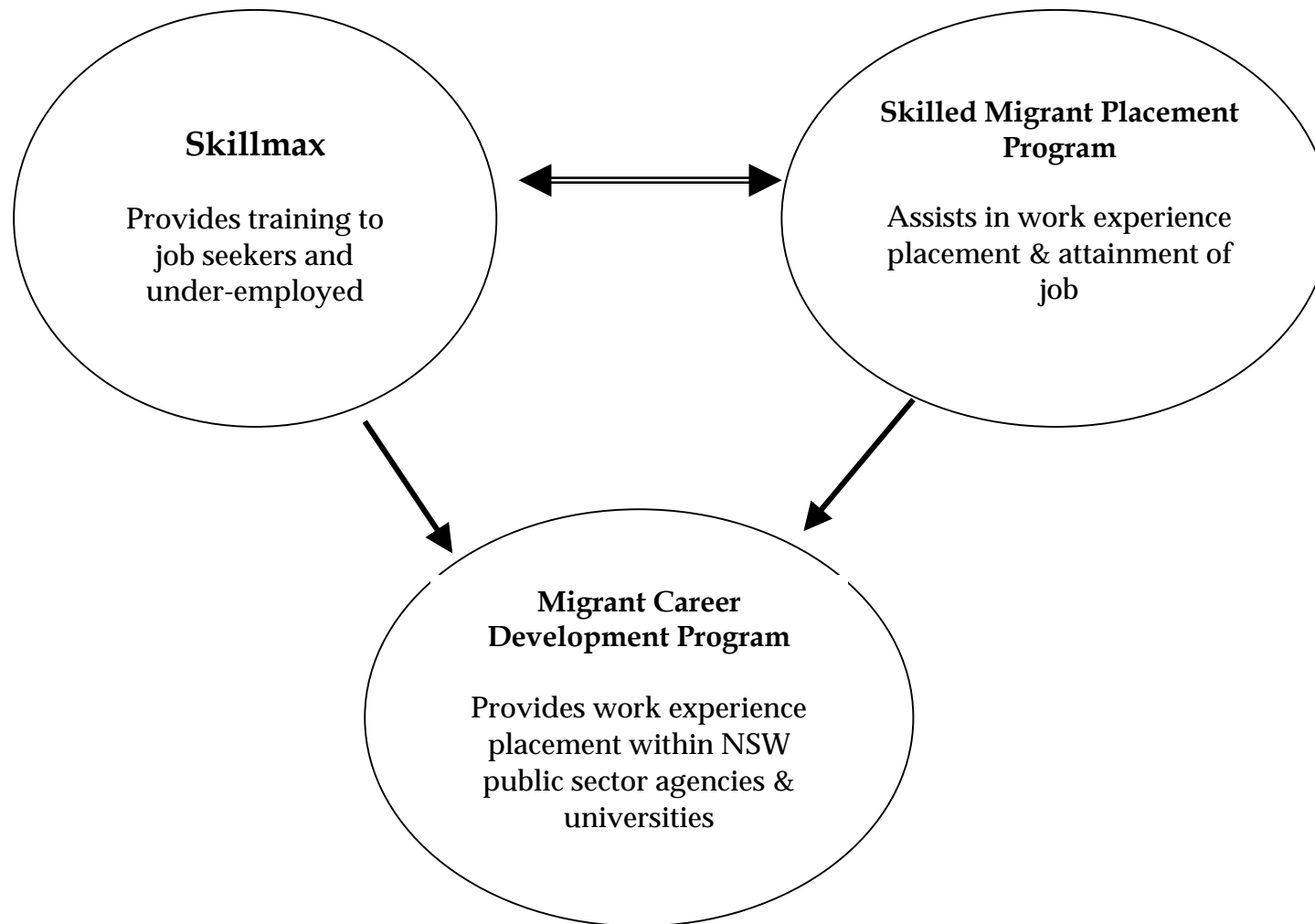
**Module E – Report Writing**

1. Can undertake appropriate research in preparation for report writing
2. Can prepare a complex report
3. Can prepare an executive summary of report

**Module J – Effective spoken skills for the workplace**

1. Can deliver complex spoken instructions
2. Can deliver a spoken presentation
3. Can participate in a group discussion

**Figure 4: Collaborative Approach in Assisting Overseas-qualified Professionals in NSW**



**Source:** NSW Adult Multicultural Education Service, Sydney.



## **CAN WE AVOID THE DARK SIDE OF LIFELONG LEARNING?\***

Workplace Learning Initiatives is a Registered Training Organization based in Melbourne. I am coming at this discussion from the point of view of a practitioner. I have been an adult educator for most of my working life. I started off as a school teacher and then got involved in adult education, adult literacy and community education work, that led me into being involved in workplace and vocational education. I am coming at the issues of lifelong learning as an adult educator and a practitioner. I am also the managing director of a small business. I work with a group of about a dozen colleagues. The staff own the company and we work together as a small collective of professionals involved in these sorts of areas.

Our main activity – somebody used the expression before about getting out of the classroom and into the workplace – well, that’s what our work is. Our bread and butter is actually going into workplaces and developing programs in workplaces. We have developed our business around collaborating with people in workplaces to come up with programs that respond to their needs. So it is very much about context-based curriculum and designing programs in response to the needs of people in those particular circumstances. But at the same time we try to match those requirements with what used to be national curriculum; and we are now using National Training Packages to give people formal credentials.

There is another activity in our business where we get involved in research related to vocational education, workplace learning and workplace change. Over the last ten years, we have undertaken a number of significant projects looking at the integration of language and literacy in vocational training, including generic skills. I was fortunate enough to work with Bruce Wilson and Peter Ewer reviewing research on *The Changing Nature of Work and Implications for VET* (1999) for NCVET. Currently we are working on two research projects: case study research within enterprises, examining the use and value of qualifications to employers; and a project looking at generic skills with older workers, displaced workers, people that have been retrenched or made redundant or displaced from their job because of accident or injury. Both projects have significant implications for lifelong learning. So I come to this symposium fresh from the field and speak as a practitioner-researcher.

### **The Fitter’s Rebuke**

I am reminded of an experience I had as an industry-based teacher, working in a factory that specialised in providing component parts to the vehicle manufacturing industry. The company no longer exists. Like many smaller

---

\* This presentation was by Peter Waterhouse, Managing Director of Workplace Learning Initiatives Pty. Ltd., Melbourne.

privately owned Australian manufacturing enterprises it was bought by a multi-national company and subsequently closed. Several of the participants in my training group were press operators. Jurgen was a massive mountain of a man. He had known presses virtually all of his working life and was approaching retirement age. He had been operating - and setting - the presses in this factory for more than twenty years. He knew all of the presses and their dies intimately. He knew their working histories and their idiosyncrasies. He knew all the standard operating procedures (and the non standard ones as well). He told me one day that he had been to see one of the maintenance fitters, because there was something wrong with one of his presses. A funny noise, a vibration, something was not quite right and he couldn't put his finger on the problem. When he got to me he was angry and disappointed at the reaction he received from the maintenance fitter. "What would you know?" the fitter said to him, "you're just a bloody press operator."

It would be comforting to dismiss the fitter's response with assurances to Jurgen that the fitter was rude and insensitive, even stupid. It would be good if Jurgen didn't have to worry about the fitter's arrogance because it was an isolated incident, atypical and not representative of the general state of things. Unfortunately this was not the case. The fitter's rebuke was authorised by his status as a tradesman addressing an 'unskilled' 'labourer'. It was further strengthened by his use of standard working class English to a 'migrant' worker (still after more than twenty years) with limited English (although he spoke two other languages).

Reflecting on this scenario through a lifelong learning lens I see Jurgen as a relatively effective learner (notwithstanding his difficulties with English). He was an active and interested participant in our Certificate II training program. He had almost completed a working life of nearly continuous employment. Yet after twenty years on the presses he was still interested to know how they worked. He was ready to turn to outside expertise to further his knowledge and understanding. The fitter, confident in his trade status, but only a few years out of his apprenticeship, was not interested in learning about the presses from a 'less qualified' informant.

In retirement Jurgen's lifelong learning might now turn to an interest in growing orchids, or breeding budgies. He may choose to access the University of the Third Age or tinker with the boat in his shed. The fitter on the other hand, has (hopefully) at least two more decades of working life. How will his qualifications, his learning skills and his attitudes equip him for lifelong learning?

Incidents such as this and many others in over twenty years of practice as an adult educator, have prompted me to think about two interrelated issues. The first concerns educational 'winners' and 'losers'. The second concerns the

limited ways in which we identify and appreciate learning. There is scope here for only brief comment on these issues.

### **Educational Winners and Losers**

On the whole, prevailing policy is determined by the 'winners' from the educational process. Few of us sitting around the table at this symposium on lifelong learning would identify ourselves as 'losers' in the education game. It is hardly surprising then that collectively we value education and see opportunities for lifelong learning as highly desirable.

However many, perhaps most, of the adult learners I have worked with over the past twenty years would (at least initially) have identified themselves as 'losers' in the education stakes. In community education centres, in factories, mines, warehouses, processing plants and all manner of workplaces, adult educators and trainers repeatedly encounter groups of people who neither see, nor value education and training in the way that we do. They are sometimes suspicious, sometimes resentful about suggestions that they could benefit from further training - as the fitter might be if he was told he needed to go back to school. For many of them, their experiences have already told them that education (or training) is not their thing. They may associate any form of schooling or training with 'book learning', and consciously or unconsciously link it with frustration, unhappiness and 'failure'.

Who is the lifelong learning we are so enthusiastic about really for? Who is it for and what is it for? I am not meaning to suggest I do not value lifelong learning. On the contrary, I think of learning as synonymous with living. However, it is essential to appreciate the worldviews and personal constructs of those with whom we wish to engage. Education is about the engagement and interaction of personal constructs as Kelly explains:

“To the extent that one person construes the construction process of another, they may play a role in a social process involving the other person ... if we cannot understand people, that is we cannot construe their construction, then we may do things to them but we cannot relate to them.” (Kelly, 1955, p. 18)

As an adult educator committed to lifelong learning it is, therefore, essential that I have a rich appreciation of my potential learners' constructs - including their constructs about learning. They may be very different to my own but that does not make mine 'right' and theirs 'wrong'.

### **The 'dark side' of Lifelong Learning**

If we are committed to a lifelong learning that is not about 'doing things to people', then the policy agenda must recognise the reality of lived experience

for the diverse 'target' constituencies of the policy. To fail to do so would be to establish learning as a new form of oppression rather than opportunity. This would realise the 'dark side' of lifelong learning; compulsory continuous training and retraining; self-funded 'learning' driven by *other people's* agendas and expectations; use-by-dates constantly devaluing skills and knowledge; 'credential creep' accelerating and spiralling out of control; the training treadmill being cranked up faster and faster in response to the ceaseless demands of the 'new economy' and 'fast capitalism' (Gee and Lankshear, 1995; Gee, Hull and Lankshear, 1996).

We need to be clear then, about whether we are really committed to lifelong learning - or whether the emphasis is merely upon formal training and credentialism. Clarity about who and what the learning is for illuminates the agendas and the stakeholders, or shareholders, being served.

### **A Wider Lens and New Appreciations of Learning**

If we are serious about valuing and promoting lifelong learning we may need a much wider lens and richer, more inclusive appreciations of learning than we have traditionally applied to education and training. Much of the discussion today has not really been about lifelong learning, it has been more about lifelong training. In fact, there is an enormous amount of learning that goes on that has nothing to do with formal institutions, formal classes, formal training, formal competencies, any of those things.

Within the Australian context Figgis et al (2001) report that the vocational education and training (VET) sector has fallen short of promoting learning in many enterprises (despite the many ways that this might be possible), in favour of selling its product - formal accredited training. Childs and Wagner (1998) report similar findings, suggesting the failure of the collective imagination of VET. A vision for effective lifelong learning must do better than this. We need a much richer appreciation of experiential and informal learning (Waterhouse, 1999). We need better understandings of workplaces as learning environments (Sefton, Waterhouse and Cooney, 1995; Hager, 1997), more sophisticated insights into learning within communities and the development of social capital (Falk, 1997; Kilpatrick, Bell and Falk, 1998). Current research investigating generic skills with displaced workers (Virgona et al, 2002) suggests a critical need for more sophisticated, comprehensive and supportive systems for the recognition of prior learning and current competence. We need a paradigm shift away from predetermined content for 'delivery' towards a focus on effective 'dialogue on designs for effective learning' in different contexts (Waterhouse, Ewer and Wilson, 1999). We need to grasp the ways education, training and career 'pathways' are often non-linear, fragmentary and contingent. We need to respond to research identifying the multiple layers of lifelong disadvantage experienced by some learners (Golding and Volkhoff, 1997a, 1997b). We need to find ways to

broaden the policy frameworks and engage the voices of a wider range of stakeholders than those traditionally involved in policy formation (see Buchanan et al, 2001).

Problems can be framed and reframed in various ways (Schon, 1983, 1987). The ways in which the problems and issues are framed determines the solutions which are possible. In the workplace scenario described above the 'problem' can be framed in terms of the press operator's lack of qualifications. However, we might also argue that the 'problem' is not that Jurgen doesn't have a trade ticket. The problem is that the fitter doesn't want to listen to, or learn from, Jurgen.

The 'problem(s)' of lifelong learning might also be framed in different ways. A focus on learning theory, rather than policy discourse, might give us new perspectives. We now know that the human brain learns constantly, consciously and unconsciously (see, for instance, Kelly, 1955; Smith, 1975; Neville 1989; Gonczi, 2002). When most educators talk about learning they are usually concerned only with deliberate and structured learning and with the learning they *want* to take place. Emig (1983) explains that teachers, like many other groups, are often guilty of 'magical thinking'. When teachers believe that learning happens *because* they teach and *only because* they teach, they are thinking magically. Often the most powerful demonstrations that teachers give are the ones they are not even aware that they are giving; and these can be both positive and negative for their learners.

It seems to me that if we are really serious about lifelong learning and issues of recognition of prior learning, then there is an enormous amount of conceptual and theoretical work to be done to come to grips with notions of experiential learning and how we can help people to identify, value, name, articulate and market what they have actually learned. The research project that we are working on at the moment on generic skills has identified the issue of recognition of prior learning as a critical issue. The research shows us that people do not know what skills they have got, even for many of the skills that many of us would take for granted as being simple, transferable skills, things like the Mayer competencies, so-called key competencies. These skills are often assumed to be simple, discrete, teachable and easily transferable; our research and experience in many workplaces over more than a decade, suggests that *'it ain't necessarily so'*. There is a good deal of unpacking that still needs to be done around these sorts of issues. One of the things that is really important is recognising that the transfer process is not a simplistic, straightforward process of transfer. In fact, it is a much more active, critically conscious process of recognising, unpacking and repacking what it is you know and seeing how it fits into a different context.

Before I run out of time, there are two other matters I would like to mention. First, there is the changing nature of work, which has been touched on several

times today. Obviously the VET system does not stand outside the changes that are taking place in the world of work. All of the trends towards casualisation, towards outsourcing, towards contracting, towards peripheral employment, all of those sorts of things, also impact directly on VET. VET is there, trying to be a service industry to other industries, trying to help other industries deal with all of these things and become learning organizations and so on. But these changes also impact directly on VET institutions, both public and private. And in many senses we are in the same sort of boat in relation to those changes and challenges as our 'clients'. Secondly, another thing that we have got to examine is the language that we use. What kind of discourse are we operating in? "TAFE'eze", for want of a better term, is not the language of industry. It is the language of our system, it is our own particular kind of tribal language; but in the main, it is not the language of industry. Training packages are not the language of industry either. So part of the challenge that we have as providers, and I'm speaking from a provider perspective, is how do we do that mediating? How do we do that marketing? How do we do that translation, to actually open up opportunities for people to engage and take advantage of the learning opportunities that might be there?

When we reconsider the 'losers' in the education stakes with the wider appreciation of learning and the broader policy context which I have been suggesting, the problem is reframed. The 'problem' is not that they didn't learn anything at school. The problem may be what they *did* learn, the negative self concept, the limitations, the dependency. Since leaving school, they've continued to learn, for better and worse. They now have lifetimes of experience - but they may not value their experience and knowledge at its true worth. They have not been helped to do so. They may have lifetimes of experience, but it counts for little when 'What would they know?' is not a question but a dismissal.

If we are to cultivate a thriving society, with multiple learning communities, the challenge is to develop policies, processes and practices for lifelong learning that will assist people to identify, appreciate and articulate their experience - and to build on it for even further learning. How different might the problems look if we truly embraced learning theory that tells us that we *already have* lifelong learning?

## References

Buchanan, J., Schofield, K., Briggs, C., Considine, C., Hager, P., Hawke, G., Kitay, J., Meagher, G., Macintyre, J., Mournier, A. and Ryan, S. (2001), *Beyond Flexibility: skills and work in the future*, NSW Board of VET, Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training, University of Sydney, and Research Centre for VET, University of Technology, Sydney.

- Childs, M. and Wagner, R. (1998), "A Failure in Imagination. Towards a critical review of VET sector orthodoxy: a polemic", paper presented to Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA) Conference, *The Importance of VET Research: Influencing Policy & Practice*, February, Sydney.
- Emig, J. (1983), *The Web of Meaning: essays on writing, teaching, learning and thinking*, Boynton/Cook Publishers Inc., New Jersey.
- Falk, I. (1997), "Community Learning: Using critical learning to achieve sustainable community outcomes", paper presented to VET Research conference, University of Melbourne & NCVER.
- Figgis, J., Alderson, A., Blackwell, A., Butorac, A., Mitchell, K. and Zubrick, A. (2001), *What convinces enterprises to value training and learning and what does not? A study in using case studies to develop cultures of training and learning*, NCVER Ltd, Leabrook, South Australia, see website at: <http://www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj/nr9016.pdf>
- Gee, J.P. and Lankshear, C. (1995), 'The New Work Order: critical language awareness and 'fast capitalism' texts', *Discourse; studies in the cultural politics of education*, vol.16, no.1.
- Gee, J.P., Hull, G. and Lankshear, C. (1996), *The New Work Order: Behind the language of the new capitalism*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW.
- Gonczi, A. (2002), "Teaching and Learning of the key competencies", International Symposium, Definition and Selection of Competencies (DeSeCo project), OECD, [www.statistik.admin.ch/stat\\_ch/ber15/desecco/](http://www.statistik.admin.ch/stat_ch/ber15/desecco/).
- Golding, B. and Volkoff, V. (1997a), *Some Implications for Australian Indigenous Training from a VET longitudinal research project*, paper presented to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Training Advisory Council (ATSIPTAC) National Networking Group, August.
- Golding, B. and Volkoff, V. (1997b), "Participation VET in Australia: Different Drives, Same Needs?" Paper to conference *Different Drums - One beat? Economic and social goals in education and training*, Monash University-ACER, Centre for the Economics of Education and Training (CEET) and NCVER, Mt. Evelyn, Victoria.
- Hager, P. (1997), *Learning in the Workplace: Review of Research*, NCVER, Leabrook, South Australia.
- Kelly, G. (1955), *The Psychology of Personal Constructs: A Theory of Personality*, Norton & Co, New York.
- Kilpatrick, S., Bell, R. and Falk, I. (1998), "Groups of groups: The role of group learning in building social capital", paper presented to Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA) conference, Sydney.
- Neville, B. (1989), *Educating Psyche: Emotion, Imagination and the Unconscious in Learning*, Collins Dove, Melbourne.
- Schon, D. (1983), *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, Basic Books, New York.

- Schon, D. (1987), *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, Jossey-Bass Inc., San Francisco.
- Sefton, R., Waterhouse, P. and Cooney, R. (1995), *Workplace Learning and Change: The Workplace as a Learning Environment*, Automotive Training Australia, Doncaster, Victoria.
- Smith, F. (1975), *Comprehension and Learning: a conceptual framework for teachers*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, N.Y.
- Virgona, C., Sefton, R., Waterhouse, P. and Sanguinetti, J. (2002) "Generic Skills and Displaced Workers", paper presented to Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA) Conference, Melbourne, March.
- Waterhouse, P.J. (1999), *Good Beginnings: A Search for Authenticity in Adult Education Practice and Identity*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Australia.
- Waterhouse, P., Wilson, B. and Ewer, P. (1999) *The changing nature and patterns of work and implications for VET*, Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.



## **LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE COMMUNITY/NON-GOVERNMENT SECTOR\***

The non-government/community/third sector in Australia is significant in scale, purpose and diversity. Its diversity is manifest in different forms of ownership, size of organization, relationship with neighbourhoods and clients, and the ambiguity of relationship with government. It is substantial, estimated to be at least 8 per cent of GDP, amounting to more than \$60 billion. It is difficult to identify precisely the number of people employed in the sector, but it can be assumed that it is hundreds of thousands, at least. Some of the things I have to say about this sector are quite similar to the kinds of comments that Peter Waterhouse has just made. The challenge they offer is that the primary forms of lifelong learning that occur in those organizations are what I would describe as organisational learning, collaborative learning amongst groups, teams of people, informal individual skills formation and last, formally accredited learning. We are talking about a very diverse sector.

They are diverse on almost every criteria. They are diverse in terms of type of ownership, whether it be community-based, philanthropic, religious or political. We are talking about diversity also in terms of scale. There are some quite large organisations as well as very small organizations, organizations that have a national focus as well as organizations in very specific localities (local housing groups, for example). If you look back to the 1970's, when there was a particular growth and renewed interest in community development and community-based initiatives, there was a very clear priority in those organisations around the first type of learning which I referred to. That was about groups of people coming together and engaging on action research methodologies. Whether they saw them as action research or not, they were capturing experience, reflecting on it and generating new insights, new learning, which informed the programs and activities they were trying to undertake.

Historically, the sector has been characterised by either a dependence on philanthropy, community-based self-help initiatives, or a religious commitment to service. In many organisations with close community connections, there was, twenty-five years ago, a strong focus on learning from and in the community. One of the most rewarding aspects of working in those kinds of organisations was the shared interest and opportunity for communicating insights and understandings about local circumstances, and developing innovative strategies in response. This form of organisational learning was able to deliver quite profound insights and outcomes for these staff groups and their organisations, but was not matched by the systematic

---

\* This presentation was by Bruce Wilson, formerly from the Union Research Centre on Organisation and Technology, and currently Head of the School of Social Science and Planning at RMIT University in Melbourne.

provision of programs or other initiatives to support individual skills formation.

The sector has been dramatically transformed in the last decade on account of the implications of two new kinds of external intervention: compulsory competitive tendering; and enterprise bargaining.

One of the consequences of competitive tendering, and I talk particularly from a Victorian perspective here, but my observation is that it extends throughout Australia, is a major re-organisation of the sector. Some organisations have become much larger, typically at the expense of the smaller community-based organisations. This has enabled the development of a more substantial infrastructure, which could enable more significant efforts to support learning.

However, the more negative effect of competitive tendering has been to place a specific focus on driving down price per unit of output, whether in contracts which required tenderers to offer a price, or those which were fixed-price, where the critical element of the tender price is specifying what will be delivered for a given amount of money. A strict regime has developed, in which the funding base of the organisation has been driven by maximising output per dollar. In this context, any significant effort towards supporting learning is an early casualty. The learning that does occur is at the margins and in the interstices between formal program delivery or service delivery, depending on the activity which is being considered. It is not only learning in the sense of formally accredited learning that is affected adversely, which as I've already indicated is a low priority anyway, but also the space and time for reflection and for collaborative discussion which characterises much of the life in these organisations. A Ph.D. student who is a senior manager in Yooralla, one of the larger non-government disability organisations in Victoria, gave me very specific examples only yesterday of the way in which the tendering regime has whittled away any capacity for them to pay attention to the learning needs of their employees (although they recognise the challenges, the needs and the risks associated with the work). Even in the larger organisations, little opportunity is conceded towards enhancing the skills of staff.

The pressures of time and money have been reinforced by the strong representation of women in the sector: the assumption was that their work did not involve much skill, and thus did not warrant the provision of learning opportunities. The gendered character of perspectives on skills formation arrangements in the community sector is as pronounced as in most other sectors of education and training.

Another consequence of the tendering regime has been the increasing emphasis on formal compliance with standards. This has driven some co-

ordinated work in many agencies on ensuring that there is a measure of internal review and development, which has a learning component. However, much of this has been focused narrowly on compliance, rather than on organisational innovation and change.

As in other industries, enterprise bargaining has provided the opportunity for unions to promote the potential benefits which can be gained from formal skills formation for both organisations and for their employees. In some cases, this has been supported by organisational management, but the pressures of cost constraint have consistently contained the extent to which programs can be sustained within organisations. There are, however, a growing number of organisations which permit, perhaps support, key members of staff in undertaking tertiary qualifications pertinent to their field.

In another respect, enterprise bargaining has created an interest in learning because, when budgets are tight and the organization is only able to offer very limited wage increases, one thing that can be offered may be learning and career development. Typically, at least in the organisations that I've had the opportunity to work with, both on a formal service basis and in my own experience, the arrangements that are established are internal. They do not generally tap into the formal accreditation arrangements. Often space gets created in and around the workplace, rather than in the context of ongoing work, for people to develop specific skills and to mark out what a career path might look like, even within the space that is available under the tight service regimes which exist.

In conclusion, it is useful to return to the distinction between organisational learning, and individual skills formation. The exigencies of delivering services or programs with limited resources and meeting new challenges in the third sector have meant that in some organisations, many people have continued to draw on their experience to enhance both their own and their organisations' understandings about improvement, and even renovation of their businesses. Even in their straitened circumstances, people still struggle with the challenges they face and seek to build new strategies together for managing their organisations and undertaking service delivery. But it is in the margins. It is not something which the organisations are able to do as part of their ongoing life as organisations. In terms of the conversation earlier today about funding, it's not just about the funding for the formal accreditation, it's within the overall framework of service delivery, where tendering is a key device for distributing resources for what one might well regard as essential services in this day and age. The question is how to build into these organisations some recognition of the lifelong learning needs that people have. In my view, much more could be done if these lifelong learning activities were resourced effectively by government purchasers, for the benefit of the staff, the organisations and their users.

## DISCUSSION\*

**Fran Ferrier (CEET):** Peter, I was really taken by your notion of the dark side of training and I wonder if you might expand a little on it. I was talking to a friend yesterday who is a good example of a lifelong learner. He started out in the trades and is now working towards an honours degree and a Masters. He says that the reason that he has kept going is not because of an employer's support and not because of set career goals, but because he learned that knowledge is not a burden. We can carry it around and it is not heavy. It is quite portable. We never know when we're going to use it.

**Peter Waterhouse (Workplace Learning Initiatives):** Well I'm also a poet and I thought it was an evocative phrase. I do think it is worth thinking about, it is worth having on the agenda, that there is another side to all this. Sure, learning is a joy and it is valuable and all that kind of thing, but not everyone sees it the way we do. We are the winners in all this; and the policy formation process is driven by the winners. I think it is important to be attuned to the possibility that there are quite other ways of seeing it. One can take the view that we are committed to our own professional development and that the people we work with are committed to their professional development. In some respects we are gold collar workers: I had not heard that expression before today, but it fits to some extent. On the other hand, there is a difference between engaging in your own professional development because you have a real interest in your profession, your vocation. You want to learn, you want to know. It is rather different if you are driven by the perception or the belief or a feeling of compulsion; that you have really got no choice about it, that you are being forced into it, that your job is on the line, that if you do not do it, you might be vulnerable. Yes, we can take it with us; but increasingly the costs are being put back on the individual as well, so you have to carry the can for it yourself. The ways in which people are employed make it increasingly difficult to get support. The support takes the form of moral support rather than fiscal support. You have got to wear the costs of it, you have got to find the time for it, you have got to fit it into your family routine. I sometimes wonder what the impact on my family was of ten years of my commitment to a PhD. Was it really bloody worth it? That is maybe an extreme example, but it is not so far out of the ballpark I don't think.

**Robin Shreeve (NSW Department of Education):** I am intrigued by your hierarchy. You talked about the trades pejoratively; or at least that is the way it came over.

**Fran Ferrier (CEET):** That is not the way it was intended. Maybe that is a problem we have. People do see it like that.

---

\* This section was prepared from the tape recording of the discussion session by the editors.

**Peter Waterhouse** (Workplace Learning Initiatives): There is another side to it too. Another aspect of lifelong learning is about credentialism. A lot of what we have talked about today has really been about credentialism, about recognition of skills and so on. I look at situations where our company gets involved in workplaces. It depends on the particular circumstances, but you can go in and, even if you can clarify the methodologies, work out the costing arrangements, find a way to give everybody recognition for their prior learning and recognise all their competencies, you can give them all their pieces of paper and go away, but nothing has really changed. Is that what we want our VET system to be doing, to be going in and giving everybody pieces of paper, but not actually making any genuine impact on the workplace?

**Rex Hewett** (Australian Education Union): There was a woman at the World Congress who came from King Island, Tasmania. Her first experience of education was being dragged from King Island to the mainland to go to school. She became an alcoholic for twenty years, but she got back out of her alcoholism eventually. In a sense it was her failure. It was her rejection, but it also made her eventually. I hear what you are saying, Peter. I agree that there is a dark side and it is part of the full picture.

**Mike Long** (CEET): I was thinking about this very issue earlier on, particularly in the first two sessions, where that role for training was portrayed. There were older workers who have not got enough RPL for what they do in the workplace. It really does sound like credentialism if you wander in, see what they do, see that this is equivalent to a Certificate 2 or 3, give them a Certificate 2 or 3 and wander out again. That does not correspond with the kind of thing Moira was talking about earlier on. Why do we have all this training? International competition? Globalisation? And on the other hand we had a reference at one stage to the idea that the firms that were in the most competitive situations were those least likely to train. That came through with the presentation on nursing and the presentation by Peter Glynn. Those things do not sit well together, do they? We could ask ourselves why. Rex proposed a rationale for this, that if you give people a certificate and give them a positive experience with learning, it will encourage them to do more. That is a reasonably nice kind of outcome. Then you ask what employers get out of this. We used to have this system called references that employers would write. And is this new system any better? It certainly costs a lot more (unless you are getting training subsidies out of it).

**Peter Waterhouse** (Workplace Learning Initiatives): At the end of the day it comes back to discussions about purposes and about what the various stakeholders are looking to get out of the training. And for some people to get that formal recognition can be a tremendously important thing. My own father-in-law, after thirty years of experience in the industry, stripping down motors, fixing trucks and doing all sorts of things, had never served a formal apprenticeship and never had formal training trade papers. When he finally

got that certificate, as an equivalency, it was tremendously important for him. For many of the students that we work with in programs to get a Certificate 2, the companies have graduation ceremonies, their families come along, other people come along, and it is a big deal, it is important. In no way do I want to undervalue that, because I think it is really important and valuable. However, if we are going to make a difference in the workplace, if that is our agenda, then we have got to be able to do more than simply go into a workplace and give people recognition for the competencies that they have already got.

**Lynette Mayne** (nominee of ANTA Board chairman): An interesting outcome has been that some of the best practice training that has been occurring, if you are talking to the companies, has been in the workplace. Through the training and retraining and getting qualifications, people are starting to redesign processes, change the way they do their work, getting more skills. “Wow, we could do this, and this, and this, and this.” A byproduct, in some of the best practice cases, is helping to change the workplace, as well as people getting skills and qualifications.

**Keith Harvey** (Australian Services Union): It is not just about credentialism. It is important when people do things which result in them obtaining credentials in a number of cases. But that is not where it starts and finishes. It is important for its own sake, but also for the importance of being a building block. We need to have a foundation and a building block to go on and encourage lifelong learning. People have to recognise the various stages of that, recognise that they have got some foundations and be encouraged to go on. But we should not look on it as a static thing – going in and walking out again – but encourage people to build on the recognition that they have achieved.

I agree with the concern that was expressed about the possible downside, that training could be another imposition on people. It was behind what I said this morning, that there is still some considerable resistance in the workplace to having to go on training. One of the reasons is that people have not had a very good education or training experience in the past, for various reasons. They got out of education and training when they could and are now told they are going to go back into it for another four years. In those circumstances, it is not something some people look forward to.

**Gary Collins** (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia): There is a matter of individual choice, of course. People do not have to get involved in this if they do not want to. [**Peter Waterhouse**: Well, yes and no. There are degrees of volunteerism, aren't there? You can refuse to be involved in the program or choose not to, but the only way you can get a pay increase is if you do.] Then you wear the consequences of your non-involvement. I was one of your losers in the education system. I left school with a piece of paper that said: “One of the school's undesirables, will never get anywhere in life;”

and they were exactly right! People turn things around. There are hundreds of thousands of people who used to lose in the education process and are now winners. The only reason they became winners is because they made a personal decision that it was worthwhile pursuing something.

**Thit Tieu** (NSW Adult Multicultural Education Service): I feel that the credentials you provide can be building blocks only if they are portable. Once they are not portable, it has just become credentialism and a title. That is constantly faced by the skilled migrants who come into Australia. They come in with great credentials, but because it is not portable in our society, it becomes a useless piece of paper. That is why they need to prove that they can do these tasks and possess these skills, to be able to get the jobs. I think the portability is extremely important across countries.

**Robin Shreeve** (NSW Department of Education): That is interesting. Credentialism in nursing and nursing's relation to the medical professions, are barriers to what is defined as professional. In New South Wales a Certificate 4 is an enrolled nurse. The Certificate 3 is an assistant in nursing, which is actually the fastest growing area in TAFE, and the Nurses Registration Board wants nothing to do with it, because they feel it is sub-professional. In New South Wales, enrolled nursing is controlled by the State Department of Health on the basis of clinical placements, so it is very difficult to have a pathway.

**Chandra Shah** (CEET): I am a bit confused. In the broadest sense, I do not think we have ever not been lifelong learners. What aspect of learning and training is going to be defined as lifelong learning if you want to narrow it down?; and if we want to make policy about it?

**Peter Waterhouse** (Workplace Learning Initiatives): You need a standard for lifelong learning. I think Chandra's question is a good one. People have talked today about transparency, about the system being open and transparent and so on. If we are talking about learning for employment in paid jobs within industry, if that is what the policy is for, let's say that that is what the policy is for. I don't know what the answer to that question is, but it seems to me that that is what we ought to be talking about. My comment was premised on an observation that, in the main, much of the discussion today has really been about credential training. It has been about formal training, although the banner was lifelong learning. In my own PhD I investigated experiential learning, professional practice and professional development. One of the things that came through, which was really significant to me, was that a lot of the most significant development did not come from formal training, courses and programs at all. In fact, in the workplace we find the same kind of thing. Often the most important learning and development is the informal learning that takes place in the workplace, and it has got a lot to do with the culture of the organisation, the values of the organisation and the way those values are

embodied in the practices that are promoted there. You can have a fantastic learning organisation that does not have a training manager, does not have a training department, does not have any credentials at all. In public policy terms, how are we trying to get a handle on these sorts of things, and what are we actually making the policy for? Personally, I was very encouraged by what I heard Moira saying earlier, that in public policy terms there is a need to recognise broader responsibilities for the VET system as a whole. It is not just about the requirements of industry, and it is not only about the requirements of employers. That might sound a bit contradictory coming from a VET provider that earns its living from workplace training. However, it seems to me that, in the context of a discourse about public policy, that is tremendously important. There is a profound government responsibility not to lose sight of those broader objectives.



## **SESSION SIX: SUMMARY OF MAIN THEMES\***

**Chair: Gerald Burke, CEET.**

### **Introduction**

The Australian symposium on lifelong learning and the world of work involved twenty-eight senior delegates representing a range of constituencies - employer associations, trade unions, national and state governments, public and private vocational education and training providers, small business and the research and consulting community. The main themes emerging from the daylong symposium are reported here.

### **What is Lifelong Learning in the Australian Context?**

A shared understanding of what lifelong learning means in the Australian context is a pre-requisite for advancing lifelong learning policy and practice.

Although the symposium was focused on lifelong learning and the world of work, much of the initial discussion favoured a narrower rather than wider interpretation. It assumed lifelong learning to be formal post-school education and training provided through the publicly funded vocational education and training (VET) sector and delivered through registered public, private and community training organisations. Links to non-formal and informal learning were largely seen through the lens of recognition of prior learning (RPL) and recognition of current competence (RCC).

However, some participants emphasised that lifelong learning needs to be interpreted more widely, beyond formal education and training and lifelong involvement, to encompass non-formal and informal learning in workplaces, institutions and in community life more broadly. Distinguishing between lifelong learning and lifelong training is important and there is a danger that lifelong learning could degenerate into training credentialism.

Perhaps this general preference for a narrower view of lifelong learning reflected the composition of the symposium which did not include representatives of the adult and community education (ACE) sector, which makes a small but significant contribution to adult learning and social and individual development in Australia. Nor did it include those involved in the delivery of informal and non-formal education and training for adults.

---

\* Prepared by Kaye Schofield, Executive Director, Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training, University of Technology, Sydney.

### ***Context Matters***

The state of lifelong learning in Australia needs to be considered in its context. Since 1974 Australia has used lifelong learning as a master concept, although not always under that title. Initially this policy direction was embodied in the Kangan Report (Kangan, 1974) which put into practice many of the principles of lifelong learning developed in UNESCO's Faure Report, published in 1972 (Faure, 1972).

The Kangan Report established a new sector comprising publicly funded Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges to provide both vocational and general lifelong and life-wide learning for adults. Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, the concept of lifelong or recurrent education came to be seen as the specific property of TAFE, rather than as an underlying vision for all education, formal and informal.

In the late 1980s Australian policy shifted to what has become known today as the national training system, with an emphasis on formal vocational education and training. Again, while not promulgated under the title of lifelong learning, the national training system in its various iterations has continued to reflect and pursue many of the core principles of lifelong learning such as:

- a national training system to support labour mobility;
- encompassing all labour market sectors;
- providing vocational learning opportunities for adults of all ages and from all social backgrounds;
- accessible to people in employment and also those looking for employment;
- client focussed;
- user driven;
- an emphasis on flexible learning, taking account of client and user preferences and utilising new learning technologies to enhance flexibility;
- multiple post-compulsory pathways, with a strong emphasis on articulation with other formal education and training sectors;
- continuing commitment to equity for those most disadvantaged in the labour market and society more broadly; and
- collaboration and partnerships between employers, trade unions and governments to achieve mutually agreed policy objectives.

## ***Tensions***

The symposium drew out some of the tensions underlying the assumption that the national training system can be equated to a lifelong learning policy. Four particular tensions recurred.

- The relationship between informal and non-formal education and training and the formal national training system currently in place.
- The respective roles and influence of the direct clients (individual learners) and users (enterprises/employers) in determining policy and resource allocations.
- Different perspectives on learning and the world of work held by the four education and training sectors: schooling; VET; higher education; and adult and community education. Differences between these sectoral perspectives and workplace perspectives need to be addressed in a more holistic approach to public policy.
- Interpretations of lifelong learning as continuous personal development and as continuous skill formation.

## ***Institutions and Workplaces***

The symposium also highlighted differences amongst stakeholders about the engine of lifelong learning – workplaces or institutions.

All stakeholders recognise the need for a strong, dynamic, innovative and flexible system of institutional provision through publicly funded TAFE Institutes and Colleges. However, there are significant differences about what is the desirable balance between institution-based vocational learning and work-based vocational learning (and therefore resource allocations).

For the trade union movement and for employer associations, the workplace must be the centrepiece of lifelong learning. As one stakeholder put it:

“...Lifelong learning must be a workplace based event and outcome...firmly rooted in workplaces not in formal training institutions if lifelong learning is to have any chance of success. Lifelong learning must get out of the classroom and into the workplace culture.”

Teacher unions recognise the importance of enhanced work-based learning, but do not want this growth to be at the expense of the public TAFE system, which provides not only for those in the workforce, but also for those not in the workforce or who work in places which have no commitment to lifelong learning or to training and development. They emphasise the need for a better balance between public TAFE provision on the one hand and private provision in enterprises and private training organisations on the other.

Stakeholders from national government, while recognising the need for a high quality public TAFE system, see the VET system moving inexorably from an institution-based system to a workplace-based system centred around contracts of training (apprenticeships and traineeships).

All stakeholders recognise that between institutional provision and workplace provision lies the matter of individual and employer choice and there is, as yet, no vision of how this could play out in the future.

### **What's Driving Lifelong Learning in Australia?**

Macro-factors such as globalisation, scientific and technological change, the changing nature of work, an aging workforce and the need to assure Australia's economic competitiveness and social cohesion are widely recognised as factors driving increased interest in lifelong learning. However, different factors play out in different parts of the economy and in society at different times.

#### ***Industry and Firm Dynamics***

Each industry, occupation and enterprise has its own dynamic, leading overall to a growing awareness of the importance of lifelong learning.

In an ever-changing health environment, nurses need to be lifelong learners. New technology for management data, clinical outcome data, online reporting, tele-medicine and new machinery such as ECGs and CTGs are making new demands on nurses; and new medical techniques and improving diagnostics are changing the way nurses care for patients. Patient expectations of nursing services are higher than ever. Globalisation of information has made patients both more informed and more ill informed. They expect choices and they expect nurses to help with those choices. Litigation is also a driving factor. Overall, there is a rising need for ongoing education and continuing professional development as a risk management strategy.

In the emergent electrical contracting industry, projected skill shortages, labour turnover and a changing industry are all key factors in driving lifelong learning. A 2% growth in apprentice numbers is outweighed by a 5% growth in demand, 36% wastage during apprenticeship and around 50% of tradespeople dropping out of the trade by the age of thirty. There is also a need for different skill sets as the industry deals with technological change and the convergence of information technologies and traditional electrical and electronic trades.

Changing demographics and changing attitudes to work mean that many firms can no longer rely on recruitment of young people as the primary

mechanism for replenishing the skills of their workforce. More attention will be directed to upgrading the skills of the existing and aging workforce. This will require new attitudes and approaches to the learning needs of older people, especially older workers, and the abandonment of negative stereotypes about them.

The more sophisticated firms are aligning their training and development decisions with their long-term business strategy. In such cases, training and development strategies are used to support technological and organisational change, entry to new markets and the establishment of new structures in the marketplace. They approach training and development from the perspective of the needs of the enterprise rather than the needs of the individual and are increasingly expecting individual employees to take responsibility for their own ongoing development. Companies are also looking for better ways to understand the previous skill development of their employees.

### ***Individual Preferences and Aspirations***

Changing attitudes of individuals are also driving lifelong learning and the symposium was reminded that lifelong learning should reflect not only the needs of globalisation, technological change and workplaces, it should also reflect the needs of workers and would-be workers as well as citizens.

How individuals manage their learning and their careers varies by industry, skills profile, age and previous educational experiences. But individual learners are not following linear pathways any more. They ‘swirl’ – dropping in and out of different learning sites and institutions and transferring freely between them and between work and study. Linear pathways embodied in traditional models of learner progression from education to work, as conceived by policy-makers, no longer apply. Learners are increasingly constructing their own routes – formal and informal – according to their own needs, aspirations and circumstances and assuming greater responsibility for their own employability.

e-Learning is beginning to open up new opportunities for lifelong learning in the workplace, in the home and in the community, although take-up is still relatively patchy. e-Learning cannot yet be considered as a driver of lifelong learning when lifelong learning is conceived only in terms of formal vocational education and training.

A further consideration in understanding what is driving lifelong learning is the changing nature of learning itself. Breakthroughs in neuroscience, the emergence of new learning theory, recognition of new modes of knowledge production which emphasise non-codified and tacit knowledge and continuous learning work, together with the changing nature of skill, are all

combining to make us think differently about learning generally and vocational learning specifically.

### **What's Working Well?**

All participants in the symposium recognise the substantial progress Australia has made in developing a systemic approach to lifelong learning over the past twenty-five years.

### ***Key Achievements***

There is little doubt that the achievements in lifelong vocational education and training have been significant.

- Industry-defined vocational qualifications now cover more than 80% of the workforce below degree level and almost all industries are now covered by VET qualifications.
- Training which was in the past company-specific can now lead to nationally recognised, portable qualifications.
- Over the past six years the number of new workers under contracts of training (apprenticeships and traineeships) has increased by almost 50%.
- There have been large increases in the number of school students undertaking recognised VET programs.
- Some 13% of people aged 16-64 years are currently engaged in vocational education and training.
- Significant financial incentives are available to employers to take on an apprentice or trainee and provide structured work-based training.
- Shared commitment by unions and employers to the national VET system.
- More than 1.7 million Australians are engaged in publicly funded VET programs each year.
- The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) aligns formal qualifications across all sectors of education and training.

### ***Good Practice***

The symposium also identified many creative examples of good practice occurring throughout the country.

- The Wyong Mature Workers Program (TAFE NSW), illustrating how the needs of mature-aged unemployed people can be met in new and flexible ways to enhance their employability.
- The Certificate IV in Interagency Practice - Child Abuse through the Adelaide Institute of TAFE, illustrating the principle of "shared

responsibility” and “mutual respect” through successful cooperation between the social partners and government agencies.

- The Skillmax program in NSW offering a collaborative, cross-agency program designed to meet the needs of overseas qualified professionals for more than twenty years, as part of a larger NSW Migrant Skills Strategy.
- The two-year pilot project by Edge Training Solutions in Western Australia to secure and support apprenticeships for people with disabilities, illustrating the possibilities of moving people with disabilities into the economic mainstream if sufficient resources are allocated to underwrite both their employment and training support needs.
- Innovative and flexible provision of agricultural training by the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture to a very broad client base - men and women aged from 15 to over 60, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people born overseas, people who speak a language other than English and people from regional, rural and remote communities. Almost 50% of the College’s clients in 2001 were people who had left school at or earlier than Year 10.

### ***Broad Policy Settings***

A widely held but not unanimous view is that current policy settings provide an essentially sound framework which enjoys bipartisan support and the strong support of both the trade union movement and employer associations. One delegate spoke for many with the following comment: “Whilst there are some queries to be raised regarding the quality of outcomes produced by the VET sector, the fundamentals of the system are nevertheless sound. Much work has already been done.”

From the trade union perspective, lifelong learning is increasingly underpinned by policy settings such as award restructuring, skill-based classification structures, awards and agreements which promote a culture of continuous training, competency-based training, Training Packages and assessment (including through RPL and RCC). The establishment of traineeships is widely seen as a major contribution to building the culture and practice of lifelong learning.

From the perspective of employer associations, employer/employee choice is the basis of lifelong involvement in training and the policy of User Choice has been a key instrument giving it practical effect. Building relationships between the training organisation and the employer is also seen to be crucial. National companies appreciate the opportunity to engage in a national training system through the AQF rather than negotiate with eight different State/Territory training systems.

From a government perspective, Training Package specifications of competency standards, assessment frameworks and qualification pathways, the introduction of the AQF, tripartite decision-making at national level and significant public funding are all working together to underpin a lifelong learning system.

However, there were some dissenting voices on the continuing appropriateness of current policy settings and these are discussed further below.

The overall view is that Australia is well on its way to implementing lifelong learning, but there is much more to be done. What is not working so well and what needs to be done differently were the subject of lively debate amongst stakeholders.

### **What is Not Yet Right?**

Stakeholders identified a broad spectrum of specific matters that need to be improved within the current policy framework discussed earlier. These are discussed in turn below.

#### ***Funding***

For most of the delegates, the value and necessity of lifelong learning is not in question, but who pays and for what outcomes is. This is seen as the core issue for lifelong learning (alongside cross-sectoral co-operation), and one which is yet to be openly debated in Australia.

There are three primary sources of funding for VET in Australia - individuals, industry and governments. Other post-compulsory sectors – schools, higher education and adult and community education – also contribute in various ways and have also drawn down on VET sector funds for various VET-related initiatives.

Getting the funding arrangements right within the VET sector itself and also between VET and other post-compulsory sectors is seen as the most important step to further advancing the concept of lifelong learning in Australia.

#### **Government Contributions**

Most of the debate at the symposium focused on government funding for VET. The size and direction of government funding is essentially a political issue and all Australian governments feel a need to conduct the debate without inferring that they should or will spend more on education and training. In this view, the existing financial cake needs to be cut in a different way. However, governments across Australia have differing views on the extent to which individuals or industry should be encouraged or required to



increase their contribution. Stakeholders noted the differential power of individuals and industry in influencing government funding policy. Unlike learners in higher education, VET learners are in a relatively weak position because of the absence of active representative organisations.

Employer associations made a strong case for establishing new funding models for the VET sector and for reforming the way funding decision are made. They argued that current funding mechanisms and accountability requirements have led to significant complexities in administering the distribution of funding and mismatches between funding and demand. For some employer delegates, governments need to be prepared to open the debate about funding systems and how funds should be allocated and to consider other models such as funding controlled by employer and employee organisations, vouchers, learning accounts and learning bonuses. They put forward three main arguments in support of reformed funding arrangements.

- State Training Authorities (STAs) currently control funding for VET, determine priorities and make funding allocations. Employer associations believe they do not represent industry, even though VET claims to be an industry-driven system. As one delegate put it, “Stalinist planning” adopted by STAs will always result in a mismatch between the bureaucracies’ views of industry and individual needs and the views of industry and individuals themselves. Notwithstanding the effort expended by STAs to plan for State/Territory provision through State Training Profiles, they consistently get it wrong by disregarding industry advice on priorities and funding areas of low or questionable demand.
- User Choice for apprenticeships and traineeships has yet to be fully implemented in Australia and there are wide variations in its implementation across the country. Employer/employee choice is the basis of lifelong involvement in training and learning. Between 70-80% of public VET funds are allocated to institutional provision, which is often irrelevant to workplaces. For employers, the evidence shows that employment-based training arrangements lead to better outcomes for individuals and industry. Institutional programs are a second-best option, but should nevertheless have substantial connection to the workplace. A greater proportion of public funds should be allocated to structured work-based training through apprenticeships and traineeships on the basis of current and projected future demand, expressed through the mechanism of User Choice. Setting upper limits on the proportion of total VET funds available for apprenticeship and traineeship training is not justified.
- Nominal training hours are no longer a satisfactory basis for resource allocation and they should be replaced by unit costs of training. Unit costs need to be made fully transparent and lists of training costs should be prepared and made available to all employers.

Trade unions have a somewhat different perspective on government funding. The general trade union movement wants to see additional funds made available for apprenticeships and traineeships so that they can be accessed by existing workers. Teacher unions on the other hand argue that the focus on funding for apprenticeships and traineeships is too narrow. Declining Commonwealth funding for VET (down from 25% of all funding in 1997 to 21% in 2000), combined with cuts to labour market programs, has reduced unit costs from \$14.22 per adjusted Annual Hour Curriculum in 1997 to \$12.67 in 2000 (at 2000 prices). At the same time, funding for non-TAFE providers increased from \$58.6m in 1995 to \$268m in 2000. It is argued that consequent cost pressures have impacted negatively on training quality generally and, in TAFE, on student services, student withdrawal rates, teacher workload and stress and have led to significant financial difficulties for a number of TAFE Institutes and Colleges. Teacher unions want to see increased Commonwealth funding for growth, matched by increased State and Territory funding, to compensate for the freeze on growth funds for VET over the past three years.

### *Industry Contributions*

Substantial public funding is allocated to VET (around \$3.5 billion per year), but this does not include the expenditure on formal and non-formal training by many companies and by government departments such as defence, health, community services and education, which is generally estimated to be at least of the same magnitude as government funding.

However, it has become harder for Australia to measure industry's contribution to training since the abandonment of the Training Guarantee Levy and since the test of "respondent burden" caused the Australian Bureau of Statistics to cease conducting training expenditure surveys after 1996. However, negotiations are underway to conduct this survey again in the near future.

Employers are seen by all stakeholders to have a key role to play in advancing lifelong learning through provision of relevant on-job training and learning opportunities linked to off-job training. In many cases this is simply not happening. They also have a role in developing a learning culture within the workplace, yet the development of a commitment to training within industry is patchy, with some employers, especially small and medium sized companies, reluctant to commit and pay. The pressures of time and money mean that in many organisations, funding for learning is an early casualty. In some sectors, including the non-government/ community/third sector, gendered perceptions of skill formation undermine investment in learning systems.

In some instances, cost-shifting is occurring, with firms substituting public funding for their own corporate funding. This prompts calls from some

delegates to restore the national policy objective of increasing industry investment in training.

### *Individual Contributions*

Training is widely recognised as a co-investment by governments, individuals and industry. Increasingly, individuals are contributing to the costs of training not only through income foregone and lower training wages but to the costs of administration and tuition. This leads some stakeholders to argue for a HECS-type arrangement, along the lines of that applying to higher education, to be introduced in TAFE to make individual contributions more transparent. However, TAFE fees are a particularly sensitive political issue and State and Territory Ministers have in the past rejected the idea of introducing HECS-type arrangements into the TAFE system.

### *Incentives*

#### *Incentives for Employers*

Most debate around incentives for lifelong learning focused on incentives and subsidies to employers to employ an apprentice or trainee. These are generally accepted as being generous, but appropriate in the Australian context. They are also recognised as helping to change enterprise mindsets and encourage a training culture.

However, the additional costs of entering into a contract of training for people with disabilities do not seem to be adequately recognised in the current incentive regime.

Some delegates identified a need to have incentive payments made on the basis of both completion and commencement.

#### *Incentives for Individuals*

There is also a need to consider the role of incentives in motivating individuals to pursue lifelong learning. The achievement of nationally recognised qualifications can be an intrinsic motivator and can also have an extrinsic motivating effect where wages or career progression are linked to qualifications achieved rather than confined to qualifications used.

While there are many individuals who love learning and are lifelong learners, there are also many individuals who are simply not interested. Incentives for these individuals with little personal motivation are generally weak.

Low wage rates and poor working conditions, lack of access to unfair dismissal legislation and poor on-job training can all serve as a disincentive to completion of traineeships.

The concepts of learning accounts and training entitlements were briefly canvassed as mechanisms for achieving greater equity and more efficient use of public funds, although the recent UK decision to move away from learning accounts was noted, because of difficulties in targeting expenditure and cost control.

All young people in Australia are entitled to at least twelve years of publicly funded education through the school sector. But there are many currently in employment and who are unemployed who did not receive this core entitlement. Some delegates called for Australia to adopt a position of guaranteeing all people, including those currently in the workforce, a minimum, means-tested training entitlement to allow them to achieve a first post-school qualification.

### *Existing Workers*

Existing workers with little previous participation in education and training face greater access difficulties than new entrants to the labour market; and large segments of the adult workforce are not getting broader learning opportunities of any sort through their employers. Longer working hours, employer resistance and weak incentives for individuals and employers are all factors at play here.

Both employer associations and trade unions believe that, while apprenticeships and traineeships are generally open to new entrants and existing workers alike, government incentive payments to employers should be available to encourage them to provide recognised training for their existing workforce. Earlier policy decisions along these lines led to abuse of the system and substitution of government funds for company investment, leading to a policy shift. However, in abandoning incentive payments for existing workers to undertake apprenticeships or traineeships, the trade unions are concerned that we may have “thrown the baby out with the bathwater”.

### ***Cross-sectoral Co-operation***

Cross-sectoral pathways are critical to lifelong learning. However, sectoral differences in organising, delivering, assessing and recognising learning continue and pose barriers for individual learners and lifelong learning. All stakeholders see a need to find better ways to coordinate and integrate activities across the sectors.

There is clear evidence of heavier traffic between the different sectors. In TAFE NSW for example, 44% of current students have previous qualifications, ranging from TAFE certificates to degrees or higher, with 27,000 students with university qualifications studying in TAFE NSW in 2001.

Estimates suggest that some 200,000 school students are pursuing formal VET qualifications in 2002.

### *School-VET Co-operation*

Schools and VET are moving progressively closer in their approach to vocational education and training and this is a major step towards lifelong learning. However, there are concerns that the quality of VET in schools outcomes may not be consistent with those from other VET sites, because of the lack of vocational qualifications of teachers in schools and more limited access by schools to workplaces or work simulation.

There is still resistance to vocational learning in many schools, and teachers do not seem to understand the contextual dimension of learning and the need for their students to be exposed to learning in multiple contexts.

Some employer associations see that they have a key role in building the capacity of employers to train and believe in starting early in the school sector. Examples of school-industry cooperation include creative initiatives such as getting employers to serve as “Principal for a Day” and placing teachers in industry to increase their understanding of the world of work.

### *VET-higher Education Co-operation*

It is generally agreed that the barriers between VET and higher education have not been removed by the recent training reforms. In some cases, these barriers have been made higher by the refusal of traditional universities to accept competency-based training outcomes, the inadequate attention to the knowledge dimension in industry defined qualifications and different funding and fee arrangements between the States and Territories.

The complexities of building seamless pathways between VET and higher education are considerable. TAFE NSW, for example, has had to negotiate 1,500 separate arrangements for credit transfer between TAFE NSW and the university sector.

From a more radical perspective, one employer association expressed frustration with the interface and proposed that Australia needs to make higher education an industry-led sector.

### *VET-ACE Co-operation*

Co-operation between VET and ACE was not discussed in the symposium, perhaps suggesting the need for a more holistic view of lifelong learning encompassing all formal sectors, even where they provide non-formal and informal learning opportunities rather than simply formal training.

### ***Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)***

Recognition of the existing competence and prior learning of individuals, be they currently in work or looking for work, is widely seen as a building block of lifelong learning, providing pathways from informal and non-formal learning settings and a real opportunity to engage with those with little formal post-school education and training. It is seen as a key access and equity issue for many individuals. The limited practical application of RPL is widely regarded, especially by trade unions and governments, as one of the key weaknesses in current arrangements .

The mechanisms exist for implementing RPL and RCC (recognition of current competency), but the key barrier is funding arrangements. The costs of RPL for most providers are substantial and government funding arrangements serve as a disincentive to provide recognition services and an incentive to provide training services, even if the person is already competent. There is an expressed need to fund RPL on a different and better basis

A note of caution was signalled by stakeholders that RPL, while an important bridge between formal, informal and non-formal learning, can slip too easily into credentialism and that we need to be much clearer about why we want to improve it and what employers will get out of it.

### ***Access and Equity***

One stakeholder summed up the position at the symposium as follows.

“...the relationship between education and training participation and socio-economic status remains clear and strong in Australia; ...the private benefits of education, and public subsidies at the post-compulsory level, still go predominantly to those from relatively privileged backgrounds; ...despite the impressively high rates of adult participation in education and training in Australia, relatively little is being done to help the many thousands of Australian adults who have serious deficiencies in their basic skills or are most at risk in the process of structural change...”

It is important to remember that there is a “dark side” of lifelong learning. The learning needs of those in education and training institutions and the needs of those in structured workplace training and enterprises with a commitment to training are generally well catered for. But those who are poorly educated, are unemployed and have few employment opportunities are consistently overlooked in policy considerations. There is a growing gap between advantaged and disadvantaged people in Australian society, and although lifelong learning is necessary to bridge that gap it is not sufficient.

The symposium noted in particular the following:

- Australian literacy levels lag a long way behind comparable developed nations. The price paid for missing out on basic literacy skills is very high for those individuals.
- People with a disability find access to VET hard and VET participation rates for people with disabilities lag well behind those for the general population. Within the apprenticeship and traineeship system, places for people with a disability are limited, there are few intermediaries such as specialist group training companies and the interface between Federal and State support mechanisms can cause uncertainty and restrict access.
- Stereotypes of the learning capacities and needs of older people in and out of the workforce limit the learning opportunities available to them.
- Participation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are generally good relative to their proportion in the total population, but their overall social and economic position indicates the need for increased effort to enhance the quantity and quality of their participation and to link that with employment opportunities.
- Professionals with overseas qualifications need assistance to improve their awareness and understanding of Australian workplace ethics and culture, communication proficiency and local work experience.

### ***Decision-making***

Many delegates to the symposium believe that learners will steadily move to the centre stage of public policy, that citizen demand for education will increase and more sophisticated approaches to setting education and training directions will be needed to constantly engage with the next generation of possibilities.

If this is the trend, then it may render somewhat problematic a continuing emphasis on an industry-led system. Some delegates argued for the introduction of a voucher model of funding which would put decision-making in the hands of individuals. At the same time they argued for greater industry involvement in planning VET delivery.

The tension between a system where the “learner is in the centre” and an “industry-led system” is obvious. Clearly, a shared view on the respective emphasis on individual demand and employer demand is needed. This is an unresolved issue in Australia and further dialogue will be needed.

The respective roles of government and industry in decision-making is clearly a point of difference amongst stakeholders. Employer delegates believe there is a disconnect between the bureaucracies’ view of the world and what is really going on in industry. They argue for the need to reclaim the VET

system from bureaucrats and politicians and ensure that it is seen, not simply as a tool of government, but that all stakeholders have a say in setting directions. Employer delegates also suggested that State, Territory and Commonwealth governments, as well as ANTA, do not want industry to really take ownership and, as a consequence, industry is able to avoid its responsibilities. Industry "...needs to bypass bureaucracies and get direct dialogue between Ministers and business and industry associations without the State Training Authority as intermediary. Industry has to have a position and government needs to make it an industry responsibility."

On the other hand, some delegates argued for an unavoidable and increasing role for the state in lifelong learning, although the character of those interventions may differ from the past.

The teacher unions argue that they need to be represented on the board of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and on the National Training Quality Council. Some symposium participants also made a case for wider stakeholder involvement in decision-making, including student representation.

### **What Do We Need To Do Differently?**

The previous two sections suggest that most symposium participants believe the current policy settings are essentially sound and acknowledge that improvements in implementation are both desirable and possible. However, there were some who pointed to problems of a more fundamental kind, highlighting the need for a different approach rather than continuous refinements of the existing approach. Their arguments are presented in the following two sections.

### ***New Policy Settings***

While Australia has a well-deserved reputation, especially with the OECD, for grasping the nettle of change and undertaking bold or radical reform, the directions of those changes are now a decade old and do not reflect contemporary economic and social reality and the changing demands of the modern economy and labour market.

Four requirements for effective government action on lifelong learning were identified.

- Governments which take the long view, recognising education and training as long-term drivers of productivity performance in an economy increasingly based on knowledge and skills. This means a 5, 10 and 20 year perspective rather than the current 3 year electoral cycle perspective.



- Governments which take the wide view. Investments in education and training will only be fully effective when they form part of a comprehensive suite of policies designed to foster economic growth, support the development of high-performance industries and protect the interests of the most vulnerable. VET needs to more actively seek to acknowledge and influence wider social and economic policies beyond VET. One stakeholder observed: “To what extent has VET been cornered into a little pocket and inwardly focused? We need to open up and take a whole-of-government approach. VET is at the crossroads of multiple policies and we need to engage with other policy-making frameworks.”
- Governments which create an environment conducive to lifelong learning. This means governments which are active in raising awareness of the growing importance of knowledge and skills, which create incentives for private investment in education and training, which provide reliable information to guide choice and which ensure that high standards are established and maintained.
- Governments with a strong commitment to equity. This means acknowledging the strong and well-established relationships between levels of educational attainment, labour market experience and income and the dangers of social division from a widening gap between the skills-rich and the skills-poor.

For some, Australia’s performance against each of these criteria is mixed at best and, in some instances, quite unsatisfactory. For all of its significance and undoubted achievements, the training reform agenda has failed to keep pace with the changing demands of the modern economy and labour market. National higher education policy has been, at best, stagnant since the mid-1990s and there is still no coherent view on the shape of a national policy for education in the vital early childhood years. Until these things change, Australia cannot claim to have a systemic view of lifelong learning.

### ***Address the Changing Nature of Work***

Many stakeholders spoke of the impact on VET of the changing nature of work, evident though:

- the rise of non-standard precarious employment through casual work, outwork, agency/labour hire work, part-time work and self-employment;
- relentless demands for workplace flexibility;
- longer hours of work and the consequent stress on family life;
- the decline in some traditional manufacturing industries and the rise of new service industries; and
- contraction of the public sector.

These developments are, in this view, ultimately antithetical to either lifelong learning or resolution of skill shortages at a societal level.

The concept of the learning organisation is often put forward as a solution to the changing nature of work and new forms of knowledge production and as a mechanism for supporting lifelong learning. However, few organisations aspire to be learning organisations and even fewer achieve the status of a learning organisation. Differences between organisations are the norm and unitary views about how workplaces should be managed obscure this reality. Lifelong learning needs to be more than throwing responsibility back to employees.

Accordingly, until workers are able to negotiate effectively with their employers, until challenging work and opportunities for skill development are available to all workers and until genuine teamwork and effective dialogue between management and workers occurs in a climate of mutual trust, efforts to promote lifelong learning through workplaces will inevitably be constrained.

## **Conclusion**

The symposium acknowledged and affirmed the substantial contribution that VET has made to lifelong learning in Australia and identified future changes which are needed. But lifelong learning is not the preserve alone of the VET sector, which must now join-up more effectively with all other parts of education and training in a whole-of-government approach. Lifelong learning can be advanced in workplaces and in institutions, but also in the community more broadly. Governments need to work in genuine partnership with employer and employee associations and with a wider stakeholder group to stimulate an informed demand for learning across all parts of Australian economic and social life.

## **References**

Kangan, M. (Chair) 1974, *TAFE in Australia: Needs in Technical and Further Education*, Report of the Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Faure, E. (Chair) 1972, *Learning To Be: The world of education today and tomorrow*, Report of the International Commission on the Development of Education, UNESCO, Paris.

## Attachment 1: Symposium Program

### **BIAC-TUAC Survey on Lifelong Learning: Australia**

Melbourne Symposium: Thursday 16 May 2002  
Monash Conference Centre  
Level 7, 30 Collins Street, Melbourne

#### **Program**

- 8.30 a.m. Registration
- 8.45 a.m. The BIAC-TUAC Survey – Overview  
Chris Selby Smith, CEET
- 9.00 a.m. –  
10.05 a.m. Employee and Trade Union Perspectives: current experience, opportunities for improvement  
Chair: Michael Long,\* CEET
- Presentations (10 minutes each)
    - **Therese Bryant**, Industrial Officer, Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association
    - **Keith Harvey**, National Industrial Officer, Australian Services Union
    - **Rex Hewett**, Federal TAFE Secretary, Australian Education Union
    - **Julian Teicher**, National Key Centre in Industrial Relations
  - Discussion (25 minutes)
- 10.05 a.m. –  
10.20 a.m. Morning Break (1)
- 10.20 a.m. –  
11.25 a.m. Employer and Employer Organisations' Perspectives: current experience, opportunities for improvement.  
Chair: Steve Balzary, ACCI.
- Presentations (10 minutes each)
    - **Gary Collins**, Manager, Training Services, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of WA
    - **Peter Costantini,\*\*** General Manager, Employment Services, Commerce Queensland
    - **Peter Glynn**, CEO, National Electrical and Communications Association
    - **Pam Jonas**, Training and Employment, Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
    - **Maria Tarrant**, Assistant Director, Business Council of Australia
  - Discussion (25 minutes)

---

\* Mr Bill Mansfield was intending to Chair this session. However, in the event, he had to participate in an ILO meeting in Geneva. Mr Michael Long, Senior Research Fellow with CEET, agreed to Chair the session at short notice.

\*\* Unfortunately, due to last minute unforeseen circumstances, Mr Constantini is unable to attend. He tendered his apologies to all.

- 11.25 a.m. –  
11.40 a.m. Morning break (2)
- 11.40 a.m. –  
12.55 p.m. Governments: ‘Steering and Rowing’  
Chair: **Moira Scollay**, ANTA
- Presentations (10 minutes each):
    - **Peter Grant**, formerly Deputy Secretary, Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
    - **Paul Byrne**, ANTA
    - **Robin Shreeve**, Deputy Director-General, TAFE, NSW Dept of Education
    - **Madeleine Woolley**, The Director, Adelaide Institute of TAFE
    - **Geoff Creek**, The Principal, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture
  - Discussion (25 minutes)
- 12.55 p.m. –  
1.45 p.m. Lunch
- 1.45 p.m. –  
3.00 p.m. The Three Perspectives: commonalities, differences  
Chair: **Chris Selby Smith**
- Presentations (10 minutes each):
    - **Rex Hewett**,<sup>\*\*\*</sup> AEU
    - **Steve Balzary**, ACCI
    - **Moira Scollay**, ANTA
  - Discussion (45 minutes)
- 3.00 p.m. –  
3.15 p.m. Afternoon break
- 3.15 p.m. –  
4.30 p.m. Other Initiatives: a wide diversity  
Chair: **Fran Ferrier**, CEET
- Presentations (10 minutes each):
    - **Greg Lewis** (LLL for people with disabilities), Edge Training Solutions, Perth
    - **Jenny Duncan** (continuing education of nurses), Mayne Health, Sydney
    - **Thit Tieu**, NSW Adult Migrant Education Service
    - **Peter Waterhouse**, Workplace Learning Initiatives, Melbourne
    - **Bruce Wilson**, Union Research Centre on Organisation and Technology & RMIT
  - Discussion (25 minutes)
- 4.30 p.m. –  
4.45 p.m. Summary of Main Themes  
Chair: **Gerald Burke**, CEET  
**Kaye Schofield**, Research Centre for VET, UTS, Sydney
- 4.45 p.m. Close

---

\*\*\* Mr Rex Hewett has kindly agreed to take Mr Mansfield’s place for this discussion.

**ATTACHMENT 2: Discussion with Mr. Julius Roe, National President, Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, 440 Elizabeth St., Melbourne; Wednesday 1 May 2002.**

1. There are a number of possible perspectives on lifelong learning, including the individual worker, the enterprise, the industry or the sector. All of them are important, but what should be the emphasis?

2. Sweden, for example, has developed a successful system, which is more centred on the individual than the particular enterprise. Access to training leave has been a key issue. Working time can be "banked", for the individual to use for training at a suitable later time. This can affect the opportunity cost of training, for example in the construction industry in northern Europe or building in tropical Australia. Relatedly access can be provided to paid work breaks, including sabbaticals or shorter periods of leave, for people to use for training purposes. The paid leave from work is partly funded by employers, who may be required by law to provide it or when they have to contribute to salary payments as part of industry restructuring, and also by governments, which can be quite generous in some cases (eg. up to 12 months).

3. Another approach can also work well; as in the German system where there is capacity to generalise the training beyond the individual enterprise. In this model employers are compelled to be members of the chamber of commerce or industry, which discharges certain responsibilities, including for training.

4. In Australia attaching training to the individual enterprise is a problem, with an increasingly mobile workforce which decreasingly has jobs for life. In these circumstances it is often undesirable to link learning and training to the needs of individual enterprises: this is the case for individual workers and it can also be true for the enterprise, especially if a longer term view of what they require in their labour force is taken. Some years ago in Australia there was more focus on industry level activities in relation to training, such as the Training Guarantee Act, industry restructuring arrangements and changes to awards and career paths. At the same time there was considerable emphasis on the formation of individuals' skills at the enterprise level. However, more recently there have been significant changes in the Australian labour market, including increasing casualisation and contracting arrangements. Skills formation is often replaced by skills importing or poaching.

5. What is required is a greater reliance on collectivist learning approaches. One model is a group training model, which helps people achieve learning in a number of different sites, but according to a coherent pattern. Also the role of the state should include ensuring that people have

training leave opportunities. Some form of regulation and support is needed, so that people will have satisfactory access. More intervention is required in the labour market. This is still possible. It would be important to change the balance towards more intervention in relation to learning, training and skills formation and have less reliance on market forces alone.

6. Knowledge industries have been developing in Australia. For a proportion of the workforce these developments are very important. However, for most sections of the workforce they are much less so. Inequalities seem to be growing in relation to income and wealth. Information on private investment in training suggests it is not really happening as much as is required and perhaps the situation is deteriorating overall.

7. From an economic history perspective, there have been (short) periods when productivity growth was enormous eg. cotton clothmaking in England and later in US with shoe production in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but this only occurred over a relatively short period. Similarly, golf balls have been mass manufactured more recently in the US with enormous productivity increases (now centred in Massachusetts) compared to baseballs, which are still handmade.

8. The inference is that one needs to be in the right industry as the productivity rate explodes and to share the productivity gains appropriately. The knowledge industry is crucial in these areas, such as information technology; and Australia needs to take active steps to be in these industries at the right time and enable the benefits to be spread. But such developments are very difficult with a fully deregulated labour market. For example, the developments in Silicon Valley were largely based on US military R&D expenditure and an excellent publicly supported university system in California. Company skill centres can be important but in Australia they are not developing much overall, even though they do exist in some industries. Privatisation of large public authorities has often resulted in lower R&D and training (eg. Telstra), “Market based solutions are not going to work. Therefore look at approaches such as Group Training Companies, employer skill centres, linked to education and research institutions.

9. There also needs to be increased scope for arranging and rearranging the individual’s learning commitments over a working life. There should be some public support, including support for retraining during restructuring. In return for moving away from jobs for life, employers should be obliged to give reasonable notice for restructuring and provide some contribution to the community costs of adjustment eg. 6 months notice of any potential redundancies and provision of paid leave by the employer.

10. “It is much easier to get a job if you already have a job”. In Australia the trade unions have tended to privatise the problem. Where they have

industrial strength they have been able to negotiate some agreements. For example, the legal minimum is 8 weeks in total, but AMWU has negotiated 3-4 weeks per year of service in some agreements. In practice this is only accessible for employees in larger companies.

11. With departure from, say, Toyota an employee may get a year's pay, but short notice, perhaps 2 weeks; and are not eligible for other public support during the 12 month period. If they are 40-50 years old, they are often unable to get another job and in a year or so they are impoverished.

12. Once a worker becomes unemployed they are likely to become less confident and not good learners. Thus, programs should be geared to future learning opportunities while the workers are still employed. For example, a friend who is a union official in Sweden did additional training at Uppsala University, came back to the union and later moved on to another job. It fitted in with his other life opportunities and choices. "A bit like maternity leave". Such arrangements require employer contributions plus a social contribution. In fact, the individual also makes a contribution through the necessary effort to benefit from the training and through lower income while learning. There can also be related, but more localised, issues such as spouse's employment, social contacts and interests, or housing values in areas with a declining industry compared to (higher) living costs elsewhere.

13. Another key thing relates to the portability of qualifications. A good aspect of the reforms in the Australian VET system has been the greater portability of qualifications, compared, say, to the US arrangements. There are "a lot of efficiencies in this area compared to the US situation", where employers often do not know how to equate various qualifications and consequently have to do their own testing, often at considerable expense. However, existing workers' access to this system has been very limited in Australia and needs to be improved. This is fundamentally due to concerns about funding arrangements. Mapping what skills the individual has requires resources; but otherwise you do not know what extra is required and therefore, what training should be provided. There is a temptation for the trainer to say "we have just the program for you". Putting more resources into assessment of existing skills and development of training plans would lead to a better targeted use of training resources. Resources need to be provided for both the training provider and the enterprise. "Use the key strength of the national training, competency based, framework".

14. Another important barrier is time, certainly in manufacturing enterprises. They have downsized so much that the workers with the key skills are so valuable to the employers that they will not provide time for the skilled worker to do more training themselves or assist with the training of others. The production manager's power has grown compared to that of the

training manager. An increasing number of companies no longer have Training Managers.

15. Also many of those with key skills are now employed by contract companies, rather than the company itself; and they do not do much training, partly because it would raise their contract price and perhaps disadvantage them commercially. Market mechanisms may help a bit in the longer term; but as the enterprise loses its competitive advantage it may move into another field rather than revise its learning, education and training strategy (ie. upwards). Also the timing of the response is critical. If the response does not occur then other competitors, even a foreign enterprise, may take over the market opportunity. Many of the contracts, once lost, represent a permanent loss; for example, the losing firm may not be available to compete next time the contract is to be let. This tends to be particularly important for those areas of the economy which are exposed to global competition; and in these sectors the international companies tend to be particularly dominant in Australia.



**ATTACHMENT 3: Interview with Mr. Bill Mansfield, Assistant Secretary, ACTU; Melbourne; 6 May, 2002.**

1. We are changing our training culture in Australia. Formerly training tended to be provided for a relatively narrow group of occupations, which also tended to be male dominated. The current move is towards a situation where most school leavers will enter employment through a structured training experience. Training is being extended from the traditional areas of trade training, such as building, the metal trades and electrical work, to other occupations and industries, such as hospitality, tourism, pulp and paper.

2. In the transition which is currently occurring to a more knowledge-based economy there is a growing appreciation of the increased need for training and retraining to take place throughout working life. It is no longer sufficient to rely on initial education and training supplemented by work experience. The nature of work is changing; and career opportunities are not the same as before. Workers who succeed in obtaining a job do not necessarily get access to appropriate training and career opportunities. There is a real question about how workers can get access to opportunities which enable them to optimise their own skills and abilities.

3. Whilst our economy overall has experienced healthy growth rates since the early 1990s and a reducing level of unemployment there has also been a significant number of changes which have affected the employment and training prospects of Australian workers. They include:

- large scale privatisation of telecommunications, electricity, gas, rail and airlines. Traditionally they had been very large contributors to our skills base through training of apprentices but in recent years the privatised companies have virtually abandoned training for other than their own needs;
- the casualisation/part-time phenomena which now sees around 30% of the Australian workforce in casual or part-time jobs. While workers can get a job there is often no training, job security or career prospects;
- the growth of labour hire contractors who offer skilled workers on an as necessary basis. In Australia the largest employers of skilled tradespeople are Labor Hire companies. In general these companies do not train new skilled workers;
- labour market deregulation has been a priority for the national conservative government. The shift from industry to enterprise bargaining, the promotion of individual contracts and the restrictions on the jurisdiction of the Arbitration Commission have led to greater difficulties for unions to obtain positive outcomes for members from the reform process.

4. Lifelong learning is about providing opportunities for individuals to work at their capacity, as a reflection of what they are capable of doing, throughout their working lives. Therefore, trade unions have got to be centrally involved. They can help the individual obtain greater job security, achieve higher income and open up the prospect of a career rather than a dead-end job.

5. Such opportunities do exist to some extent. However, they are not as widely available or as well-structured as the union movement thinks they ought to be. A generation ago, in a large organisation such as Telecom, there were clearly defined occupational structures, closely linked to particular types and levels of prior education and training, with relatively little opportunities for individuals to move between them eg. technicians, professional engineers, clerical work. Now the situation has entirely changed, with much greater scope for movement. Of course, for technician work technician training is still required, and a professional engineering qualification is still required for professional engineering work; but the barriers have broken down in the clerical administrative area, and in relation to broader managerial work. On the other hand some new barriers have emerged: for example, a staff member is expected to be either on or off the team; and being a union member is seen as a sign of being not on the team. This compares with the earlier situation where becoming a union official in the organisation was one way of developing the talents of the individual in an organisation such as Telecom and enabling them to get involved in wider policy issues.

6. The Australian population structure is ageing as birth rates fall and life spans grow longer. By 2030 a significantly smaller proportion of Australia's population will be aged between 16 and 65. Responses should include: up-skilling existing workers to further boost productivity; providing greater opportunities for those currently out of the workforce to become productive workers; and providing greater training opportunities to enable workers to change occupations and also (on a voluntary basis) to continue working beyond the age currently considered normal for retirement. Also, many adults are not yet familiar with new technology such as computers and Internet usage. To avoid our society being further divided into the information rich and the information poor there is a need for further education and skill development opportunities in ICT to be made available to adults.

7. The introduction of a broadly based VET system was meant to give greater opportunity to existing workers to gain recognised qualifications. In part this meant greater access to VET courses plus opportunities to have existing competencies recognised through recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes. The prospect of an accessible RPL system was one of the selling points for VET reform to some unions. To date the availability of RPL has been less than satisfactory due to the focus of VET reform being on new starters in the VET system, particularly school leavers. To date there has been no substantial government financial assistance to offset the cost of RPL and to

encourage the development of providers of RPL services. There is a need for greater attention to both the policy changes required to ensure that public funds for training are not wasted by experienced workers re-learning competencies they have already acquired and also to encourage the development of practical systems of recognition of skills acquired by existing workers.

8. The moves towards enterprise bargaining have led to a reduced focus on award structures. They have also made it harder to get a national level focus. This is where the shortfall occurs. The focus of training and retraining is primarily on enterprises, many of which are very inwardly focussed. Enterprises are tending to look at the narrower enterprise requirements. In the longer term this can inhibit adjustment to changing needs; and be disadvantageous for the individual and to the wider economy.

9. Changes are occurring in employer attitudes to training. Many employers are discovering that training adds to the human capital in their business and assists their bottom line.

10. But on the negative side of the ledger, there are Commonwealth and State subsidies which encourage employers to take on apprentices and trainees. Some companies appear to be taking them on in order to obtain the subsidy payments rather than to do the training. One could ask whether it is good public policy for governments to subsidise training to enable the company to be properly run? On the other hand trainees may, for example, get valuable skills in safety which they would not otherwise receive as employees, they may learn to operate equipment more efficiently or provide better customer service. Enterprises receive other benefits when trainees are substituted for employees, such as exemption from unfair dismissal laws, workers compensation exemptions and about a \$2,000 wage subsidy per year for each worker.

11. While one can certainly identify some areas where questionable practices have occurred, it could be argued that we are going through a transition phase, from a narrowly based to a more broadly based training system, which increasingly offers training to those occupations and industry areas which did not do it at all or do it on a serious basis in the past. Some of the current problems may be seen as problems of the transition to an improved situation. In the move from a business culture which undervalued training to one which recognises its positive contribution to business success an incentive program is useful. However, the real test of whether training is regarded as valuable in its own right will come sometime in the future when the incentive payments are reduced or removed. Significant improvements include: better transferability and articulation possibilities; a national strategy which sets out the key objectives for the VET system; the development of the AQF framework; the introduction of training packages setting out competencies required, qualification outcomes and assessment guidelines; a

national quality framework for training providers; and the increasing recognition of prior learning. In some cases, doubt about proposed changes can reflect safety concerns, as in the electrical trades.

12. Interestingly, a professional survey of workers and union members undertaken by the Labor Council of NSW found that the second most important issue (behind wages/salary) where unions “should do more” was career opportunities. Too many union members are stuck in dead-end jobs with employers having no interest in improving their opportunities for either training or advancement. Unions have argued that access to vocational training and career development throughout a working lifetime should be a right associated with employment. This “right” should stand alongside others such as safe workplaces, fair wages, equal pay and no discrimination --in many ways it is as important as these issues. There is general agreement within unions that Australia’s vocational training system makes an important contribution to an individual’s ability to perform to his or her capacity, enterprise competitiveness and the ability of the economy broadly to cope with the pressures of globalisation, economic growth and rapid technological change.

13. A broad base of agreement exists with employers about the need for improved education and training. There are disagreements with employers in relation to such matters as rates of pay; but generally the disagreements are on the margin of the training reform agenda. Both the unions and employers support the Australian training system being competency-based to reflect the “competencies” set out by the industry parties as necessary for a particular level in the qualifications framework. Industry competencies are now out in Training Packages. Training Packages developed by industry are one of the key underpinnings of the VET system through flexible and relevant education and training. They are a consistent set of nationally endorsed components for training, recognising and assessing people’s skills. They contain:

- competency standards, which set out the knowledge and skill and applications of that knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace;
- assessment guidelines, which provide a framework for consistently assessing competency in a specified industry in accordance with the overarching Australian Quality Training Framework; and
- qualifications, which are created from combinations of units of competency and defined in accordance with the Australian Qualifications Framework. These qualifications in the Packages also provide the outcomes for apprenticeships and traineeships within New Apprenticeships.

Training Packages are developed by industry through employers and unions in the national industry advisory arrangements. The Packages are quality

assured and nationally endorsed by the National Training Quality Council of ANTA, which involves employers and union representatives plus representatives of Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.

14. There are more significant differences between the union movement and the employers in relation to career structures and the organisation of the Australian labour market. Carmichael's vision was a broad one, envisaging greater opportunities for workers and development of high performance enterprises. Employers do not seem to be interested these days in careers and career structures. This is especially the case in relation to the macro framework within which the individual's career development can be pursued. Increasing casualisation and declining employment security are also major concerns to the union movement. The ACTU is very concerned about the changing nature of the labour workforce, such as the shift from full-time towards more part-time work. Overall the union movement tends to be more concerned than employer organisations about those individuals who may miss out, including the unemployed, disabled and otherwise disadvantaged. The employers tend to have a greater focus on individuals and their responsibilities. Similarly, the union movement tends to place more emphasis on the industry-wide aspects of education and training, whereas the employers tend to place more emphasis on the perspective of individual enterprises.

15. In its submission to MCEETYA in April 2002 concerning adult and community education (ACE) in Australia, the ACTU argued that:

- there is a significant challenge to ensure that adults in regional areas are provided with further training and education opportunities.
- there needs to be special attention given to making ACE more available to lower income groups who, at present, access opportunities at a lower rate than higher qualified, higher income groups. This will require financial assistance to make access more affordable.
- evidence of lower levels of literacy and numeracy amongst certain groups in Australian society should be a factor which is incorporated in any ACE policy.
- the availability of ACE opportunities is particularly important to workers who become unemployed. Too often these opportunities only become available under a public program after a prolonged period of unemployment. Greater efforts need to be made to ensure that they are more readily available, either prior to employment concluding or shortly after becoming unemployed. Where individuals are unemployed for longer periods they should have a priority for publicly funded ACE opportunities.

- although incentives are currently provided for New Apprentices to undertake training towards a recognised qualification, additional incentives should be considered for individuals to engage in ACE in courses other than New Apprentices. Consideration should be given to incentives for indigenous and disabled people, providing greater resources for distance learning, and also allowing tax relief on a broader basis for costs incurred for self-education (in particular for low income earners).
- support should be given to allowing employees an amount of paid time each year to undertake ACE which is to improve work-related skills, not necessarily related to their existing occupation. A ten day entitlement each two years would be a practical first step.
- existing skills gained through a variety of means should be recognised prior to undertaking any courses. The absence of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) arrangements constitutes a major source of dissatisfaction for adult learners when they are required to study elements of a course where they are already competent. To date Australia has not put in place practicable RPL financing arrangements, despite it being nominated as a priority in the VET system for many years.

**ATTACHMENT 4: Interview on 21 May 2002 at Adult Multicultural Education Services (255 William Street, Melbourne) with Ms. Moira Schulze, Chief Executive Officer, and Ms. Jenni Blencowe, General Manager, Planning and Program Development.**

1. AMES was formed fifty years ago, when the Australian government was seeking migrants for post-war industrialisation. Its purpose was to provide English language programs – the glue for a cohesive society. Since that time AMES has become an integral part of Australia’s culturally diverse community. In addition to its original English language programs, AMES provides employment and vocational training, small business and work-place training, on-line and computer aided learning, primarily to people from non-English speaking backgrounds. AMES’s 800 dedicated employment and teaching staff supported over 30,000 students and employment clients through an extensive network of locations around Melbourne and Western Sydney in 2001. As a not-for-profit organisation, AMES’s objective is to support people as they strive to participate fully and productively in their community.

2. Many people may have the notion of a linear pathway, where participants pick up the tools along the way to become a lifelong learner. In fact, many of the clients of AMES do not possess the necessary tools to do so, even in their own country, culture and language. It is even more difficult for them in Australia.

3. In an ideal situation migrants arrive, then sort out their new life in Australia, sort out their language difficulties and then embark effectively on their career and life in this country. In this vision proficiency in the English language is the key, but other things are also important. In the past all migrants, other than business migrants, got income support (as long as they were unemployed). Many migrants other than refugees “do not have that luxury now”. It has become a much more disjointed and disruptive journey. Many of AMES’s clients are not in a fit mental or psychological state to carry out this learning journey. Therefore, staff have to be very sensitive to their needs. First priorities for many migrants are housing, getting their kids into school, and putting food into their mouths. “We tended to think education was central, but in fact it was often not so”. As dedicated educators AMES staff tended to be focussed on their classes and teaching; but often these were not the initial and central concerns of the recently arrived migrants.

For example, material aids can be critical, as sometimes when they do not have beds or furniture. Child care can also be very important; given their previous experiences they may not be willing to let go of their children. If they are in employment, especially if it is part-time or casual, it may be “in and out stuff”. In such cases, it can be hard for them to keep up their education. There is so much irregularity about their lives. This is particularly important in this State, since a lot of refugees and humanitarian migrants are

coming to Victoria – more than to any other state proportionately. Many migrants are highly skilled and very frustrated, but “can be totally disempowered by their failure to gain appropriate work and recognition”.

4. “The job is the key to it all ... It will always take precedence over education”. When there is not income support, the migrants are very keen to get work and employment. This is a major contributor to the disjointed experience which many migrants have.

5. AMES is moving to a more case management type of approach; with a greater focus on the individual client. AMES is calling it “learner management”, acknowledging the very chaotic picture, but trying to keep a focus on the learning process. AMES tries to keep a thread going in relation to their learning, so when the migrants are able to get back more fully into education, “they are still with us”. AMES finds that if the migrant drifts away and they lose contact for 4-6 weeks or more, then they are likely to drift away permanently. For example, under their new approach, if the migrant is eligible for the 510 hours of Commonwealth assistance, and they go into employment, AMES tries to link the English language training into the workplace.

6. AMES is the one which initiates the business with employers. They “generally have to sell it”. Their experience is that employers have been providing less overall. However, it varies by area. Under the Training Guarantee Act AMES found there was far more engagement by employers with training. In occupational health and safety, training for migrants still occurs, as the unions emphasise it. Similarly, in relation to food handling, where there are legislative requirements. Risk management is an important element in stimulating training by employers, including for migrants.

7. The client management approach adopted has important implications for AMES staff. They have been used to conceptualising their job by reference to the students in their class, “who come to them”. The students might have a diverse range of characteristics, but can sometimes be described by their level of English language competence. The client management approach being adopted now involves a major shift in power. AMES is undertaking a massive professional development program. They are trialing things, evaluating them and trying to spread best practice examples throughout the organisation and its staff. They have pulled some people off line who are gifted teachers and had them undertake special tasks. For example, one staff member visited Canada to look at alternative approaches and on her return has become “a peer leader”. These changes in approach represent a very big shift for AMES. They involve doing and proselytising; and then doing and proselytising again. The staff member involved has enormous status in education, “because she is still a doer”.



8. The Commonwealth Government tends to expect that 510 hours will result in the migrant having functional English. “But often it is light years away from enabling them to operate at a reasonable level” in the developing labour market in Australia. Any bona fide migrant or refugee whose English is below a certain assessed level is eligible for the 510 hours. Often their living is pretty heavy going, even though they have Commonwealth income support (eg. as a refugee). There are so many barriers to overcome, so many holes to drop through. Perhaps three out of ten are reasonably successful, but this leaves a substantial majority facing continuing difficulties.

9. AMES finds it can use volunteers and other students, who often like to be able to give something back rather than only to receive assistance from others. Overall, AMES is seeking to develop a more holistic approach to their clients.

10. AMES is saying to the Victorian State Government that more bridges are required after the 510 hours of functional English. The cost of providing an integrated service is high, but the cost of not providing an integrated service can be even higher. Also, circumstances are changing to the disadvantage of the recently arrived migrant. For example, the labour market is changing and becoming more demanding, while funding is getting tighter.

11. Another important area where problems can arise relates to overseas qualified professionals. AMES brought together 40 such students recently, including both former and more recent students, to share their experience. The program involves seven weeks of preparation and six weeks out in the professional workplace. Three examples illustrate the problems faced by such migrants.

- One Russian woman, with a postgraduate degree in engineering, had applied for 400 jobs and not got one interview. As a result of the AMES preparatory program she was able to get a foot in the door. She was weeping with joy at getting an opportunity.
- An Indian with software experience had not been able to obtain a job after 18 months trying. In India he had been in charge of a large team of people; he was the boss. As a result of the AMES program he came to realise that he was applying for that senior job, whereas he should have been applying for a more junior job, at least initially.
- A former resident of Yugoslavia, an oracle specialist, had been told there was a shortage of people with such skills in Melbourne before he migrated. He spoke very good English, but had only been able to get a part-time job in his area of expertise.

12. Similar circumstances applied to their wives. One was a medical practitioner. She had been told she would not have trouble in obtaining a suitable job, especially if she was prepared to go to rural areas. In fact, she

was currently working as a ward attendant at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Another participant said that his wife was also a doctor and was working in a nursing home. They have a different kind of anguish and pain. Offshore we have led them to believe in expectations that do not get realised when they actually arrive in Australia. Six weeks gives the employer time to see the person and assess their skills ie. not just judge them on the basis that they are from a non-English background. Also, it provides an opportunity for the migrant to get into the workplace, see how it works and readjust their own expectations. For example, one commented that there is a flatter structure of work in Australia, the hierarchies are not so prominent as where he had worked previously. Former managers found that unions had more power in the Australian workplace than in their own countries. If they have gained that understanding of the actual workplace here, they have a much better chance of gaining and keeping employment. For many, if not most, migrants AMES has found that obtaining a suitable job is the key aim, whereas education is a means to that end rather than normally the end in itself.

13. Many migrants innately possess entrepreneurial skills. Many migrants self-select in relation to such characteristics. AMES now runs a targeted New Enterprise Incentive Scheme, coupled with small business training. It provides targeted training for migrants and refugees who want to start their own business. The program at AMES is still at an early stage, but they are thinking of developing a more enterprising culture. "As educators we sometimes do not act with as much enterprise as we might". This is in the mindset of how we work with people; and it can be developed further.

14. Obviously if AMES can get a good link with large organisations they can place considerable numbers of recently arrived migrants in employment. But links often prove not easy to develop with large enterprises; for example, they are often relatively self-contained in relation to matters such as training and recruitment. Conversely, many small companies are desperately trying to keep their heads above water. So, much of AMES's placement activities tend to be with medium-sized organisations.

15. In relation to disabled people, AMES has many fewer than in the general population. They are screened out before they arrive. Less than 1% of AMES students probably have a disability.

16. Most of the clients do not keep a continuing relationship. AMES would like them to come back to AMES more often. However, some of the volunteers trained to provide English language support become quite close, which can lead to them providing other supports and even becoming personal friends.