

VET IN SCHOOLS

1. The Nature of VET in Schools

1.1 Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should endorse the following principles in relation to VET generally and VET in Schools in particular:

- All Australians should have an equal right of access to and participation in high quality VET irrespective of their location, their capacity to pay or other factors.
- Educational disadvantage requires specific redress but must also be tackled within the wider context of socio-economic, employment and other barriers which disadvantage many Australians and lead to marginalisation, poverty and disconnection.
- A high quality VET system must be inclusive of and balance the needs of students, industry, educators, local communities and society.
- Quality and effectiveness are the key principles underpinning the future development of vocational education and training.

A representative national body — including representatives of government, industry, unions (including education unions) and public VET providers (both TAFE and schools) — should be established with the responsibility of developing a coherent national policy position that clarifies and prioritises the objectives and expectations for school-based VET. This body must be consulted by, provide advice to, and be involved in decisions made by Skills Australia and other national bodies developing and implementing the National Training Framework. Establishment of this body underpins many of the other recommendations in this report, and the AEU regards this as an imperative and fundamental necessity.

To inform the deliberations of this body, MCEETYA should commission critical research on the theory and practice of VET in Schools and its relationship to the other objectives and expectations that schools are expected to achieve to ensure curriculum is diverse enough to cater for all post-school pathways.

The vast majority of VET in Schools is at entry-level standard. Standards for provision of VET courses, regardless of level, should be maintained to reflect consistency in the criteria and processes for RTO registration, AQTF compliance and of National Training Package requirements.

2. The Quality of VET in Schools

2.1 Quality assurance processes relating to VET in Schools should take full account of the complexity of the roles that schools play.

2.2 A quality improvement program should be jointly funded by the Commonwealth and States and Territories to provide for quality improvement strategies including:

- staff development, teacher training, return to industry and acquisition of vocational qualifications;
- curriculum development that is broad-based and meets the needs of a competency-based system;
- innovation projects;
- initiatives to increase flexible provision and cooperation with other public VET providers;
- improved planning and consultation with local communities and stakeholders;
- increased cooperation between TAFE and schools in delivery of VET.

2.3 Empirical research (informed by a critical analysis of the purposes of VET in Schools) should be undertaken on the quality of VET programs in schools.

3. Planning and Governance

3.1 New representative consultative and advisory bodies should be established at the Territory level to allow for the participation and representation of all stakeholders in the shaping of VET directions. This body should include representatives of each education sector – TAFE, universities and schools – and include education union representatives.

3.2 The ACT Skills Commission should be used as a representative Territory-wide body to work cooperatively on the development of a whole of government approach to industry

planning, employment related issues, education and training, and community welfare and support services. A key term of reference for this body should be the facilitation of local/regional partnership models of VET provision involving schools, TAFE institutes, local business and industry, and community groups.

- 3.3 School VET needs must inform the ACT Training Plan along with industry and community strategic plans. Planning should be informed by local schools and TAFE institutes, as well as by government, industry, enterprises and the community. Overall planning processes should facilitate the identification at the regional and local level of existing and emerging industry/labour market needs and articulation arrangements that meet this need.
- 3.4 All education systems should ensure that their senior management group includes someone with direct knowledge of and responsibility for oversight and coordination of VET in Schools policy and implementation.

4. Funding/Resourcing

- 4.1 Funding should be ongoing and recurrent and based on per capita grants for the number of VET in Schools students. The funds should be additional to ANTA funding.

The ACT Government must also make an enhanced and ongoing commitment to appropriately fund VET in Schools. This must not be at the expense of funding to TAFE colleges or other programs in schools.

Current funding levels and allocation models for VET in Schools should be reviewed as a matter of urgency. This review should include consideration of the impact of funding models on the quality of programs, general and specific services and on student and community access. The outcomes of this review should be aggregated with the outcomes of similar reviews in other States and Territories and form the basis of a national review of policy directions, including the appropriate level of contribution from States/Territories.

The provision of VET to secondary school students should avoid wasteful duplication of public funds and should be underpinned by co-operative arrangements between schools and TAFE.

Base (profile) funding for TAFE must be increased and allocated in order to support services provided to schools so that schools and students are not denied access to these services due to their cost.

Access to Commonwealth, State and Territory funding for VET programs should not be submission based. Schools/teachers do not have the resources for constant and lengthy submission writing.

5. Organisational/Workload Issues

- 5.1 Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should urgently consider ways to deal with the excessive workload of VET teachers and administrators in schools, including, for example, staffing buffers, improved clerical assistance, reappraisal of RTO registration.
- 5.2 Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments need to refine the interpretation and implementation of VET in Schools compliance with the AQTF standards. Adequate resourcing should be provided to alleviate the workload of teachers and ensure that their professional and industrial rights are guaranteed.
- 5.3 System and national data should be collected and reported on the workload and staffing implications of the implementation of VET. This data should form the basis of a review of the impact on teaching and learning conditions with a view to developing guidelines on funding and on staffing structures which enhance quality, effectiveness and fairness for education workers and students.
- 5.4 Appropriate leadership, coordination and support personnel should be deployed at the central, regional/district, and school levels with specific full-time responsibility for VET in Schools.
- 5.5 There needs to be an enhancement of career and vocational guidance services in schools.

- 5.6 Professional development needs of VET teachers should be better integrated into mainstream professional development arrangements in States and Territories. Funding should be available and specifically targeted to schemes to allow VET teachers to meet AQTF standards in relation to qualifications and experience, and for programs for teachers to ensure they meet the needs of the full range of students, in particular students with Indigenous backgrounds.
- 5.7 Where vocational class sizes are regulated in TAFE governments should ensure that class sizes for VET in schools courses do not exceed those for the same courses in TAFE.
- 5.8 Time spent by teachers supervising and assessing students in the workplace should be recognised as teaching time in industrial instruments. Appropriate compensation for travel time, costs and responsibility in relation to work placements should be negotiated.
- 5.9 AQTF compliance requirements should include compliance with industrial awards and agreements pertaining to staff in the training organisation and the relevant industry areas.

6. AQTF Compliance Issues

- 6.1 A review of AQTF implementation should be undertaken at Commonwealth, State and Territory levels with a view to:
 - ensuring the highest standard for delivery and assessment of VET programs;
 - developing consistent implementation guidelines about interpreting valid requirements;
 - establishing the validity of various requirements/benchmarks;
 - eliminating unnecessary paperwork/workload associated with compliance requirements and reducing bureaucratic pressures on schools and TAFE colleges;
 - providing mechanisms of advice and support, including considerably more professional development, in meeting AQTF standards.

7. Teacher Qualifications and Experience

- 7.1 Systems and teacher education institutions should ensure that professional development (pre and in-service) for teachers of VET in secondary schools is based on the following:
 - a broad-base in pedagogy, curriculum and assessment theory and practice linked to recognised general teaching qualifications;
 - appropriate industry qualifications and experience meeting AQTF compliance and National Training Package requirements.

This will require changes to pre-service education courses and the provision of additional funding to schools to facilitate industry placement and training for teachers.
- 7.2 As part of the process of defining and prioritising the multiple goals of entry-level VET, the proposed national body, in consultation with the AEU and its State/Territory branches and associated bodies, should review requirements to set appropriate nationally consistent criteria for the qualifications of teachers and assessors in terms of industry qualifications and experience and teacher education qualifications.
- 7.3 The ACT should put in place programs to ensure the adequate supply of appropriately trained and accredited VET school teachers. This should include arrangements to:
 - encourage and support industry qualified personnel in identified priority areas to undertake teacher education;
 - strategically release teachers to industry.
- 7.4 In addition, the problem of ensuring a supply of accredited casual relief teachers who meet the AQTF standards must be addressed at the Territory level.
- 7.5 Teachers new to VET, regardless of whether already experienced teachers, should be entitled to an induction process and a mentor.
- 7.6 Return to industry programs and any other requirement of VET teachers in relation to specific VET professional development and/or qualifications, should be recognised within Territory professional development industrial requirements or recognition processes where these exist. To enhance the flexibility of use of staff across sectors teacher registration authorities should have coverage of TAFE teachers.

8. Curriculum and Assessment

- 8.1 In developing a coherent policy that clarifies and prioritises the objectives and expectations for school-based VET, the proposed national body should put curriculum and assessment issues at the centre of their considerations.
- 8.2 The Commonwealth in collaboration with the States and Territories should establish a fund to support development of learning strategies and materials for use in schools and TAFE institutes to support National Training Packages.
- 8.3 Reviews of National Training Packages should make more explicit the “underpinning knowledge” in the competency standards and broaden the outcomes of the courses to include those explicitly related to fostering knowledge, understanding and values and to preparing learners for further education and training, employment and full and active participation as citizens.
- 8.4 The review of training packages should also ensure that assessment measures used in training packages are consistent and do not cause barriers to access to further education, training and employment.
- 8.5 In defining and prioritising its multiple goals, the broader educational and generic work-related, as opposed to industry specific, dimensions of entry-level VET should be given greater emphasis in the AQTF and National Training Packages than is presently the case.

9. Tertiary Entrance Articulation

- 9.1 States and Territories should continue to explore and develop mechanisms for counting VET for the purpose of tertiary entrance. This should not, however, be achieved by a broad strategy of including an increasing number of Certificate III competencies into VET in Schools courses.
- 9.2 State and Commonwealth Governments should provide support for school systems to increase and enhance pathways to further education and training for all students, increase knowledge in the community about these alternative pathways and promote acceptance of their legitimacy among secondary school students and their families. In particular, information about the value of TAFE pathways should be highlighted and disseminated to schools and students.
- 9.3 All skills and knowledge should be included in tertiary entrance requirements.

10. Relationship Between VET and Non VET Subjects

- 10.1 Following the development of a coherent national policy that clarifies and prioritises the objectives of VET in Schools, the ACT education system should provide resources, support and professional development to schools to allow teachers of all subjects to understand and support the role of VET in Schools. Funding for VET should be at a sustainable level to achieve the outcomes expected of schools and reflect its position within the broad aims of schooling.

11. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues

- 11.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decision-making structures should be created within the new bodies proposed in earlier recommendations.
- 11.2 The Commonwealth, States and Territories should work together to ensure that all teachers to be employed in the public education system must have completed a comprehensive sequence of Indigenous Studies in their undergraduate courses as a precondition to their employment. Such studies should include studies of Indigenous histories, languages and cultures, Indigenous teaching and learning processes and practices.
- 11.3 A mapping exercise should be conducted to determine the disparities between the employment, training and career pathway options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers (AIEWs) across each State and Territory. This mapping should inform the development of a set of competency standards for AIEWs.
- 11.4 An urgent investigation should be conducted into the number and levels of post-compulsory school aged Indigenous children accessing the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP). VET in Schools, or other appropriate programs, must be urgently put in to place to prevent this from occurring.

12. Issues of Access and Equity

- 12.1 In developing a coherent policy that clarifies and prioritises the objectives and expectations for school-based VET, the complex relationships between cultural assumptions, institutional arrangements and outcomes for individuals and groups must be examined and addressed.
- 12.2 The Commonwealth, States and Territories should ensure that culturally appropriate services, programs and support structures meet the needs of disadvantaged students and local communities. Such a program would provide resources for a whole of government approach combining industry policy, labour market programs, job creation, job placement, education and training and community welfare support and services.
- 12.3 Funding models in the States and Territories must recognise that some schools and TAFE institutes face higher costs than others because of their location and/or student profile.
- 12.4 The Commonwealth should contribute additional funds on a dollar for dollar basis to the States and Territories to assist schools with VET programs specifically targeted to disadvantaged students.
- 12.5 Access to VET (including to school-based apprenticeships/ traineeships) should be funded and made available to students of compulsory school age where there are sound reasons for doing so.

13. Interface Between Schools and other VET Providers

- 13.1 Plans for the development of school-industry links and the use of appropriately qualified industry and VET staff in VET in Schools programs should be built upon the goal of developing a co-operative model of the provision of programs with other public schools and TAFE institutes.
- 13.2 Schools and clusters of schools should be encouraged to establish links and strategic alliances/partnerships with local industry organisations, community and TAFE as a means of strengthening school-industry-community links.
- 13.3 Arrangements should be put in place to facilitate the use of appropriately trained teachers across the schools and TAFE sectors, with attention being paid to the culture, working conditions, expectations and needs of each sector.
- 13.4 The ACT Education Department should encourage the establishment of consultative education groups at the local level, with representatives of both TAFE and schools, to determine where and how best to deliver the range of VET in Schools courses. These consultative groups should involve classroom teachers and senior managers and have an overall planning role.
- 13.5 The structures and resourcing of the vocational education system should reflect the role of TAFE as a vital public asset that is the predominant provider of VET. The ACT Education Department should ensure that public schools do not use private providers unless there is no public provision available.
- 13.6 Steps should be taken to ensure that the VET system is, in fact as well as in theory, a system of nationally recognised qualifications and accreditation. This may mean altering the way National Training Packages are constructed and/or establishing representative bodies, at the level of clusters of schools and TAFE colleges, to co-ordinate accreditation arrangements between schools and TAFE.

14. Employer Involvement

- 14.1 Funding for the development and continuation of the relationships between schools and employers must be ongoing.
- 14.2 State and Territory Governments should develop and fund methods of educating employers about the importance and nature of work placements, their role in ensuring successful training of VET in school students, and the expectations they can reasonably have about the students. Peak industry groups, such as the Business Council of Australia, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Australian Industry Group must be persuaded to take greater responsibility for the provision and quality of work placement. They and local Chambers of Commerce should be engaged to reach small businesses.
- 14.3 Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should ensure that where large industry is involved in VET in Schools it is on the basis that all students have a right of access to the programs

14.4 Where particular schools and teachers have developed good relationships with local businesses, funding should be made available to the school or district to develop those relationships, expand them and extend them to a wider group of schools and employers.

15. Student Work Placements

15.1. Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments should support the expansion of structured work placements as a part of VET in Schools. Co-ordination of these should be centrally funded with dedicated co-ordinators with experience (wherever possible) in industry, training and schools.

15.2 Specific Commonwealth funding for industry links in relation to the organisation of work placements should continue. This funding should be ongoing.

15.3 The role of the ECEF should be reviewed by MCEETYA after substantial consultation with schools and teachers currently engaged in VET programs with Structured Workplace Learning components.

15.4 The ECEF Review should include consideration of the structure and composition of the ECEF Board and the appointment of educationalists including an AEU representative to the Board.

15.5 The ACT Government should ensure, through appropriate arrangements, that the burden of organisation and supervision of Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) that currently falls to teachers is appropriately regulated and rewarded or compensated.

15.6 The ACT Government should establish arrangements to ensure that extra staffing is available to allow for students absent on work placements to catch up work missed.

15.7 The issue of VET teachers being on-call as emergency contacts for work placements out of school hours (including during school vacations) must be dealt with.

16. School-Based Apprenticeships/Traineeships

16.1 The school-based apprenticeship/traineeship program should be reviewed with particular attention to the following issues:

- adequacy of funding;
- organisational implications for schools and education systems;
- inconsistencies in approaches and take-up amongst States and Territories;
- employer support;
- relationship with other VET provision in schools;
- industrial arrangements and training agreements;
- access and equity issues;
- staff and local training and development.

16.2 The ACT Government should engage further in school-based apprenticeships/traineeships by providing the opportunity for students to train in the public sector and/or publicly funded projects, particularly in rural areas.

17. Student Protection and Duty of Care Issues

17.1 In order to ensure that employers provide work placements that deliver meaningful and appropriate work place learning and are not exploitative, systems should:

- provide resources to schools to support workplace learning including full-time work placement co-ordinators preferably with appropriate industry experience;
- establish and resource mechanisms at the systems level to encourage and monitor appropriate behaviour by employers in the use and treatment of students in structured work placements;
- review models of student work placement to define and identify best practice.

17.2 Funding for the training of teachers in workplace health and safety and in the nature of their responsibilities in relation to student work placements must be included as a part of the funding for VET in Schools.