



## VET IN SCHOOLS

# CULTURE, POLICY AND THE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING IMPACT

## Final Report

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**NCVER will fill out the details on this page**

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# Executive Summary

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In the context of significant growth in the provision of VET in Schools programs in the past decade, this study sought to investigate the place of VET in school culture and policy. The study gathered information from twelve schools and six TAFE Institutes in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. The school data represented the views of over 300 teachers, over 1100 Year 11 students and over 400 exit Year 12 students.

## The role of VET in Schools

In most of the schools in our study, the consensus was that VET plays an essential role in making the curriculum inclusive of a broader range of needs.

VET was also viewed as a useful means of improving learning, giving many students a chance of success at school, some for the first time.

## Factors contributing to effective VET programs

The development of good VET programs was seen by teachers to depend on both attitudinal change (among staff and the school community) and structural change (in the school's operation). Schools which were able to achieve change at both these levels had a number of characteristics in common:

- A strongly supportive Principal
- Time release to allow teachers to focus on the heavy administrative demands of VET, The establishment of a **team** of dedicated VET staff, rather than individuals working in isolation
- High enrolments
- Ability to offer courses on a cost-neutral basis or to charge students for courses
- A view of VET as improving learning
- Positive, modern view of VET
- Proximity to a TAFE
- Good relationship with TAFE.

## Barriers to VET

Although some evidence of resistance to VET was observed, issues associated with adequately resourcing VET programs seemed to be more important. Factors which limit the ability of schools to provide quality TAFE programs and/or expand existing provision include:

- A shortage of adequately trained teachers prepared to accept the additional workloads associated with VET teaching;
- Costs associated with training teachers to the standards needed to meet AQTF compliance (including time release for industrial experience);
- Providing adequate facilities for delivering VET within the school (and the costs associated with updating aged facilities or building new ones);
- Costs of “buying in” provision from a TAFE (or other) provider;
- Fees charged to students.

## **The TAFE view on VET in Schools**

The views of TAFE staff regarding the main aspects of the relationship with schools and with a school-aged clientele may be summarised as follows:

### **TAFE and early leavers**

- TAFE Institutes differ in the roles they play for early leavers. Very young early leavers (13 and 14 year-olds) are not regarded as suited to most TAFE environments.
- There is a perception that the range of programs available to TAFE Institutes to cater for early leavers has narrowed in recent years.
- TAFE staff question whether they have the experience and resources to deal adequately with the needs of this group.
- TAFE and VET in Schools
- TAFE questions the quality of much of the training offered in VET in Schools courses. The lack of adequately trained and experienced staff is seen as a major problem.
- There is a perception that TAFE and schools are carving out niches in the training market, whereby schools provide the kinds of courses their facilities and staff profile will allow, while TAFE provides training which schools cannot offer from within their own resources.
- Better co-operation between the VET sector and the schools sector is needed to avoid wasteful duplication of resources.

### **TAFE and school completers**

- There seems to be a greater acceptance in schools of TAFE as a legitimate post-schooling option, although resistance in some schools continues.
- There is a perception that many school leavers continue to reject places offered in TAFE courses.
- Application for a TAFE place through a tertiary admissions committee does not suit all TAFE applicants.



## The Teacher View

While teacher sentiment was generally very positive towards the role and effectiveness of VET programs in delivering positive educational outcomes for secondary students, there still remain a number of key issues that significantly influence the availability and accessibility of VET programs. These are summarised as follows:

### The role of VET

- Teachers were generally very positive about VET. Virtually the entire sample agreed that students struggling with the mainstream curriculum and those intending to leave school early need VET programs.
- Similarly high proportions of teachers saw the value of VET for students who are interested in technology or business, regardless of their ability, and for students who are only average academically.
- Over three-quarters felt that vocational education and training is important even for those students who are above average academically.
- Teachers valued the role of Work Placement in increasing students' self-confidence.
- In a strong indication of support for non-university pathways, teachers endorsed the role of schools in creating links with TAFE and employers, and in providing advice about apprenticeships, traineeships and employment to an even greater extent than the provision of advice about university.
- VET and non-VET teachers differed in their opinions of which groups should be catered for through VET programs. Non-VET teachers appeared more inclined to recommend VET programs for students in Year 10 or below, and who are average academically, whereas VET teachers strongly supported the introduction of VET only in Years 11 and 12, and advocated VET programs for students of all skill levels, including students who are above average academically.

### Effectiveness of VET

- Schools with strong VET programs ("strong VET" schools) were judged by teachers to be better able than "limited VET" schools to manage diversity in the way of a varied curriculum, stimulating activities and the availability of programs for high achievers.
- However, on the other measures – discipline policy, extra-curricular activities and student counselling – "strong VET" schools were perceived as less successful than the "limited VET" schools, although these findings may be related to the nature of the clientele in the latter group of schools.

### Barriers to VET

Consistent with the findings reported above, "cultural" barriers were not identified as the most important blockers to growth. More important to teachers were issues

associated with the resources, including the provision of infrastructure and training, and the costs of delivering VET. The majority of VET teachers perceived the following as significant resource issues associated with VET provision:

- The extra workload and responsibility generated by VET (eg liaising with employers and TAFE, increased paperwork) compared with mainstream subjects;
- Fees and charges to students, which place significant limitations on VET provision;
- Shortage of adequately trained teachers;
- Inadequate facilities and resources for delivering VET onsite;
- Resources (time, money, effort) needed for compliance with AQTF requirements.
- Internal pressures such as lack of support from principal, timetabling constraints, lack of commitment from other teachers.

## **The Student View**

### **Why students enrol in VET**

- Students enrol in VET for several reasons, most importantly the opportunity to widen career options, obtain workplace training, and the desire to gain a VET qualification. VET appears to serve the dual role of preparing these students for work, whilst also keeping open other options, including pathways into university and TAFE.
- More than half the students enrolled in VET to provide access to better part-time work than they might get without training, reflecting the importance of part-time work to students in senior secondary school and in university.
- There were few gender differences in reasons for enrolling in VET except in relation to parents' views. Male students were more likely to cite parental encouragement as a reason for enrolling, possibly reflecting the traditional view that vocational subjects are more appropriate for boys than girls.

### **Students' views of VET**

- Student feedback strongly suggests that VET had satisfied the need for work-related skills and experience, and that the work placement had contributed to increasing self-confidence. There is also encouraging data to suggest that VET had contributed to student learning more generally, increasing the likelihood that these school leavers will have a more positive orientation to lifelong learning.
- However, almost half the students wanted more practical content in their VET courses, which suggests that VET is only going part way to meeting students' needs in this regard.

## Work Experience and Workplace Training

- Students were generally more positive about work placement than work experience, and saw work placement as providing benefits that school cannot, including the opportunity to learn things they cannot learn at school and facilitating entry to future employment.
- Despite these positive views, students stopped short of claiming that their work placement was a situation in which they learnt “more” than at school, reflecting an awareness of the different, yet mutually supportive roles of school and work placement.

## Comparing VET and Non-VET schools

- Students in schools with strong VET programs were more positive than students in schools with limited programs about the quality of their school’s career-related services, including advice and assistance with employment, and information about university and TAFE courses.
- Moreover, these students were more likely than students in schools with limited VET to endorse the success of their school in a broader range of measures relating to their school’s effectiveness, such as achieving high academic results, and providing access to cultural and sporting activities.
- Large enrolments and good leadership, seen by the teachers in this study as crucial to the success of VET, are also likely to have contributed to the success of these schools in providing a range of quality programs and services.

## Barriers to VET

- The reasons given by non-VET students for not enrolling in VET programs indicate that non-participation is based on a combination of attitudinal and structural barriers.
- The main reasons for not enrolling in VET were associated with an academic, university-oriented trajectory, and an associated perception that it is not relevant to their future study and career plans.
- This view was more likely in schools with strong VET programs, whereas students in schools with limited VET programs were more likely to cite reasons associated with limited access, such as VET not offered or that there was no VET subject they wanted to do.
- Another important barrier to participation was cost. Financial costs were also identified by teachers as the main barrier to student participation in VET programs, due to the need to charge fees.
- Negative perceptions of VET were given relatively little importance by the respondents as reasons for avoiding VET. Very few students believe that VET programs are taught badly, and few claim that their parents or teachers have discouraged them from enrolling in VET.

## Student Pathways

- In line with previous research, non-VET students were about twice as likely to go to university as their VET counterparts. Approximately one fifth of the VET graduates used their studies to access a university destination.
- The rates of entry to TAFE (and other VET providers) reverse this pattern, with VET graduates in the study twice as likely as their non-VET peers to study through a VET provider.
- VET graduates were much more likely to enter full-time work and apprenticeships and traineeships, which is consistent with the vocational orientation of their senior certificate studies.
- Despite a greater likelihood of entering the labour market without further study, VET graduates were also less likely to be unemployed, a finding that confirms the value of VET in schools as a tool for accessing jobs.
- VET and non-VET students appear to access TAFE in different ways. VET in Schools graduates are more likely than their non-VET peers to enter TAFE at Certificate III level, which suggests that they are building on their VET experiences at school.
- In contrast, non-VET graduates were more likely to enter TAFE at Certificate IV and above (reflecting a more academic orientation at school) or, alternatively, at Certificate I and II level. This 'split' in the non-VET cohort suggests that VET programs delivered a tangible advantage to many VET students that was not available to their non-VET counterparts.
- The great strength of the VET in Schools program appears to be its flexibility in catering for the diverse learning needs of school students, and in preparing pathways into a range of post-schooling destinations.
- This strength is highlighted by the evidence presented in this report that VET in Schools is able to achieve these outcomes despite the pressure on it to cater for a range of ability levels and the consequently higher proportions of academically weaker students who enrol in it.

## Summary

These findings are indicative of a sea-change in schools. Resistance remains among some teachers. There is a view among some in the more academically inclined subject departments that VET is disruptive, that it does not fit easily into the timetable, or that it is simply not needed. But in the schools in this study, such teachers seem to be in the minority. For most, VET plays an essential role in managing diversity, in improving learning and in securing a range of good outcomes for school leavers. Even among non-VET teachers, there is a majority view that VET is needed and that it is effective.

Among students too, VET is seen as providing opportunities and pathways which are essential. Alternatives to the traditional pathway to university are provided in VET programs, giving these young people a senior schooling experience which caters for

their diverse needs and learning styles. It would seem that students, if they choose not to do VET, do so because it does not fit their view of an academic trajectory, rather than because they view it negatively.

The feedback from TAFE staff seems to confirm these views. There is an acknowledgement that schools and students are beginning to view VET (and consequently TAFE itself) in a more favourable light. By valorising VET, schools are also paving the way for a more positive view of TAFE as a post-schooling option.

Yet, despite these changing views, problems remain. These seem to be problems rooted in the institutional structures of schools and in the financial arrangements which constrain the relationship between the sectors. All of the stakeholders have focussed on the financial difficulties involved in accessing VET in Schools programs. The vexed relationships between individual schools and individual TAFE Institutes cry out for resolution of the institutional arrangements which make productive and efficient co-operation so difficult. From the students' point of view, the financial demands of VET (often most prevalent in those schools with the least capacity to address them) make access to programs which can improve both the schooling experience and the prospect of future pathways more difficult.

Institutional arrangements relating to access to senior secondary VET curriculum and accreditation arrangements are somewhat different from state to state. Yet, in the schools in the three states chosen for this study, the themes which run through this report are common ones. While both TAFE Institutes and schools have done much to accommodate the need for high quality VET programs for school students, many issues need to be addressed. The need for funding and administrative flexibility is chief among them. While access to VET remains complex and troublesome, residual resistance to VET will remain and some students who need VET programs will continue to miss out.

There is a need for a frank appraisal of the issues facing schools in different settings if they are to offer high quality VET programs to all students who need them. These issues include access to TAFE programs, funding arrangements, school size, isolation and the provision of trained teaching staff. These issues all involve funding and affect different schools in different ways. Unless adequate acknowledgment of the need to provide quality VET in a range of settings (and not just in those where it is easy) is made, access to VET will continue to be constrained for many young people in Australian schools.

# Introduction

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## Background

Major growth has occurred in the number of young people undertaking VET programs in schools. Over 80,000 school students were enrolled in the VET sector in 1998 and considerable growth may be assumed since that time (NCVER 1999). While growth has been considerable, overall levels of participation mask important differences in access to school-based VET, in quality, and in the impact of VET in Schools on employment and further education transition. For example, rates of participation in school-based VET in Victoria vary from as high as 15.2 per cent in Gippsland to as low as 6.4 per cent in the inner-eastern suburbs of Melbourne (Polesel et al. forthcoming). In some regions, low participation in VET reflects a strong academic emphasis in schools serving high socio-economic status communities. But limited participation can also be found in regions of low status where early leaving is high, academic attainment below-average, and transition to university is for a minority only. Issues of school policy and school culture are of major concern in these contexts, as will be discussed further below.

Participation in VET beyond school also displays quite marked regional variations. In country areas, young people make greater use of TAFE/VET than do young people in metropolitan regions. Transition to VET tends to offset typically high rates of early leaving from school (Teese 2000). Many early leavers in the country begin apprenticeships or campus-based VET from a platform of successful achievement at school, self-confidence as learners, and satisfaction with their experience as students. However, in urban regions of low socio-economic status, participation in post-school VET is merely average and does not counter school drop-out rates which are as high as in the country (Teese 2000). Early leaving is often followed by unemployment and no further education or training. When early leavers who have been low achievers at school do enter TAFE, their attitudes, classroom behaviour, and preparedness to learn often make them unwelcome. They may not complete a basic certificate, attend erratically, re-enrol in courses of the same level only to qualify for income support, and derive little cognitive or economic benefit from their experience. For such groups, entry to VET has come too late. VET should have been a positive framework for learning while at school rather than a failed safety-net for low achievers after they have left school.

Access to VET in Schools programs and under-utilization of post-school VET are related problems. Both have their origins in school policies and culture which see VET as a poor alternative to academic and general studies and as basically a relegation stream. Parents are often reluctant to have their children enrol in subjects of low prestige and uncertain outcomes. This tends to reinforce the doubts entertained by teachers about the suitability of VET either from an economic perspective (doing VET

may block the road to university) or from a cultural perspective (doing VET is too educationally narrow). An ARC project found that in 1998-99 over half of all upper secondary school teachers in Australia either doubted the value of VET or were opposed to its place in school programs (Teese and Polesel, forthcoming). The conservatism of even poor families towards VET, based on insecurity, negative prestige signals, and hopes of social advancement, and the conservatism of teachers (who do not want to sell students short) work together to impede the growth of VET in schools or to restrict its role or limit access to it. One manifestation of this cultural impact is the sometimes nearly exclusive focus of careers education and guidance on university, with little or no attention paid to TAFE/VET, apprenticeship or employment for school leavers. A recent survey in Victoria found that in a range of schools serving rural and low SES urban communities, high proportions of students reported receiving poor quality information about VET or receiving none at all (Polesel et al., 2001).

Negative attitudes to VET can be expected to affect not only the level of provision of VET programs in schools and student access to them, but also the quality of programs that are offered (e.g., in terms of teaching resources, facilities, work placements, TAFE links, and broadly the extent of “real commitment” and energy given to the VET area). Similarly, how schools operate their VET programs in the larger context of selection into the academic courses will also be affected. Finally the place of post-school VET as an option for school leavers is likely to be limited where conservative academic attitudes prevail. Evidence of this can be seen in research for the Kirby review of post-compulsory education and training pathways in Victoria which found a systematic link between the likelihood of Year 12 students applying for VET as their first preference and the level of their academic attainment (DEET 2000). As results fell, first-preference applications for VET rose. This underlying negative orientation to post-school VET was also found confirmed by the comparative likelihood of students rejecting a TAFE offer. This was twice the rate at which university offers were turned down by students.

## **The Purpose of the Study**

This project is an investigation of the place of VET in school culture and policy. The aim is to elucidate the cultural conditions under which VET in schools either thrives or fails. The project will identify the consequences for students of supportive and negative school cultures in terms of access to VET while at school (including work-based learning), growth of favourable attitudes to lifelong learning, self-confidence, knowledge of employment and training options, and transition to employment and further education.

While the main focus of the project will be on schools, a second strand will look at the provision of VET for young people through the perspective of TAFE institutes. Here the concern is with how TAFE sees its role in the context of the growing role of schools. This part of the project will investigate both tensions within TAFE and cross-border tensions within VET regarding program responsibilities for young

people, and the extent to which these tensions affect total access to VET, including range and quality of offerings.

## Research Questions

- What are the factors within a school culture which support a successful VET program?
- What cultural factors inhibit the successful development of VET options within school curricula?
- What do teachers think of VET and its place in school curricula? On the basis of what considerations -- philosophical, factual -- do they make their assessments of its importance? Do teachers in the same school tend to be united in their views and attitudes regarding VET, or is division more common and, if so, over what issues does division occur?
- In careers education and guidance, how well profiled are employment, apprenticeship and VET options? To what extent do schools communicate with TAFE institutes, other VET providers, and state training authorities in designing careers education and guidance programs? How do students rate careers education and guidance and to what extent do their assessments differ according to planned and actual destinations?
- In developing curriculum policy with respect to VET, do schools consider the post-school destinations of students? Are the views of students factored in to the process of curriculum decision-making?
- How do regional TAFE institutes view the growth of VET programs in schools? Is there a sense of competition or one of co-operation? What is the experience of TAFE institutes in delivering VET to early school leavers? Is there a view that this falls outside TAFE's role, that it should be managed by schools (or ACE providers), or alternatively that TAFE should be involved with this group and are perhaps better placed to address needs? How active is the communication from TAFE institutes to schools? Do the institutes see school leavers as an important market, and if so, how do they endeavour to profile their programs to make them attractive to this client group?

## Partnership Arrangements

A partnership was formed between the Centre for Post-Compulsory Education and Training (CPET) at the University of Melbourne and Sydney Institute of TAFE, Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE and Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE. CPET conducted the research and the TAFE Institutes were asked to prepare position papers and provide data relating to their perceived role in catering for school leavers, while CPET wrote the report. The range of institutions ensured that a broad variety



of relationships with the school community could be examined efficiently and effectively.

## Methodology

The project was national in scope and involved 12 schools and 6 TAFEs across three states (New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland) representing characteristically different metropolitan, provincial city and rural settings. Schools and TAFEs serving low to average SES communities were targeted and schools with well-developed VET programs (as identified by system authorities) as well as those with little or no VET provision but serving similar communities, were compared. The methodology adopted for this study resulted in the selection of matched pairs of schools in each community. The aim was to include in each location a school with demonstrated strong commitment to VET and one with a more limited VET program. The only exception was in Victoria, where three schools strongly committed to VET were selected and only one with a more limited commitment. This was in order to provide some bias towards “best-practice” schools. The categorisation of schools was based on information supplied by state education authorities, local TAFE Institutes and ECEF cluster co-ordinators, and on objective data on the breadth of the schools’ VET programs. They were subsequently tested against more subjective interpretations of the schools’ commitment to VET, as expressed by school staff in the fieldwork and the categorisations were found to accord with the data derived from school sources. The process resulted in seven schools being assigned to the “strong VET” category and five to the “limited VET” category. "

Pairs of schools were, in general, associated with a local TAFE. The “matched settings” methodology enabled a comparative analysis to be made of prevailing school staff and management attitudes to VET, the place of VET in the curriculum, resource allocation, the staffing of VET programs, and the relative emphasis on this side of the school’s mission and its perceived importance. At the same time attention was paid to the other side of the local VET equation—the regional TAFE provider – to identify the nature of relationships with schools, school teachers, school students and early leavers. The values, attitudes, experience and destinations of students were studied through classroom surveys, focus group discussions, and a telephone tracking instrument. The project aimed to build up a picture of the options which students would wish to see in the curriculum as well as their needs and priorities -- and experience on leaving school -- and at the same time to profile the school’s experience of VET and how this is expressed in the curriculum actually available to students.

Professor Margaret Vickers from the University of Western Sydney assisted in the fieldwork in NSW.

# Review of the Literature

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VET in Schools is possibly the most substantial change that has occurred in post-compulsory schooling in the past decade. It emerged in the early 1990s as a major piece of curriculum reform, with the principal aim of providing greater breadth of choice to the more diverse populations making use of senior secondary schooling. In practice, this meant introducing relevant and viable pathways for students not intending to apply for university, and increasing retention of students at risk of early leaving. Since its inception, there has been significant expansion in the numbers of young people participating in VET in School programs. This review summarises recent research on VET in Schools, addressing key questions about participation and outcomes.

## Participation

Since the early 1990s, major growth has occurred in the number of young people undertaking VET programs in schools. In the early 1990s, for instance, about 13 per cent of Year 11 and 12 students participated in some form of vocational education. Since the mid-1990s, when major reform of vocational education took place, participation has expanded significantly. Between 1996 and 2000, this proportion grew from 16 per cent to 38 per cent, or 153, 616 enrolments (MCEETYA, 2001).

Associated with this growth is the increase in the number of schools offering VET programs, from 1,441 in 1997 (70 per cent of secondary schools) to 1,787 in 1999 (85 per cent of secondary schools) (MCEETYA, 2001). Malley et al. (2001) point out that, whilst the number of schools offering VET has increased substantially, the number of enrolments within each school has increased only slightly. These figures suggest that increases in student enrolment are based on increasing school participation rather than increasing enrolments within individual schools.

As VET in Schools continues to evolve, further increases in participation are likely. One recent development that may increase enrolments is school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, which provide an opportunity to gain a recognised VET qualification whilst working part-time and studying towards the senior school certificate. The appeal of VET subjects is likely to be further enhanced by recent changes in accreditation arrangements, such as some VET studies being included in the calculation of Year 12 tertiary entrance rankings. A national study currently being undertaken by the University of Melbourne on behalf of the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEP) will shed further light on the impact of changes such as these.

Data from Victoria (Polesel et al., 1999) document the extent to which VET in Schools offerings grew over the period 1994 to 1997, from the original three certificate areas of Office Administration, Electronics and Hospitality to include 19 certificate areas

representing most industry areas. By 2001, the number of Certificate areas available in Victoria was at least 24 (Polesel and Teese, forthcoming). The development of areas as diverse as agriculture, food processing (wine) and horse studies demonstrates the responsiveness of schools to student needs and interests, as well as to local industry opportunities. In recent years, Information Technology has overtaken all other certificate areas, followed by Hospitality and Office Administration in enrolment size. Taken together, these three certificate areas now account for 51 % of enrolments, compared with 1997, when these three areas accounted for 60 per cent of enrolments (Polesel et al., 1999). This would seem to be indicative of increasing diversity in VET in schools offerings.

According to Lamb, Long and Malley (1998), access to school-based VET varies considerably by state, school sector, and region. The remainder of this section reviews literature that addresses differences in VET participation according to achievement, socio-economic status, type of school attended, gender, ethnicity and geographical region.

## **School sector**

Government schools have dominated VET provision since its inception in the early 1990s. At that time, 80% of VET participants were enrolled in Government schools (Lamb et al., 1998). Students in government schools enrol in vocational courses at about twice the rate of Catholic school students, and almost four times the rate of independent school students (Lamb and Ball, 1999). Data consistent with these figures are given by Malley et al. (2001) who found that by 1998, 37 per cent of all Year 11 and 12 students in Government schools participated in VET programs, compared with 22 per cent of Catholic school students and 14 per cent of students in Independent schools.

By the end of the decade, however, independent schools had substantially increased their share of VET provision. Within a context of increasing provision generally, Government schools' share of enrolments dropped slightly from 82 per cent to 74 per cent between 1997 and 2000, whilst independent schools' share rose from 5 per cent to 9 per cent, and Catholic schools' share increased slightly from 13 per cent to 17 per cent (MCEETYA, 2001).

These differences between the school sectors may reflect different agendas. Whilst private schools tend to focus on achieving high rates of entry to university, government schools are faced with the challenge of accommodating the needs of a more diverse student population. However, recent increases in VET provision in independent schools suggest that its role in that setting has become more acceptable. Anecdotal reports suggest that, apart from a strategy to address the needs of non-academic students, VET is also being used as a means of supplementing academic studies (e.g. electronics to improve student performance in physics) or as a strategy to improve part-time work prospects for students who move on to university studies (eg hospitality studies). These practices are examined in the following chapters.

Other school factors, such as size, would also have a bearing on the quality and range of VET offerings, as well as staff resources and facilities. There is no available research that addresses this issue. Therefore, a priority of the current research is to identify the school characteristics that contribute to the success of VET programs.

## **Regional differences**

Early studies on regional patterns of participation in vocational subjects obtained equivocal results. Ainley and Fleming (1997), for instance, found that school-industry programs were more extensively provided by schools in provincial cities and country towns than in capital cities or rural areas. Lamb et al. (1998) examined data for young people who were secondary school students undertaking vocational subjects or units as part of Year 11 or Year 12 studies between 1991 and 1993. They reported very small differences based on rural or urban location, reporting slightly higher enrolments for urban males and rural females than for rural males and urban females.

Fullarton (2001) found that students in regional and rural areas were more likely to participate in VET in Schools, with one in four students participating compared with about one in five for students in urban areas. Fullarton suggested that this may be due to the stronger social networks and closer school-industry linkages that exist in smaller communities.

It is apparent from these data that factors influencing VET provision and enrolments are far more complex than a simple distinction between rural and urban would allow. In analysing trends for the state of Victoria, Polesel et al., (2001) were able to capture more of this complexity. They found that VET in Schools enrolment rates tend to be highest in non-metropolitan areas and in those regions which have the lowest socio-economic profile and the poorest rates of transition from school to university. These results provide encouraging evidence that VET in Schools is able to offer opportunities to students who in the past were ill-served by a narrowly academic curriculum. Further analysis is needed of the types of VET programs available in different geographic regions and the regional factors influencing successful transitions to further study and employment.

## **Academic profile**

VET in Schools programs appear to be targeted at students in the lower bands of school achievement. Fullarton (2001) examined data from a national sample of over 6000 young people who were in Year 9 in 1995. She found that 24 per cent of students in the lowest achievement quartile (as measured by literacy and numeracy in Year 9) participated in VET in Schools in either Year 11 or 12, compared to 9 per cent of those in the highest achievement quartile. This study also provided data on the proportion of VET and non-VET students in each achievement quartile; more than 6 in every 10 VET students were located in the lowest two achievement quartiles, whilst fewer than two in ten were found in the highest quartile.

Similarly, Polesel and Teese (forthcoming) found that VET in Schools students are over-represented in the two lowest achievement quintiles and under-represented in the

two highest quintiles, in comparison with non-VET students, who are evenly distributed across the five categories.

These data suggest that VET in Schools may have a role in the retention at school of lower achieving students at risk of early leaving. However, over the last decade, the proportion of students remaining at school in the post-compulsory years has been relatively constant, at about 80 per cent for 16 year-olds and 60 per cent for 17 year-olds (ABS, 2001). These figures suggest that the growth in VET in Schools has not been associated with a corresponding increase in school retention, but has been sustained mainly by students who would have continued on in the secondary system in any case. These figures also indicate that VET, whilst primarily accessed by non-academic students, also appeals to students who are bound for university. Further research is needed to ascertain how different types of students make use of their VET studies, on the extent to which VET in Schools meets the needs of students at risk of early leaving, and to identify strategies that successfully meet these needs.

## **Socioeconomic status**

Schools serving mainly low SES populations are more likely to offer vocational programs (Ainley and Fleming 1997) and students from low SES backgrounds are more likely to enrol in them (Lamb et al., 1998). Similarly, Lamb and Ball (1999) found that provision of school industry programs in Years 11 and 12 was associated with low-ranked socio-economic status, with Year 12 students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds enrolling in vocational education and technology subjects at about twice the rate of high SES students.

Lamb et al. (1998) found that Year 11 and 12 students participating in vocational programs were more likely to have attended government schools and come from home backgrounds where parents worked in skilled or unskilled manual occupations. Similar results were obtained by Fullarton (2001) who noted that students from manual or clerical backgrounds were more likely to participate in VET than students from professional backgrounds (27 per cent compared with 14 per cent).

Further research is needed to identify the types of VET programs that students from different SES backgrounds select, why they choose them, and what benefits they reap.

## **Gender**

A number of studies have found that boys are slightly more likely to participate in VET in Schools programs than girls (Lamb et al, 1998; Lamb and Ball, 1999; Fullarton, 2001; Polesel et al., 2001a).

Lamb et al. (1999) cited rates of enrolment for boys in the group of subjects comprising technical drawing, technology, general maths and computing that were almost 12 times those for girls. Conversely, girls were most heavily over-represented in secretarial studies courses where their rate of enrolment was more than five times that of boys. Given that post-school VET has traditionally been highly gender segmented, these findings are no surprise.

Polesel and Teese (forthcoming) provide enrolment data for VET in Schools in Victoria broken out by gender for 24 Certificate areas. Male enrolments comprised 54 per cent of the total number of enrolments, and males outnumbered females in 15 of 24 certificate areas, indicating that males continue to be over-represented in VET studies. Strong gender segmentation was evident in patterns of enrolment choices. Areas in which male enrolments dominated most strongly were those associated with traditional male domains, such as electronics, construction, automotive studies, engineering and furniture studies. In these five areas, males comprised more than 90 per cent of enrolments. Conversely, females comprised more than 90 per cent of enrolments in three areas: clothing design and production, community services and horse studies.

Areas where male and female enrolments were more balanced (although still slightly male dominated) included interactive multimedia, small business, agriculture, music industry skills, sport and recreation, desktop publishing, and food technology. These studies include several newly emerging areas, which, being less constrained by traditional gender expectations, may offer greater opportunities for male and female students to participate more equitably.

Overall, while male enrolment rates are marginally higher than those of female students, the considerable diversity in the range of program areas available has meant that VET in Schools has been able to accommodate girls as well as boys, although there are differences in the types of programs being accessed. Further research is needed to investigate the relative success of these programs in bridging students into work and further study and to determine how these gender differences interact with socio-economic and ethnic factors.

## **Ethnicity**

Fullarton (2001) reported that young people with a home background from other than English-speaking countries were less likely to undertake VET in Schools: 24 percent of students with Australian-born parents participated in VET in Schools, compared to 18 per cent of those from families from non-English speaking countries. These results are consistent with earlier studies (Lamb et al., 1998; Lamb and Ball, 1999). Lamb and Ball (1999) for instance found that vocational education and technology subjects were dominated by students from English-speaking backgrounds whereas students from non-English speaking backgrounds tended to avoid technical, vocational and non-academic courses in favour of physical sciences, mathematics and business studies.

Lamb et al. (1998) noted that the rate of participation for girls from non-English speaking backgrounds was about 5 percentage points below that of girls from English-speaking origins, and concluded that ethnic background influenced VET participation of girls. These findings are consistent with the view that non-English speaking families place a stronger emphasis on university studies than Australian born families, an issue which is explored in this report.

More research is needed on the impact of these views on transitions to further study and employment, particularly for those students who, although expected to go to university, do not get accepted.

## **The workplace experience**

Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) is a key aspect of most VET in School programs. SWL differs from the traditional work experience offered to Year 11 and 12 students in a number of ways. It is undertaken in an area of work that is specifically related to the VET area in which the student is enrolled, it is usually of a more extended duration, and it allows students to acquire skills and competencies in a workplace setting that are recognised and accredited as part of their formal studies. Its importance is highlighted by researchers such as Cumming and Carbines (1997) who argue that it plays an important role in integrating the general and vocational components of the curriculum.

Polesel et al. (2001a) identified some important differences between SWL and work experience in terms of their perceived value to students. They compared the workplace learning experiences of VET students with those of non-VET students using data from a large sample of Victorian students, and found that SWL was superior on several counts. The VET in Schools group were more likely than the non-VET group to report that they had learnt key competencies, such as organising themselves better, meeting deadlines and working under pressure. VET students were similarly more positive than their non-VET counterparts about a range of other benefits delivered by their workplace training experience. They were almost twice as likely to describe it as a place where the work is related to what they learn at school, underlining how effectively VET in Schools programs forge the critical connection between workplace learning and school-based curriculum. The VET students were also more likely to describe their work placement as being related to the kind of job they would like to do, indicating a more careful matching of student aspirations with choice of workplace than seems to occur among the non-VET students.

It is not unexpected that the structured workplace learning available in VET in Schools programs targets students' interests more effectively than the work experience programs offered in generalist academic streams. However, what is notable is the range of measures on which VET workplace learning appeared to be the more effective alternative.

## **Outcomes**

As discussed above, VET programs are intended to broaden the range of curriculum offerings and provide young people with an alternative pathway to work and further education. This section addresses the following question: To what extent do VET in Schools programs improve student outcomes?

The heterogeneity in VET programs requires caution in generalising about their impact. Sources of diversity include the range of industry areas involved in VET

programs; the extent of SWL, and in the type of provision: some are provided entirely using school premises and teachers, whilst others involve resources shared with other schools or provision by TAFE Institutes and private providers. Another factor that suggests caution in attributing too much to the effect of VET participation on post-school destinations is the limited amount of time VET in School students actually spend in these programs, which Fullarton (2001) estimates to be about three hours per week on average. Another difficulty associated with attributing causality is that outcomes may simply reflect the abilities and preferences of students rather than the effects of participation in VET in Schools. These constraints should be kept in mind in interpreting results of research.

Lamb et al. (1998) examined outcome data for students who participated in vocational programs in the early 1990s. Students who studied vocational subjects at school were more likely to proceed into the post-school VET sector (53 per cent of males and 51 per cent of females) than those who did not study vocational subjects (43 per cent of males and 35 per cent of females). Male VET students entered apprenticeships at almost twice the rate of non-VET students whilst female VET students entered traineeships at twice the rate of non-VET students. VET students were far less likely to enter higher education than non-VET students, with the implication that VET in Schools is a pathway largely excluding university entry. This study also found that VET students were more likely than non-VET students not to have engaged in any further education by age 19 (37 per cent compared with 28 per cent).

More recent data from Victoria (Walstab et al., 2002) also suggest that participation in VET in Schools has a positive impact on students' choices to continue with VET. In this study, Year 12 VET in Schools graduates entered apprenticeships or traineeships at about twice the rate of non-VET graduates. Given recent changes in accreditation of VET subjects, such as results in some VET subjects counting towards tertiary entrance rankings, this trend may change, with certain combinations of VET and non-VET subjects providing effective pathways to tertiary education.

Data from a series of destinations surveys conducted in Victoria (Polesel et al. 2001, Polesel, 2001) provide some more positive findings about post-school pathways of VET students.

Polesel (2001) reported on the impact of VET in Schools on post-school destinations in Victoria over a five-year period (1995-1999). In broad terms, over half of the leaving cohort were consistently going on to further study at either a university or TAFE institute, with the majority of these students choosing to continue their schooling at a TAFE. This was seen as demonstrating some progress towards the achievement of one of the aims of the VET in Schools Programs, which is to stimulate interest in non-university training among secondary school students. Labour market transitions were also effective, with high rates of transition to full-time employment, and apprenticeships and traineeships.

Comparison of outcomes for VET and non-VET students of similar academic achievement revealed impressive results for academically weaker students. Polesel (2001) showed that for the academically weakest students, progression to further



study was stronger for the VET group than for the non-VET group, with a much stronger transfer to TAFE. These results paint a promising picture of the role of VET in facilitating effective transitions to post-secondary education and training for these students.

In order to determine the effects of VET in Schools on employment outcomes, Polesel et al. (2001) compared the destinations of the 1999 VET and non-VET students according to academic achievement. In the two lowest quintiles of achievement, the transition to work and further study appeared to be somewhat smoother for the VET students, with a higher proportion of the VET group working and a lower proportion unemployed.

Similar results were found in the most recent report from the series of Victorian destinations studies referred to earlier (Polesel and Teese, forthcoming). This study found that the VET program works differently for students from different achievement profiles. For the academically weakest (and therefore most vulnerable) group, rates of progression to further study were stronger than for non-VET students. The transition to work was also smoother for VET students, of whom a higher proportion was working and a smaller proportion unemployed. In the highest quintile of achievement, overall rates of progression to tertiary education were strong for both VET and non-VET students, with VET students more likely to go to TAFE and non-VET students more likely to go to university. However, nearly two thirds of VET students make the transition to university, and overall four out of five are entering study in a tertiary institution. This is a noteworthy result considering the vocational nature of the program, and the high rate of participation of VET in School graduates in the labour market.

Supporting the data on outcomes for the most academically vulnerable students is recent research on the effect of VET programs on self-concept in low achieving students (Kane and Warton 2002). This study found that school programs with an employment preparation orientation could be more effective than tertiary preparation programs in increasing the self-concept of such students. These findings are indicative of the role which VET can play in increasing the self-confidence of learners and their future orientation to further learning.

Similarly, Lamb et al. (1998) compared outcomes for VET in School participants with those for early leavers. VET in Schools participants were, on the whole, more likely to enter some sort of further education or training than the early leavers. Early leavers were more likely to enter apprenticeships and certificate courses in TAFE, whilst VET in Schools students tended to move into traineeships and diploma courses. A notable exception was that female VET in School participants were more likely than early leavers to enter low level certificate courses, which raises some questions about the advantages for these students of remaining at school.

## **Gender differences**

Lamb et al. (1998) found striking gender differences in the destinations of students who participated in vocational subjects in Year 11 or 12. Males were more likely to go

into apprenticeships than females (22 per cent compared with 2 per cent) and females were more likely to enter traineeships (13 per cent compared with 8 per cent), study at Diploma or certificate levels (37 per cent compared with 22 per cent) or proceed to higher education (21 per cent compared with 9 per cent).

Polesel and Teese (forthcoming) noted that, over time, gender differences in destinations of VET in Schools exiting students have shown consistent patterns, with proportionally more boys going into apprenticeships, and more girls going into traineeships and tertiary education (both VET and university).

Compensating for the higher proportion of girls entering tertiary studies, boys were far more likely to be located in the apprenticeship/traineeship category (24.6 per cent of boys, compared with 12.6 per cent of girls). Within this category, however, there were also large gender differences. Just under one-fifth (18.9 per cent) of all male VET in Schools graduates entered an apprenticeship, compared with only 4.0 per cent of all girls. Conversely, 8.6 per cent of girls became trainees, compared with 5.7 per cent of boys.

This study also found that the benefits accruing to VET graduates, as compared to non-VET graduates, were consistent along gender lines, indicating that the advantages of VET in Schools study, as measured by higher rates of transition to TAFE and better employment outcomes, apply broadly to both gender groups. They note however that, as for the data published for the 1999 cohort, the high rate of entry to TAFE for male VET in School graduates – a rate that brings the overall tertiary transition rate of VET in School boys to a level matching that of non-VET boys – was not matched by the rate for female VET in Schools graduates. While male VET graduates were only 4.5 per cent less likely to enter tertiary study than male non-VET graduates, the difference between VET and non-VET girls was 8.7 per cent.

## Teachers

If there is a dearth of literature in the field of VET in Schools generally, then this is particularly true regarding the role of teachers working in such programs. There are examples of literature which deals with the issue of how teachers' roles are changing (Shaw, McDonald, Childs and Turner 1999) but these do not specifically address the context of VET in Schools in Australia. The debate over the recruitment and training of VET teachers, what incentives should be offered to address teacher shortages in the area and how issues of recognition of prior experience (e.g. trade qualifications) should be approached has only just begun in this country.

One of the few studies in Australia to address the issue of teacher training is a New South Wales project examining a course established to train VET in Schools teachers at Charles Sturt University (Green 2002). This paper reports on an innovative approach to training teachers which recognises the prior industry experience of practitioners and accelerates their progress through their studies. Combining innovative approaches to practicum experience and problem-based learning, the course has shown early success

in retaining student teachers (low attrition) and in the positive feedback provided by schools on the trainee teachers.

## **Careers Education and Guidance**

Related to the changing role of teachers and similarly under-researched, is the role of careers education and guidance for students who are not following the traditional route from senior secondary schooling to university. A recent English study notes that schools need to focus on the careers needs of students who are in danger of dropping out or whose post-schooling pathways do not lead inevitably to university (Andrews 2000).

Similarly, recent research in Canada (HRD Canada 2000) argues that, while there has been a significant expansion of information and services about careers choices, there is a need for a more co-ordinated systemic approach to providing information to young people about programs and services. Canadian initiatives to encourage employers to give work experience to young people and support for expanded careers and counselling programs in schools reflect these concerns. These initiatives have focussed on raising awareness of the alternative pathways available in school with a view to increasing school retention (Crysdale et al. 1999). There is a recognition in such initiatives that the provision of vocational education and training in schools and the expansion of schools' role in providing pathways for school leavers who wish to enter the workforce without further study requires schools to take a more inclusive approach to the provision of careers education and guidance services. Such services must now accommodate the needs and aspirations of students who are remaining at school but are not necessarily on a pathway to university.

## **Conclusions**

The studies reviewed here indicate that VET in Schools offers a positive experience of training and workplace learning for participants, whilst facilitating effective pathways to post-secondary education, training and work. However, as discussed above, the significant growth in VET in Schools masks important differences in access to school-based VET, in quality of VET provision, and in the impact of VET in Schools on the transition to further education and employment.

Further research is needed to address issues associated with the quality of VET in Schools provision, in terms of teaching resources and facilities, teacher training, work placements and TAFE links. Questions that arise include the following: What factors restrict or enhance quality delivery? Is VET reaching all students who could potentially benefit from vocationally oriented programs? Is the range of VET offerings appropriate to the needs and interests of students? Are there any significant gaps in provisions? What of low achieving students at risk of early leaving who may be "falling through the cracks"? To what extent does the culture of the school, including teacher and parent attitudes, impact on the extent and quality of VET provision? To what extent is VET enhancing or extending students' career options? To what extent

are VET enrolments and outcomes constrained by traditional gender expectations?  
How are schools coping with increased demands to provide a broader range of  
curriculum and careers options?

This study will report on the factors within a school culture that influence the success  
of VET programs and facilitate effective transitions into post-secondary training,  
education and employment pathways.

# The School View

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This chapter presents the findings of data collected during fieldwork visits to twelve schools in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. During these visits, Principals, Deputy Principals, senior year-level co-ordinators, VET co-ordinators and careers teachers and careers advisors were interviewed regarding their views on the role and quality of VET programs in their schools.

Presenting the “school perspective” on VET is rather like presenting an “Australian perspective” on the republic. It depends who you ask. VET plays a variety of roles in schools and its history, profile and status vary widely from one setting to another and, indeed, from state to state. This chapter examines the role which VET plays in a selection of schools, the ways in which it is perceived and the issue of resources (human and material). It attempts to do so with careful consideration of each school’s context – state, local and historical – in order to highlight the range of issues pertaining to the delivery of VET in Schools in a diverse federal system of secondary schooling upon which are overlaid attempts to impose the consistency of a national approach to training.

## The Role of VET in Schools

The perspectives provided by teachers and Principals in these schools seem to point to vocational education and training (VET) in schools playing two main roles. These are the management of diversity and the improvement of learning. Both of these, in turn, have an effect on the school’s ability to retain students, a third and consequential role assigned to VET by school staff.

### Managing diversity

Managing diversity means, in essence, finding an appropriate location in the curriculum for every student. This is a task which can be quite different from one school to the next.

In many schools, the challenges of catering to a diverse clientele have been felt keenly. The inadequacy of the senior secondary curriculum was a recurring theme in the schools targetted for this study, as the two following statements, from New South Wales and Queensland respectively, demonstrate:

*Even with the old HSC (pre-McGaw) the subjects were suitable for only 50 per cent of our candidates. They did not want TER-band approaches....*

*The school is still orientated towards OP (university entry) even though the students are not that academic..... Education Queensland needs to look at staffing. There is no point trying to change policy or curriculum if you don't have the staff to deliver it.*

For some schools, usually the most disadvantaged, the pressure to maintain student numbers can result in the unhappy combination of a clientele with diverse needs and a

narrowly-based academic curriculum. Typically, schools which in the past were able to shed “non-academic” students and focus on the provision of a university-oriented senior secondary curriculum, now face declining student numbers (due to a maturing population or other demographic changes). Such schools find themselves faced with many students who require a broader curriculum (one which includes vocational options) but neither sufficient numbers to offer such a curriculum nor the expertise to find solutions to this problem.

One such state school, located in the suburbs of Brisbane, described these pressures thus:

*There is a huge rise in private schools too, which are taking the best students. The old academic mission was appropriate then but not now. The more able students are no longer here but the school adheres to the old mission. There is a fear that VET is a lot of work and it's scary. Principals are also trying to play down how much work is involved, rather than face what needs to be done. At the experienced VET schools, it will be easier to deal with the new AQTF guidelines. At a school which is only just starting like (this one), it will be very difficult.*

In other schools, the issue of a clientele with diverse needs was less important and, consequently, the role of VET was seen differently. In a middle-class school in Sydney's eastern suburbs, for example, there is little demand for VET in Year 12:

*There are not many VET subjects that are 2-unit and that 'count' toward UAI. So most kids will do 2 units of TAFE in Year 11 and do no VET in Year 12. Maybe ten students each year will continue with a 2-unit non-Board developed subject in Year 12 because they want to go to TAFE, not university.....*

This is a school in which VET is a useful, but hardly essential, adjunct to the academic curriculum offerings. The Principal focusses on the social benefits of the VET “experience” and sees it as “part of a wide curriculum” but does not offer a strong commitment to VET in Schools programs. The careers advisor comments that some kids see VET as “recreation”. When asked to offer a judgment on the importance of VET, staff are careful to emphasise the “life-broadening” aspects of VET study but reject any major role for VET in dealing with the broad needs of students:

*(We) do not see VET as a lifesaver for potential dropouts because it's only 2 units. It's such a small part of the curriculum that it does not really make a difference to kids who are not coping with school per se..... If kids know they have to finish school, they will finish even if they only have the academic program on the menu.*

Consideration of this particular view is useful, if only in the fact that it alerts us to the wide attitudinal differences among schools. It must be remembered that there are many schools which consider themselves well-served by the traditional university-entry curriculum. However, such views seemed to be the exception in this study. In most of the schools in our study, the consensus was that VET plays an essential role in making the curriculum inclusive of a broader range of needs. This was largely the case whether or not schools had experienced success in implementing VET programs. It was certainly the case even in various private schools and the more middle class settings encountered in the study.

## **Improving learning**

Improving learning was seen as a major benefit of VET in a number of settings. While the management of diversity was a major motivation for the introduction of VET in

schools where many students were not regarded as candidates for university entry, improved learning was nominated as a benefit more generally applicable to a range of students. At a Catholic secondary school strongly committed to VET programs, the claim was made that VET makes learning more accessible:

*Many, through doing VET, experience success for the first time and then see themselves as academically able and able to go to university. No doubt those students will be successful at university. This argues for VET in its own right at schools, not just to get into TAFE.....*

The theme of VET being an end in itself, rather than a pathway to tertiary-level VET, was not uncommon. In one large regional school, approximately one-quarter of the senior secondary population was enrolled in at least one accredited VET unit – an impressive commitment to VET by any measure. Yet, fewer than 6 per cent of Year 12 graduates from this school received a first-round offer at the local regional TAFE and only 6 per cent more received offers at other more distantly located TAFE Institutes.

In a suburban Victorian school, the point was made that VET takes the focus off narrow academic performance and invests resources in the development of work readiness and preparation for life more broadly. By building on the learning strengths of students, VET prepares young people to be successful lifelong learners. VET was also seen as building positively on prior learning:

*For students who are not academically focussed – including those defined at risk at the Year 9 and 10 levels – the move to VET styles of teaching and learning (especially the emphasis on competency-based training) can make for new experiences of learning success. This is especially the case with the strong emphasis on recognition of prior learning built into many units - some students are very heartened to find not only how much they already know but how much it is valued.*

There is also a view that students enjoy their VET learning – a point made in various settings. Assessment requirements are different and do not put students under the pressure of pass/fail arrangements. The flexibility inherent in the modular approach of much VET learning would seem to be an approach which suits many students.

A further advantage of VET mentioned in some schools was its ability to put students' thinking about careers into perspective. In one relatively conservative Catholic school, the Deputy Principal argued that all students should have access to VET and, particularly, to SWL, in order to help them appreciate the role of work and to reflect on careers.

A final point worth making here is that there is a perception that VET teaching is more accessible and attractive to students than much of the teaching which occurs in the mainstream and that VET teachers are better teachers:

*Kids love going to TAFE for social as well as other reasons. The TAFE experience is a great milieu – adult experience, good equipment, more freedom. (It) is something we push. They are better at teaching than we are.....*

What is significant in much of this commentary is a perception of VET in Schools as useful and valuable in its own right – as a means to better teaching and learning, as a way of improving student motivation and morale and as a context within which to consider future careers. The implications of this for lifelong learning are evident.

Students who become motivated to love learning (rather than seeing it as a unpleasant experience which they must terminate as quickly as possible) will be more likely to return to study or to continue their association with learning throughout their lives. Increasing the numbers of students going to TAFE is not necessarily the first priority for some schools. While this may be seen as important in some contexts, many schools show a willingness to separate the issue of VET as a tool for learning at school and the issue of VET as a desirable tertiary option. Indeed, some schools explicitly cite VET in Schools as a means for improving students' chances of entering university.

## How VET Is Seen

Views such as those expressed above suggest that changes have occurred in the way schools regard VET. Negative perceptions of VET have not disappeared, but increasingly, an acceptance of VET as an important tool in the management of diversity and as a means of improving learning has meant that objections have diminished. As our discussion in the previous section has shown, the difficult challenge of finding appropriate and relevant subjects and pathways for all students has meant that most schools have had to re-assess their curriculum offerings in general and their VET offerings in particular.

Where resistance occurs, it seems to be concentrated in those schools most insulated from the demands of diversity or in those subject departments most removed from the VET area (e.g. English, History, etc.).

For instance, in the schools with a more traditional focus on the academic curriculum (or in those where “non-academic” students are not encouraged to stay) VET is less likely to be seen as a necessary curriculum option. If the majority of students are focussed on academic pathways, there is a perception that there is little need for curriculum diversity and the incentives to tackle the hard work of implementing a major curriculum initiative such as this are simply not in evidence. However, even in these schools, there is a grudging acceptance that VET may be useful in dealing with the “problem” students – those who do not fit into the school's academic profile. It would seem that only where the needs of students are diverse and pressing does the provision of VET take on a sense of real urgency.

Within schools, the conservatism of some subject departments is most often demonstrated in resistance to timetable or curriculum changes or to the flexibility needed for aspects of VET to work successfully. For instance, if the provision of VET requires the removal or restriction of some of the more traditional subject offerings, there may be strong opposition. Similarly, the flexibility needed to accommodate structured work placements (SWL) and workplace assessment (both from the VET teacher and VET student points of view) is sometimes resented by non-VET teachers. The removal of students from a non-VET class in order to attend such activities was the commonest objection put forward by non-VET teachers.

Lack of knowledge is another issue. Many teachers are unaware of or do not understand differences in accreditation and assessment as they relate to VET. They



may be unfamiliar with the school's relationship with TAFE or unclear about students' attendance requirements at school, TAFE and the workplace.

While teacher resistance (and ignorance) continue in some circumstances, instances of innovative and strategic solutions were also in evidence. In one school where initial resistance from the academic subject departments was fierce, an advanced course in laboratory skills (Certificate III level) was developed for students whom the Principal described as "not conventionally regarded as VET candidates – that is, high achievers". This strategy had the effect of allowing the science department – a group not traditionally associated with VET – to invest in the school's VET program. In this way, the school managed to confer ownership of VET (and an interest in its success) upon a group which might have been expected to resist its implementation.

In many settings, however, objections of various kinds continued to emerge, among both parents and teachers. A history teacher in a working-class Sydney school – a school otherwise well-disposed towards VET – lamented the changes which VET was imposing and described it 'as a fad dictated from above'. In a similar school nearby, the Principal acknowledged the value of VET in dealing with diversity but expressed concern at the labelling of western suburbs schools as 'trade schools'. Elsewhere, migrant parents strongly resist VET in the school curriculum, associating it with the blue-collar occupations to which they themselves have been relegated for so long. In one predominantly Anglo-Saxon working-class suburban school, the teachers argue that their success in promoting VET is linked to the nature of their clientele:

*This school community is comprised primarily of the Australian-born working class, often with a strong trades background. They do not have the university focus of the more recently-arrived migrant communities, and are already (arguably) favourably disposed toward apprenticeships, TAFE and VET generally.*

It seems evident that the equating of VET with trades in the thinking of many people continues to be widespread. If schools portray VET as inextricably linked to the traditional trades and thus to a contracting sector of labour market activity, the introduction of VET will meet strong resistance, regardless of the socio-economic profile of the school community. It may well be that perceptions of vocational education and training in schools will never change until a broader view of VET gains acceptance in the community – one which includes the technological, artistic and commercial fields which form an intrinsic part of modern VET studies.

There are also instances of positive parent attitudes. Teachers in one Victorian school noted that attitudes to VET changed dramatically when the parents of otherwise disaffected and disruptive students found that their child had "miraculously" started to settle at school after enrolling in VET. Parents who had believed that academic pathways were the only real options found that their kids were "happy in school for the first time" after beginning a VET program. The real misfortune, claimed the staff, was that these positive views tended not to permeate into the broader school culture, but rather remained confined to the happy users themselves.

Consequently, the importance of promoting VET positively cannot be emphasised strongly enough. The role of the Principal in this respect is crucial. While other factors such as the nature of the school's clientele, school size and parent expectations

all impact on the acceptance of VET, the Principal's support (or lack of it) was highlighted in many schools as making the difference between a successful VET program and an unsuccessful one.

The point was made in one school that the development of good VET programs depends on both attitudinal change (among staff and the school community) and structural change (in the school's operation). To achieve change at both these levels, it is not enough to have a good, committed VET co-ordinator. Rather what is needed is:

*....the solid weight of leadership support and determination. The Principal needs to be wholly supportive. The VET co-ordinator alone cannot achieve these sorts of outcomes.*

The reasons for this are that administrative, funding and teaching support are unlikely to be secured without the direct intervention of the highest levels of leadership. The innovative use of grant funds, time release to allow teachers to focus on the heavy administrative demands of VET and structured workplace learning and the construction of a "team" of dedicated VET staff are all heavily dependent on the support of the Principal.

Two outer suburban schools in different states serve as an example of contrasting leadership approaches. In the first, the Principal is acutely aware of parents' conservatism regarding VET but is strongly supportive of VET programs. Despite concerns that staff are expensive to train and consequently more liable to be 'poached', the Principal actively promotes VET among teachers and parents, both verbally and with funding support. The result is a VET program which plays a central role in the curriculum.

In the second school, a timid Principal is reluctant to ask teachers to engage in the process of hard work required to establish VET programs. He is also unwilling to reduce the control exercised by the academic subject departments over resources in the school. Fearful also that parents will object to paying levies or any extra costs associated with training, VET remains starved of funds and, consequently, of any status. Staff are adamant that the lack of progress in VET has one central cause – leadership:

*(The school) has been left behind because the Principal refused to enter the competition. His conservatism on a range of fronts has meant that nothing has happened.*

## **VET and the Senior Certificate**

An issue which impacts heavily on the acceptance of VET is the relationship between VET curriculum and the senior certificate in each state. The status of VET is heavily dependent on the institutional value accorded to VET through recognition (or non-recognition) of VET subjects' contribution towards satisfying the requirements of the senior certificate and the calculation of a tertiary entrance rank.

The approaches taken by different states to these issues vary considerably and are inevitably complex – so complex in some cases that senior certificate students may be misled as to the effect of some curriculum choices on their tertiary entrance rank outcomes. This report is not the place for an analysis of the different states'

regulatory approaches. However, a number of state-specific issues were raised by schools regarding the relationship between VET and the senior certificate.

In New South Wales, a number of the survey schools (some of them strongly committed to VET) note the difficulties of promoting VET in an atmosphere driven predominantly by **academic** success and achievement. Teachers report that, because only one subject can count towards the senior certificate/ UAI, a one-line timetabling approach in most schools prevents students from doing more than one VET subject in Year 12. As a result, most students in these schools will be unable to complete sufficient modules to be awarded a VET certificate and this becomes a further factor in reducing the incentives for enrolling in VET. Furthermore, since HSC subjects may not be taken by students in Year 10, there is a barrier to access to accredited VET for younger students, many of whom are regarded as potentially benefiting from more practical and experiential approaches to learning

In Queensland, anomalies also exist. In that state, VET subjects count towards the senior certificate but it is possible to complete such subjects without assessment of the attached competencies. This was of concern to some staff who regarded this as “watering down” the VET curriculum, since the VET units would count towards the senior certificate, but, stripped of their competencies, could not be used as credits towards a VET qualification. In Queensland too, as in New South Wales, students may not enrol in VET in Schools subjects which count towards the senior certificate while they are in Year 10.

In Victoria, VET in Schools modules are available to students in any year of their secondary schooling, thus allowing them to gain “advanced standing” with regard to both their VET qualification and their senior certificate qualification. However, in the Victorian context, a different concern was raised. There was a belief among some teachers that the strong integration of VET and senior certificate had resulted in some senior certificate VET programs being too difficult for some students. While VET was seen as serving the needs of the majority of students, the demand for VET programs which also met the “standards” of mainstream VCE programs was regarded as having made these subjects inaccessible to students who struggle with traditional academic styles of learning. Recent moves to introduce study scores in VET subjects were seen as intensifying the pressure on these subjects to meet the needs of the academic curriculum rather than the needs of a broad range of learners.

## Resourcing VET in Schools

The resourcing of VET involves both the provision of adequately trained teachers and the availability of facilities appropriate for the delivery of industry-recognised training (or the ability to buy such training from an outside provider, such as TAFE). On both these fronts, schools are aware of severe shortcomings, although it must be emphasised that the nature of the problems is different in different schools and depends on factors such as their ability to charge students for services and their own ability as schools to fund VET programs.

The particular difficulty of finding (and keeping) suitably trained teachers, however, is an example of an issue which seemed to affect all sites, regardless of their level of resources. In the broader context of a worsening teacher shortage across Australia, schools reported difficulties in finding trained and accredited VET teachers. Adding a sense of crisis to the situation are the newly-implemented AQTF requirements that teachers delivering AQF-accredited content must have industry experience (minimum 40 hours) and relevant qualifications (AQF Level IV).

A range of incentives by state education departments to deal with these needs was reported. For instance, in Queensland, teacher training recruits with industry experience are given RPL which effectively takes one year off their degree training. A similar scheme operated in Victoria in the past, but now that it has been discontinued, HECS is seen as a disincentive to enter teacher training. In New South Wales, it was reported that schools with teachers wishing to gain industry experience are fully funded to release them for this purpose.

However, the vast majority of staff interviewed in this study reported continuing severe problems in this area. In Queensland, virtually every school in the study raised the issue of industry experience as an unaffordable cost associated with the provision of VET in Schools. These schools made it clear that they could not afford to release teachers for this purpose and that teachers were not willing to do so in their own time. In some cases, compromises had been reached, with schools reimbursing teachers for a proportion of their time.

In New South Wales, despite the availability of full-funded time release, many teachers were reluctant to gain accreditation because of a perception that VET-associated roles were more work-intensive than other teaching roles. There was a perception that industry visits, co-ordination of SWL and heavy assessment and reporting requirements (often to different authorities), in addition to actual teaching, put a significantly higher burden of work on VET teachers than it did on their other colleagues.

Staff know the workload in VET is huge: it involves retraining to get AQF IV, being out of the school to deal with work experience placements and the huge paper work burden -

*We actually had a Business Studies teacher who refused to update his qualifications because, if he did update, he would have to teach VET and he wanted to opt out.*

The extent of this problem may become more evident when the research team surveys teachers in a later stage of this project, but DET statistics were quoted indicating that, despite 3,500 teachers having been trained in New South Wales, only 60 per cent were working in the VET area.

In the area of facilities, the situation was somewhat more variable. The availability of adequate facilities seemed to depend largely on the school's previous history. Some old technical schools had well-resourced workshops or kitchens. One, in Melbourne's outer suburbs, retained much of its VET infrastructure and staff, and now finds that its "strong culture of technical studies" serves it well. Perceptions also depended on

the school's ambitions. One school in New South Wales, which offered little VET and had very modest ambitions to do so, declared itself satisfied with its VET facilities.

Others, which were eager to expand their offerings and had strong demand for VET, bemoaned their ageing resources or pointed to the fact that their kitchens were domestic rather than industrial quality and therefore inappropriate for the teaching of Hospitality. Again, the expense of updating aged facilities or building new ones was often weighed against the need to fund non-VET facilities (science laboratories, music facilities, etc.) and the tenor of the resulting debate would usually depend on the level of support available to VET in that school.

Also weighing into this debate were the counterbalancing costs and savings of “buying in” provision from a TAFE (or other) provider. This relatively simple solution – outsourcing VET – comes at a cost. The need for TAFE Institutes to recover costs means that charges are passed onto the school (or directly to the student). In some cases, state governments will provide funding for “taster” courses. Such funding, allocated to the TAFE, will allow the provision of a certain number of places per school in such courses. Places are usually allocated according to the level of school interest and individual schools have some discretion as to how the funding may be used. For example, a school which has been allocated funding for 12 places in a course may decide to send 24 students and charge each student 50 per cent of the costs, thus broadening access but requiring a contribution from the user.

These taster courses, however, have limited utility from the school's point of view. Usually limited to one or two modules, they serve only as an indication of what VET or TAFE can offer and may stimulate interest in VET programs. However, they have only a limited role in the provision of an integrated VET program in school. Schools requiring from TAFE a course which leads to a VET in Schools qualification (usually Certificate I or II) will normally be required to pay fees.

It is in this area that schools are very differentially placed to access such services. The first and most obvious obstacle to such access is distance. Schools located too far away from a TAFE provider face the barriers of cost and time. Time spent travelling to a TAFE location and the costs of transport (often for a very small number of students) can remove this option from consideration, as one school in a regional location noted:

*The school cannot access TAFE, as it is too far away (45 minutes by bus). There is no point TAFE telling us they should teach all the VET (rather than us teaching it) because they cannot guarantee a course from one year to another. And it is too expensive and too time-consuming to travel there...*

Another barrier is the cost of courses. Again, this impacts differently on different schools. A number of private schools in our study made it clear that the costs of VET, which were additional to the fees students paid, were passed on directly to students. In this way, the outsourcing of VET was cost neutral to the school. Similarly, in some government schools, it was felt appropriate to charge these costs to the students on a user-pays basis. In other schools, some contribution might be put forward from the school from within its global budget, but such occurrences were rare.

In the case of one resource-poor school in Queensland, the costs of VET were such that the school was at risk of losing even the limited VET programs it had. In this school, individual students could not afford to pay any fees which TAFE charged due to their economic circumstances and the school could not subsidise them. The school was not even able to fund the organisation of structured workplace training places through the local ECEF provider –

*(SWL broker named) has a monopoly. You can't get an SWL placement except through them. Kids can't pay and the school can't pay. Fundraising is not allowed by the Principal and therefore nothing happens.*

In this same school, the issue of AQTF compliance in relation to accreditation of teachers for delivering VET internally and the unaffordable costs of delivering VET externally had combined to make the provision of a viable VET program virtually impossible. Unable to afford time-release for its own teachers to be trained and accredited and unable to meet AQTF compliance, it was also unable to afford to “buy in” VET delivery from TAFE:

*AQTF compliance doesn't understand school needs. Compliance runs on the financial year, yet courses run from February to December. We have students enrolled in courses for next year, yet our compliance registration runs out in July. This is really designed to push secondary schools out of VET. They are trying to push them into RTOs and TAFE, but is this too expensive for (us). We are also too far away from a TAFE to get students there and we can't afford to bus them. (We are) more at risk of dropping out of VET than other schools – and (we) don't have much to begin with.*

In contrast to this situation, a neighbouring state school was able to offer a broad VET program and was funding an industry liaison officer to find and co-ordinate work placements for students. In this case, the school had taken a decision to offer only those VET courses which it could provide as the Registered Training Organisation – a considerable range thanks to the school's size and its excellent facilities. Its dependence on TAFE was thereby reduced, as were any problems associated with funding externally-sourced courses.

A similar story emerged in another state, where the luxury of 1100 students (and innovative timetabling) in one school made VET programs not only affordable but, in some cases, profitable:

*There is virtue in numbers. Without this you are at the mercy of TAFE. Unless you get a class of 15 you don't run a course. This number allows the school to buy in the resources it needs and offer the subjects to students at a “mainstream cost” – that is, effectively no more than any other subject area. Students are not penalised by a VET focus; it is accessible. This would not be possible with lower numbers. Anything larger than 15, on the other hand, becomes a nice little earner and some larger subjects work to cross-subsidise new or emerging courses where numbers have not yet firmed up. Parents are very happy with this cost-neutrality policy and it makes for considerable continuity in planning .....(Principal).*

Size confers other strengths too, including the ability to hire or use staff flexibly. One school had the luxury of not having to depend on external providers to organise SWL programs for its students. Rather it had funded an industry liaison officer for this purpose – a woman with considerable experience in the local tourism and hospitality industry. In effect, her role had become broader than this and she was the person to whom students now turned for advice regarding TAFE courses, apprenticeships, traineeships and employment (rather than the Guidance Officer). This position was

funded by the school, outside entitlement, a decision made possible by the school's size (2000 students) and consequently greater flexibility in allocation of funds. The decision was also based on a recognition of the need to employ an appropriately qualified person for a job requiring special expertise:

*Teachers cannot do industry liaison part-time. Ring an employer and they ring you back when you're in class. If a teacher is going to do it, they need to be full-time. You can't do Guidance Officer and industry liaison together. It is an advantage for someone (like me) who has industry experience and links to employers and the community.*

## The Relationship with TAFE

We have seen already the dilemmas schools face in funding the provision of VET. Given the role that TAFE Institutes play in much of that provision, it is no surprise then that resource issues dominate the relationship with TAFE. It is not, however, the only difficulty identified by schools in their dealing with TAFE.

The cost issue was described succinctly by the VET co-ordinator in one Victorian school:

*Courses are presented on a user-pays basis. Costs are: \$425 for office-admin, \$400 for hospitality and \$375 for sport-rec. These are major imposts, and it comes as no surprise that numbers are low – generally under 10 for VET when mainstream classes are usually in the order of 26.*

While TAFE insists, with justification, on cost recovery, schools are differently placed in their ability to pay for courses or to charge their students for these costs. The school quoted above has a large student population, but a comparatively low level of commitment to VET. With little support for VET and a questionable choice of programs on offer, it faces difficulties attracting sufficient numbers of clients to offer VET economically.

In another setting, the relationship has taken on a sharp business edge. This can be seen in the dealings between a large school wholly committed to VET programs and two neighbouring TAFE Institutes in the outer suburbs of a large capital city. Its relationship with the geographically nearer of the two TAFEs, with which it has not been able to reach a satisfactory arrangement for the delivery of courses, is virtually nil. Instead it enjoys a "strong and mutually rewarding" relationship with the other (geographically more distant) TAFE Institute, with which it has been able to negotiate on costs, methods of delivery and issues such as RPL:

*With some TAFEs, it's very much a matter of having to take what they dish up: we won't stand for that. You need to have good skills in negotiating the best possible deal. Some schools don't have that relationship and express despair at the attitude of their local TAFE.... Sometimes I feel I would love to get in there and negotiate on those schools' behalf .....(Principal).*

The school approaches its negotiations with the TAFE sector with confidence and from a position of strength. The large numbers of students doing VET in the school make it an attractive client to a potential provider. The school has had no hesitation in "shopping around" for the most attractive deal or package. In this school, a decision was taken to work with one TAFE to achieve volume and scale for optimum delivery

and economies of scale. This allows the school to maintain a cost-neutral delivery, both from the students' and from the school's point of view.

Having noted this example, another large school with considerable "buying power" described itself as being locked into a relationship with a single TAFE provider because its regional setting precluded any relationship being set up with any other TAFE Institutes. There is a strong sense in the school that the TAFE Institute is exploiting its monopoly position and is unprepared to negotiate on details of cost or in flexibility of provision. In this particular case, the school has turned to a private provider for the delivery of some programs. In addition, it is expanding the range of programs it can deliver itself, to the extent that the school is auspicing VET programs in other schools, which have encountered similar problems with the one and only TAFE in the area.

Issues other than cost also influence the school-TAFE relationship. Perhaps the most important is the TAFE's ability to deal with a school-age clientele. Schools want a TAFE that is "committed to kids – that is important, that in the first instance they are committed not to me, or even to the school, but to the kids". In many cases, schools have the view that TAFE does not understand the needs of students. Examples are given of TAFE teachers "lecturing" for an hour, with no opportunities for questions, feedback or interaction. In another case, a practical work session of 3-6 hours followed by an assessment was cited as a case of a particularly unsuitable approach for school-aged students. Schools are also concerned about inflexible approaches to timetabling, which may cause problems both from a learning point of view and at the school organisational level:

*TAFE teachers don't understand the needs of kids. They make no accommodation for kids' learning styles, the point where they start from or, importantly, the "duty of care" which a secondary school teacher undertakes as a given in framing the relationship with students. There is a tendency to organise program provision to suit the provider rather than the participant – e.g. non-negotiability on timetabling, chunking big blocks of learning (3 or 6 hours straight, for example) and then testing for competency, rather than organising learning into more manageable units to meet students' needs.*

Complaints are also made about the inaccessibility of TAFE staff, poor communication and inefficient systems of assessment or accreditation. In one case, it was claimed that the schools had not been given the costings for courses until after the school term had begun. There is evidence of TAFE Institutes providing briefings for students interested in going on to tertiary VET and schools are certainly willing to make available any literature which the TAFE distributes to them. However, there is no evidence of co-ordinated careers or guidance programs which involve both TAFEs and schools.

Again, the nature of any given TAFE-school relationship seems to depend heavily on the players involved. Schools with a stronger commitment to VET and some experience in dealing with the TAFE sector are better able to negotiate and maintain a relationship which is mutually beneficial to the two parties. TAFE Institutes with some experience in dealing with schools seem better able and prepared to offer services sensitive to the needs of school-aged clients.



## Summary

Many factors affect the ability of schools to offer good VET programs. Some are internal and involve physical and cultural resources. Others involve the relationship with the TAFE sector. In general, the following characteristics seemed to be associated with sites which were able to offer more comprehensive VET programs:

- High enrolments
- Ability to offer courses on a cost-neutral basis or to charge students for courses
- Pro-active Principal
- A view of VET as improving learning
- Positive, modern view of VET
- Proximity to a TAFE
- Good relationship with TAFE.

What also emerges from the fieldwork in schools is a view of considerable change in attitudes to VET. Most teachers and school Principals see a role for VET, even if in some cases it is only in the management of student diversity. Often, VET is credited with changing students' views of learning, motivating them and giving them the opportunity to enjoy the learning experience, with clear lifelong learning implications. Barriers to the implementation of VET seem more likely to be in the form of financial and institutional barriers, rather than teacher resistance. The following chapters examine the views of teachers and students more closely to investigate these changes in attitudes.

# The TAFE View

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*“There’s a blurring of the line between TAFE and schools”*

This section draws on the data presented in the three reports commissioned from the TAFE research partners – Sydney Institute of TAFE, Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE and Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE - and is also informed by fieldwork carried out in these and three other TAFE Institutes located in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. It presents a TAFE perspective on the relationship with schools and on the role of TAFE in dealing with school-aged students.

## **TAFE’s Role in Relation to Early School Leavers**

The respondents in this study unanimously agreed that TAFE Institutes had an important role to play in catering for the needs of early school leavers. In one large suburban TAFE, this role was portrayed as a public responsibility and a social justice issue. In another setting, TAFE was described as a safety net for this group. Another described itself as ‘a public provider that provides second-chance opportunities for early school leavers’.

These assertions were backed by the argument that TAFE was a more appropriate environment than schools for some groups of early leavers. It was argued that this might be because the adult environment of the TAFE was better suited to some students or it might be because the training options in TAFE were better suited to the students’ needs. There was a strongly expressed view that some schools “don’t have the style of teaching to deal with them. They alienate them”.

Supporting this view that TAFE has a role to play for early school leavers, all of the TAFE respondents were able to outline this role in the context of a strategic plan, and all gave evidence of strenuous efforts to develop relationships with local schools. “VET in Schools co-ordinator” and “schools-liaison officer” are titles of positions commonly found in TAFE now and, although the relationships with different schools may be somewhat uneven, a cross-sectoral view of the needs of young people seems to be slowly developing in TAFE Institutes.

Accompanying this are strong arguments for TAFE to be fully funded (as schools are) to cater for this group. This was a recurring theme – one which put forward the view that, if TAFE were to be expected to deal with early leavers of school age, then it should be funded at the same level as schools were for the same clientele.

However, despite this clear commitment to early school leavers generally, specific roles were defined somewhat differently at different sites and specific concerns were also raised. These may be categorised as follows:

- TAFE may not be appropriate for all early leavers, especially the very young ones (13 and 14 year-olds). TAFE Institutes differ in the age groups and year levels they target or regard as appropriate clients.
- The range of programs available to TAFE Institutes to cater for this group has narrowed in recent years. There are differences between Institutes in perception of the adequacy of their offerings.
- TAFE staff do not necessarily have the experience to deal with this group, especially with those at the younger end of the age spectrum.
- TAFE is not adequately funded to deal with this group.

The first of these points was the most often raised. Reflecting a view common in schools, TAFE is happy to acknowledge that it is not an environment suitable for very young students. As adult learning facilities, TAFE Institutes cannot always offer relevant pastoral care, appropriate levels of supervision of minors and a classroom environment designed for adolescents. All of these services for this specialist group, should they be provided, would involve considerable additional expense, since they do not form part of normal TAFE activities. Their provision is further complicated by the increasing levels of “casualisation” among TAFE staff. Sessional lecturers cannot be expected to show the same commitment to student needs outside the classroom which full-time teachers in a school setting can.

Even for the “older” early school leavers, 15 and 16 year-olds, the provision of adequate services and facilities was regarded as potentially difficult. Classrooms without “youth friendly” displays and posters and in which noise or boisterous behaviour might be disruptive to neighbouring classes were mentioned as examples of such difficulties. Safety, “duty of care” to minors and issues such as smoking were also raised. On a number of sites, this problem was addressed, at least partially, through the provision of special courses on separate campuses or in isolated sites on campus, thus allowing the development of an atmosphere better suited to younger clients.

With regard to the youngest early school leavers, a common view was that TAFE should not be dealing with this group at all. For many respondents, the perception was that 15 should be the minimum entry age to TAFE. It was not deemed appropriate for 13 and 14 year-olds to be attending TAFE. In particular, the placement of very young teenagers among adults and in classrooms designed for adults was regarded as a potential problem.

However, some exceptions to this view should be noted. In one urban TAFE Institute, a Youth Program for these very young school leavers has been established to deal with particularly difficult cases. However, this program is not actively promoted either in the schools, in the TAFE or in the community, in order to avoid any perception of it as an easy alternative to school. Officially, the message from the TAFE Institute to students is couched in terms like “The best thing is to stay at school”. Students are

only referred when it is clear that they cannot cope, in academic or social terms, in a school environment.

In another TAFE Institute, a Youth Centre caters for a similarly young clientele. Many are referred by schools. Some have been expelled or are ex-offenders who “just turn up” and ask to enrol in a course. In this particular TAFE, however, the “aim is to get them back into school”. The TAFE is all too aware that it is not the ideal setting for such a young clientele and views its role as supporting or complementing the school system, rather than replacing it. The approach here is to “embed TAFE delivery within the community” and to see TAFE’s role as part of a broader strategy to deal with the needs of young people.

There are, evidently, inconsistencies inherent in the TAFE view of early school leavers – inconsistencies which TAFE itself acknowledges. TAFE sees the inadequacies of the school system in catering for this group and outlines a case for the important role it can play in dealing with these students – a case also predicated upon its own commitment to social justice and equity. At the same time, it acknowledges the challenges of dealing with this clientele and its own shortcomings in the area. Differentially placed to address these shortcomings, individual TAFE Institutes are taking a range of stances with regard to early school leavers. For some, very young school leavers are excluded from their target clientele. For others, this is a group which must be included if schools have failed to cater for it.

The second reservation regarding early leavers related to the provision of appropriate programs, and again there are differences in the approaches taken by individual TAFE Institutes. As one TAFE manager puts it, the problem is clear but the solution less so:

*What you’re essentially dealing with is the concept of bridging.....from what their current knowledge is to some level where they’re capable of doing some sort of vocational course to get skills and get a job. I’ve never been totally satisfied with the products we offer in this area.....*

Literacy and numeracy issues were paramount in the discussion of appropriate courses for these students. The CGEA (Certificate in General Education for Adults Level 1) was regarded as particularly strong in this respect, with its emphasis on literacy and numeracy modules. However, the point was also made that some students do not necessarily need such programs, but rather need to be steered either into a “taster” vocational course which makes them aware of the range of VET options which are available or into a specific vocational area at a very basic level (pre-Certificate I).

A number of respondents made the point that pre-vocational courses, of the kind commonly offered in TAFE in the past, have now been largely abandoned. In the context of the AQF, such courses involved competencies below the level of Certificate I and therefore could no longer be accommodated, despite a continuing need for them:

*And that’s the dilemma: we have to offer accredited training and we can only go with what’s around. So it’s kind of like there’s still a gap at that lower level.*

An exception was highlighted in New South Wales, where the pre-vocational course in Printing was described as a useful opportunity for young people who leave school very early (i.e. in Year 10).

An alternative to accredited VET courses and the senior school certificate was also proposed. This involved the formation of partnerships between TAFE and schools to assess the needs of these students in collaboration and to provide negotiated services in tandem. The increasing number of TAFE Institutes providing a dedicated liaison person to work with schools is evidence that such collaborations may become possible in the future. Taking this concept one step further, one TAFE's initiative to develop a TAFE-based senior college (Years 11 and 12) were also put forward as a means of developing an appropriate learning environment for this clientele of young people.

The third concern raised by staff was the provision of adequate training to deal with these younger students. One respondent highlighted the inexperience of TAFE teachers in dealing with younger clients (a point also made by some school staff). Another made the point that most TAFE lecturers are not trained to teach, in the sense that primary school teachers are.

Finally, it was argued that TAFE is not funded adequately to deal with this new clientele, either in terms of offering adequate facilities and services, in developing appropriate courses, or in training staff to deal with younger students. From the TAFE's perspective, the younger clients are much more resource-intensive than adults and most enrol in full courses rather than individual modules. There was a perception that the funding of school-aged students in TAFE must reflect the levels at which they are funded in schools.

## **TAFE and VET in Schools Provision**

TAFE staff are willing, in principle, to endorse the concept of schools delivering VET. The value of schools providing young people with an introduction to vocational training is not disputed and VET in Schools programs are seen as effective in providing a "taster" of the options available in training. However, with the possible exceptions of IT and office administration courses, schools are not judged to be capable of delivering accredited vocational training.

Concerns with the quality of what schools do in the VET area are consistently expressed in TAFE. Chief among these concerns is the ability of teachers to deliver vocational competencies. The following comments are illustrative:

*What they've created now is a hybrid system where they are pretending that high school teachers with a general education and who have lived in high schools all their life, are capable of delivering vocational competencies after completing a few hours of some course related to 'train the trainer' or the Certificate IV with a 'top-up' from a degree to a Certificate IV of Workplace Assessment and Training....*

These concerns extend to facilities in schools, including the Occupational Health and Safety conditions in school workshops, and the issue of access. Whether VET was becoming the prerogative of only the more able students and whether schools were the appropriate venue for teaching skills relating to the adult world of work were two of the concerns raised relating to access.

TAFE staff were particularly concerned that the accreditation of poor quality training in schools would mean students that enter TAFE without the competencies implied by their school-delivered qualifications. There was also a view put forward that such poor quality training would have a negative impact on the way industry viewed VET qualifications:

*And the problem for us is that their (school teachers') misinterpretation of the standards within competencies produces for us a whole range of training that we have to recognise but we know is largely second rate. Industry knows it's second rate, every TAFE Institution in the country knows it's second rate. The only people who don't know it's second rate are the high schools and apparently our political masters. Now eventually you know what's going to hit the fan, and industry's going to be up in arms about the watering down of the standards of training in their industry training areas.*

The alternative to school delivery of VET courses is, of course, TAFE delivery, but this creates its own problems and is perhaps the greatest single source of friction between TAFE Institutes and schools. One of the strongest incentives for schools to persist with school-level delivery would, indeed, seem to be the administrative and financial problems created by the “purchase” of delivery from TAFE, whether this involves students attending a course at TAFE or bringing TAFE staff into schools.

The school perspective, well documented in the last chapter, is that the purchase of TAFE delivery involves considerable expense to the school or to the student, expense which is not fully covered by the school's operating grant. The TAFE perspective is no less reasonable. TAFE Institutes are required to recover their costs. With the exception of special taster courses, funded by some states in order to market VET courses to school students, TAFE Institutes are not funded to deliver training to these students. Schools, unused to the “commercial and contractual realities” of VET, are consequently critical of TAFE's business-like attitude to recovering its costs. There is also a perception, in both sectors, that there is competition for the limited resources associated with student enrolments.

One TAFE Institute noted that schools are reluctant to allow their students to enrol in TAFE courses while at school because of the threat this poses to their funding and staffing entitlements. Moreover, Board of Studies regulations in some states which prevent students from enrolling in VET before Year 11 place a further barrier between schools and the VET sector. Any VET courses completed by these younger students while at school cannot be counted towards fulfilment of the senior certificate and this presents a strong disincentive to enrol in VET for students who may stand to benefit greatly from VET courses in Year 10.

In the context of the concerns raised here, it is no surprise that TAFE Institutes are reluctant to endorse the view that VET in Schools is meeting the needs of young people. There is a view that schools do not fully cater for the needs of their clientele, either in their general courses, which do not meet the needs of the weaker students or in their VET delivery, which is perceived as being poor in quality and as increasingly less accessible to the academically weaker students. Schools need to “employ people similar to the way TAFE does”, with the emphasis on relevant and recent industry experience. There is also a view that needless and inefficient duplication of resources

is occurring, with schools trying (ineffectively) to imitate what TAFE is already doing:

*Jones High School is a small inner city school located within 15 minutes walking distance of (our) Institute. The school recently submitted an application for a grant of \$400,000 to develop a VET Centre with new facilities being developed in IT, Business, Tourism and Hospitality, and Retail. At the same time, (our) Institute has embarked on a \$48 million building construction and refurbishment program that includes these vocational areas. Suggestions that the same set of facilities be used for both VET in Schools and mainstream TAFE students are not accepted.*

In reality, a process of accommodation seems to be occurring. While the nature and level of school-based resources will, to a large extent, determine what any individual school can offer in the way of VET programs, a broader pattern seems to be emerging. This is a pattern in which a narrow range of industry areas are becoming the ‘domain’ of school-based providers while TAFE is increasingly relied upon to deliver the remainder:

*A model seems to be emerging where secondary schools have the human and physical resources to deliver Business, Information Technology, and Tourism and Hospitality programs, but rely on TAFE Institutes to deliver programs that are more resource intensive (TAFE respondent).*

## **TAFE and School Completers**

If the role TAFE plays for school students is fraught with difficulties, then its *role vis a vis* school completers may be described as fraught with uncertainties.

While TAFE continues to make efforts to market its courses to school completers, students continue to make university their first choice. Where students are able to apply for their course through a university admissions committee (as in Victoria or New South Wales), many students reject their offer of a place in TAFE. Careers teachers continue to talk about TAFE as a second-chance option and promote it as a fall-back position, should a student’s attempts to get into university fail.

TAFE expends considerable effort marketing its courses to school completers, but acknowledges that school students largely ignore their promotional material. TAFE wants school students (and their teachers, careers counsellors and parents) to take TAFE as post-schooling option more seriously, but where entry through a university admissions committee is possible (as in Victoria) concludes that this is not a good way for students to apply for entry. The argument here is that TAFE courses, lined up against the university offerings, will always be placed lower on a list of preferences. As the role of TAFE is changing, from a traditional provider of trade courses to a diverse provider of training ranging from basic literacy to technician-level diplomas, so too it seems that there is a need for public perceptions of TAFE to change.

Our TAFE respondents, however, also acknowledge the change that has occurred in schools as a result of changing clienteles and the development of VET in Schools programs. While some schools are perceived as stubbornly conservative and reluctant to provide students with advice about TAFE, there is also acknowledgment of positive developments – “There is still a perception that TAFE is a ‘second choice’ option but this is not as strong as it was, say, five years ago”. Another TAFE cites

the rapid growth in the numbers of VET in Schools students enrolled there as evidence of a fundamental change in attitudes to VET:

*The status of TAFE is certainly improving which is clearly evident through the increased offering of TAFE programs through VET (Vocational Education and Training) in schools. Since the inception of VET in schools at (our) TAFE in 1996, the number of VET students has jumped from 40 in 1996 to 3,128 currently in 2001.*

## Summary

The views of TAFE staff regarding the main aspects of the relationship with schools and with a school-aged clientele may be summarised as follows:

### TAFE and early leavers

- TAFE Institutes differ in the roles they play for early leavers. Very young early leavers (13 and 14 year-olds) are not regarded as suited to most TAFE environments.
- There is a perception that the range of programs available to TAFE Institutes to cater for early leavers has narrowed in recent years.
- TAFE staff question whether they have the experience and resources to deal adequately with the needs of this group.

### TAFE and VET in Schools

- TAFE questions the quality of much of the training offered in VET in Schools courses. The lack of adequately trained and experienced staff is seen as a major problem.
- There is a perception that TAFE and schools are carving out niches in the training market, whereby schools provide the kinds of courses their facilities and staff profile will allow, while TAFE provides training which schools cannot offer from within their own resources.
- Better co-operation between the VET sector and the schools sector is needed to avoid wasteful duplication of resources.

### TAFE and school completers

- There seems to be a greater acceptance in schools of TAFE as a legitimate post-schooling option, although resistance in some schools continues.
- There is a perception that many school leavers continue to reject places offered in TAFE courses.
- Application for a TAFE place through a tertiary admissions committee does not suit all TAFE applicants.



The data presented here support the view expounded in the previous chapter that there has been some cultural change in schools. The TAFE staff acknowledge this and, although there are still concerns about how schools view TAFE, it is financial and institutional barriers which seem to have emerged as the main sources of tension between schools and TAFE.

These tensions require further investigation from the student's point of view. Ultimately, it is the student, whether located in a school or in a TAFE, who must be the focus of policy. It is the student as client whose best interests must be determined in the provision of accessible and suitable options, whether these be located in one sector or the other (or in both). The following chapters seek to provide this client perspective through an investigation of student needs, attitudes and aspirations and by means of an analysis of their post-schooling destinations.

# The Teacher View

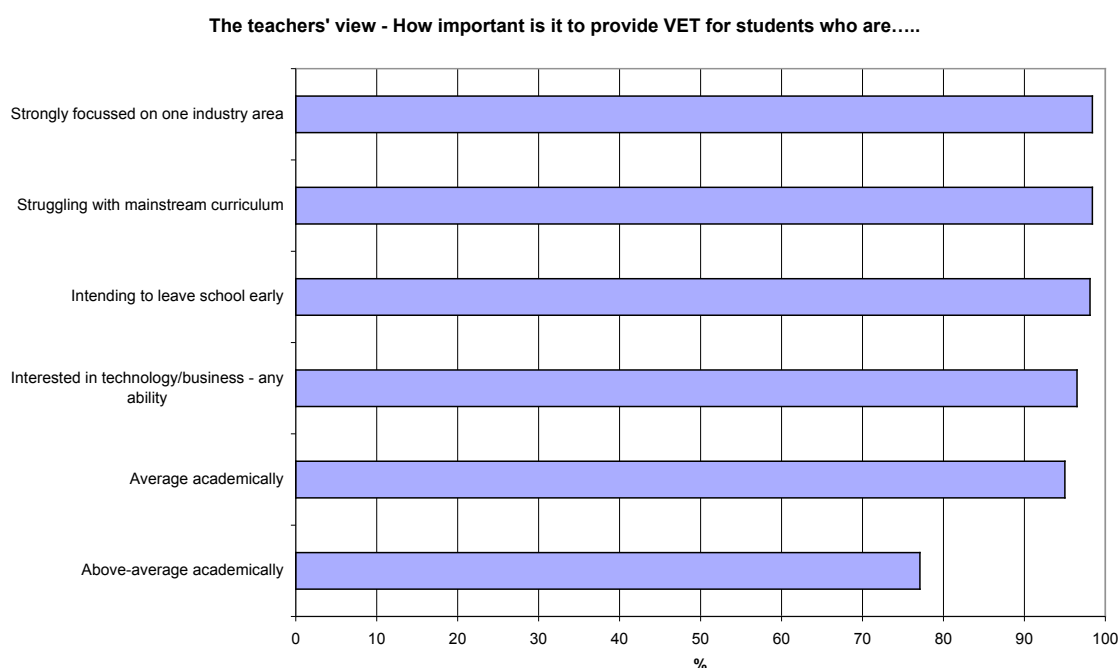
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This chapter is based on teacher survey data collected as part of a survey of teachers conducted in September-October 2002. It presents data aggregated across the schools and also data broken out by category of teacher (VET teachers/non-VET teachers) and data broken out by category of school (strong VET / limited VET). The rationale for the latter measure is outlined in the methodology section. *This chapter is based on data provided by 10 of the 12 schools; it will be updated when the remaining two schools return their survey forms.*

## How Teachers See the Role of VET in Schools

A previous chapter in this report, presenting the views of school staff on VET, identified the management of diversity and the improvement of learning as two of the principal potential benefits of VET in Schools. These views are strongly confirmed by the survey data. The teachers acknowledged the importance of VET in dealing with the diverse clientele they teach (see Figure 1). Virtually the entire sample of teachers who were surveyed agreed that students struggling with the mainstream curriculum and those intending to leave school early need VET programs. Similarly high proportions of teachers saw the value of VET for students who are interested in technology or business, *regardless of their ability*, and for students who are only average academically.

**Figure 1 Teacher views of role of VET in Schools**

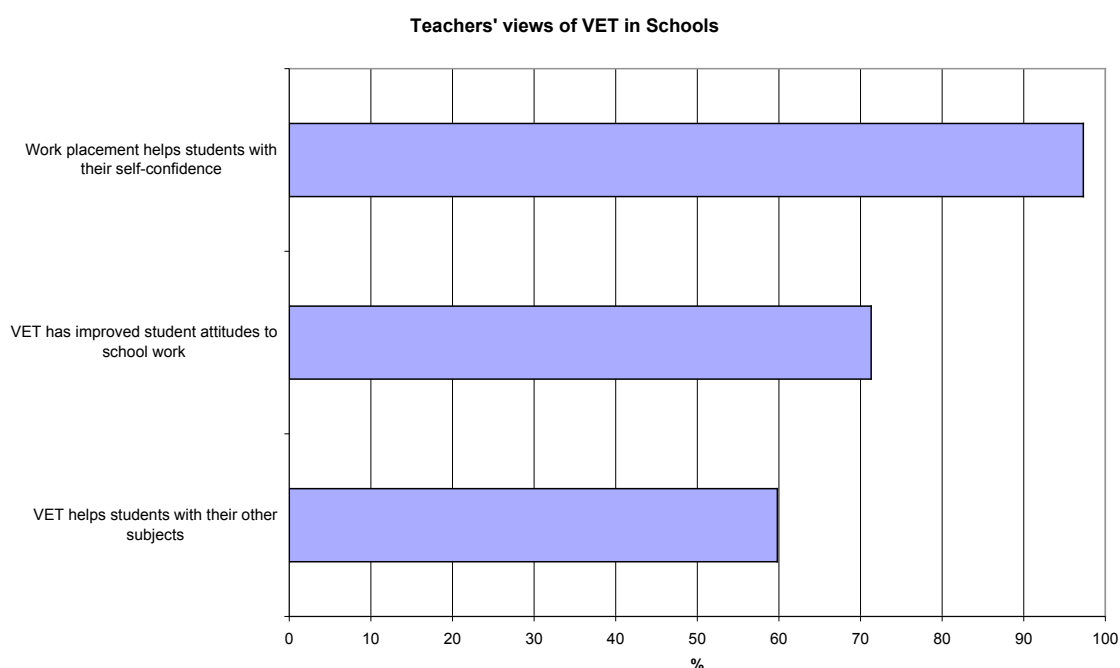


It is particularly noteworthy that in this sample of teachers, most of whom are not involved in VET, over three-quarters felt that vocational education and training is important even for those students who are above average academically.

An examination of teachers' views of the role of VET in Schools in improving learning yields somewhat more mixed results (see Figure 2). Certainly, the work placement component was viewed very positively. Most teachers were willing to endorse the view that work placement increases the self-confidence of students. Furthermore, over seven in ten teachers believed that VET has improved students' attitudes to their school work. These morale-related effects of VET are important in the context of the literature on disaffection and alienation from schooling.

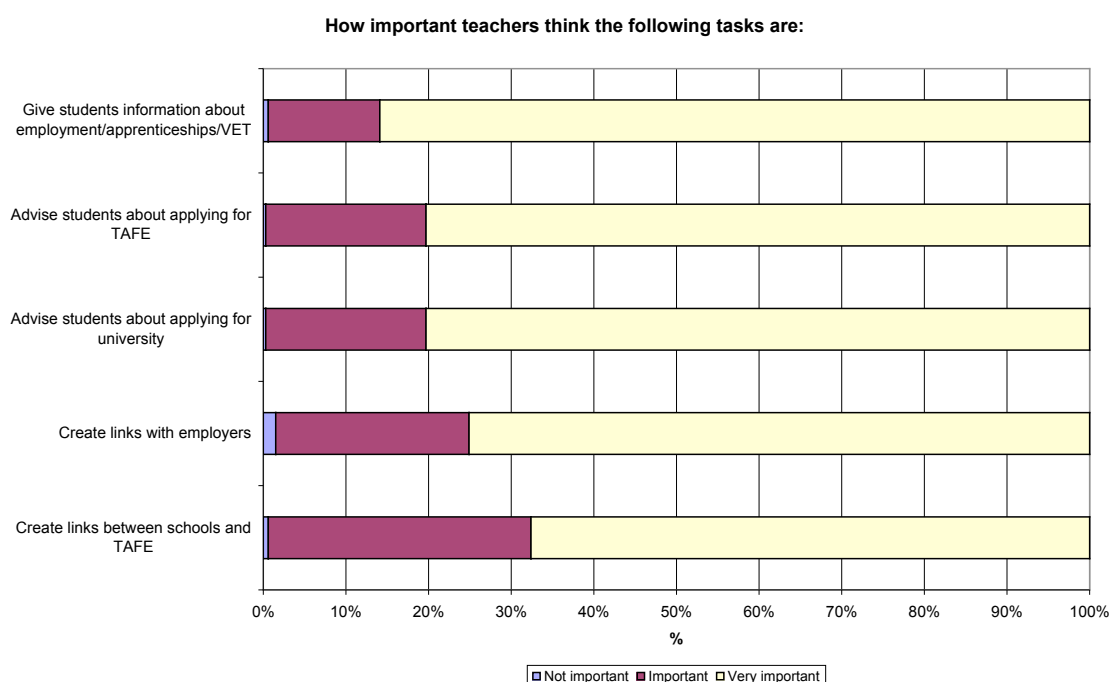
Teachers views of the direct benefits of VET with regard to other subjects were not so unequivocal. However, even on this measure, six in ten teachers were willing to endorse the view that VET helps students with their other subjects.

**Figure 2 Teacher views of VET in Schools**



These predominantly positive views of the role of VET were not confined to the VET in Schools program only. Teachers presented as remarkably open to the importance of giving students information about non-university options and to creating links with TAFE and the world of work (see Figure 3). All items in this chart attracted nearly one hundred per cent of teachers' support as important or very important. In fact, teachers were more likely to describe as "very important" the provision of information regarding employment, apprenticeships and VET than the provision of advice regarding university applications. And TAFE advice and university advice rated equally in teachers' views of their relative importance. However, it must be pointed out that there was a difference between the level of "very high" endorsement given to items relating to advice and those relating to establishing links. This would seem to indicate that teachers are more comfortable with their role as providers of information than their role in broking or liaising with parties outside the school. This may be due to the more time and resource intensive nature of such tasks and is certainly indicative of the additional requirements placed on teachers working in the field of VET.

**Figure 3 Teacher views of careers advice**

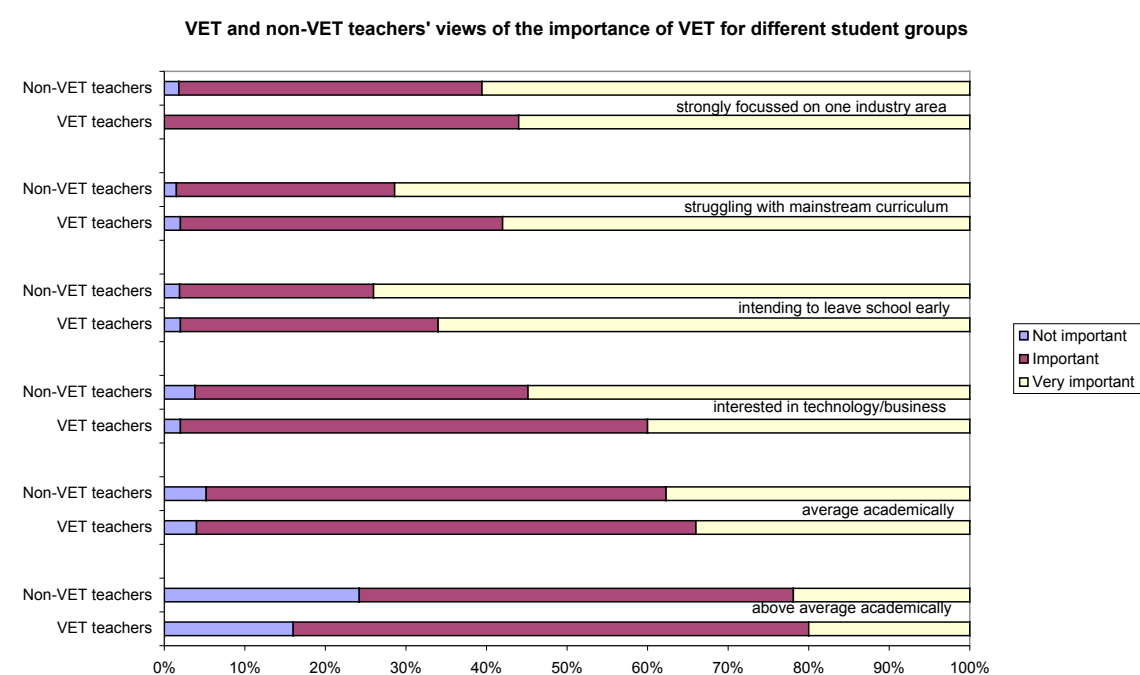


What is remarkable about these findings is the overall high level of endorsement of VET evident in teachers' views. Having said this, there were some differences in emphasis between VET teachers and "mainstream" teachers, although these were more a matter of degree rather than substantially different opinion. Figure 4 illustrates where these differences in emphasis occur. When asked to comment on the importance of providing VET for different student groups, VET and non-VET teachers differed significantly only in their views of the appropriateness of VET for above-average students. But there were also some differences in the level of importance attached to VET for other groups.

For example, it was the non-VET teachers who were most likely to view VET as "very important" for students struggling with the mainstream curriculum, for students intending to leave school early and for students interested in technology or business or interested in a particular industry area. They were more likely to endorse VET even for students who are average academically. On the other hand, non-VET teachers were the group least likely to see VET as "very important" for above-average students, and nearly one-quarter of these teachers described it as "not important" (compared with only 16 per cent of VET teachers).

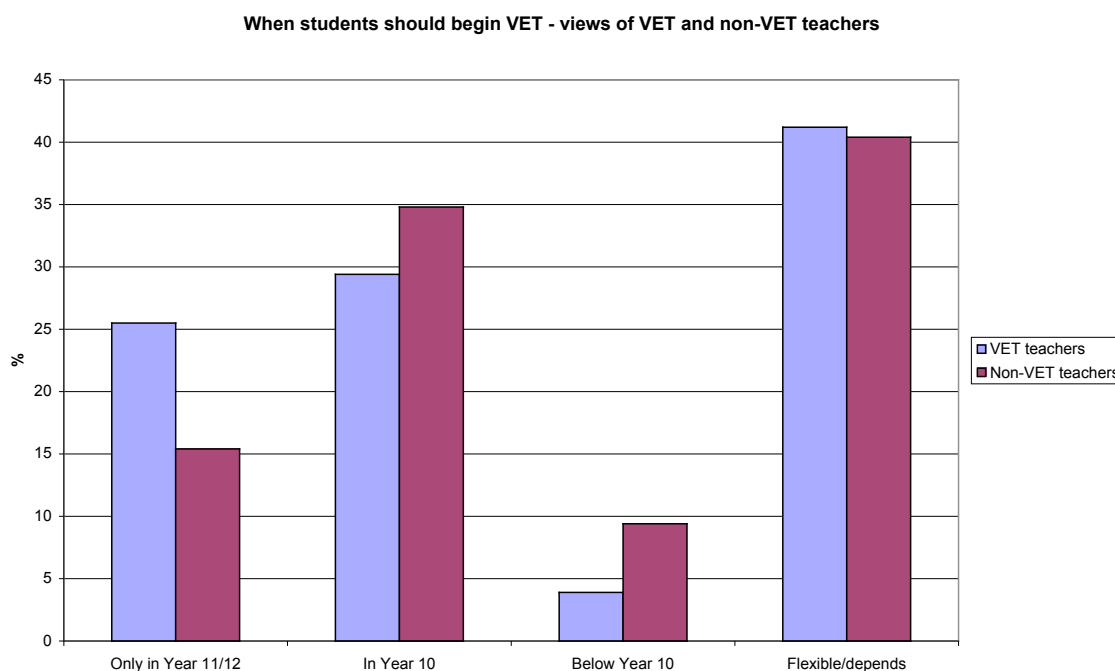
What this chart seems to illustrate is a greater likelihood on the part of these non-VET teachers to see VET as a tool for managing students who are academically weaker or who are inclined to non-academic pathways. For such students, they are even stronger advocates of VET in Schools than are the VET teachers themselves. However, while most will acknowledge the importance of VET for above-average students, they are less likely to do so than VET teachers. This seems to indicate some residual resistance among teachers to VET as an important option for *all* students, regardless of the students' ability.

**Figure 4 Teacher views of the importance of VET for different groups**



Supporting this argument are the data on teachers' views of when students should begin their VET studies. Non-VET teachers were most likely to advocate that students begin their VET studies in Year 10 or even earlier, and while this view also attracted support from some VET teachers, the VET teachers were much more likely than their non-VET colleagues to argue for VET to be restricted to the senior certificate years (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5 Teacher views of when students should begin VET in Schools**



The debate over the balance between general and vocational education in schools is a long-standing one (see, for example Blunden 1996, Hickox 1995, Edwards et al. 1992). The need to avoid channelling students into vocational options which preclude access to university and which deny facilitated access between general and vocational programs has also been raised in various fora (OECD 1996, Sweet 2000, Polesel 2001). The views of the mainstream teachers presented above must be considered in the context of these debates. It is evident that some mainstream teachers would support an argument that VET should be a substitute for mainstream programs, even at year levels where the curriculum is not usually differentiated (i.e. Year 10 and below). It is possible that this reflects a view that management of diversity is best addressed by a form of “streaming”, channelling those students not oriented to the academic curriculum into alternative (vocational) pathways.

However, if such an approach were to lead to a narrowing of the pathways open to such students or if it were to substitute narrowly vocational competencies for the broad range of general competencies required by all young people, then it is possible that VET in Schools would be creating as many problems as it solves. Certainly, these VET in Schools teachers seemed to understand this in their greater reluctance to endorse vocational studies for students in the younger age brackets.

Nevertheless, it is also important not to stereotype the mainstream teachers as narrowly concerned with partitioning off the non-academic students into vocational pathways from an early age. Both groups of teachers acknowledged the diversity of their clienteles and both groups of teachers argued that the level at which VET is introduced should be flexible and dependent on the student’s needs (over four in ten teachers in each category have chosen this option). And even among the VET teachers, there was some support for introducing VET to younger age groups. What

is crucial is the nature of that support, the pathways it creates (or closes), its relationship to the program of general studies – does it rule out a pathway to university studies? – and the qualifications framework (both senior certificate and VET accreditation) within which it occurs.

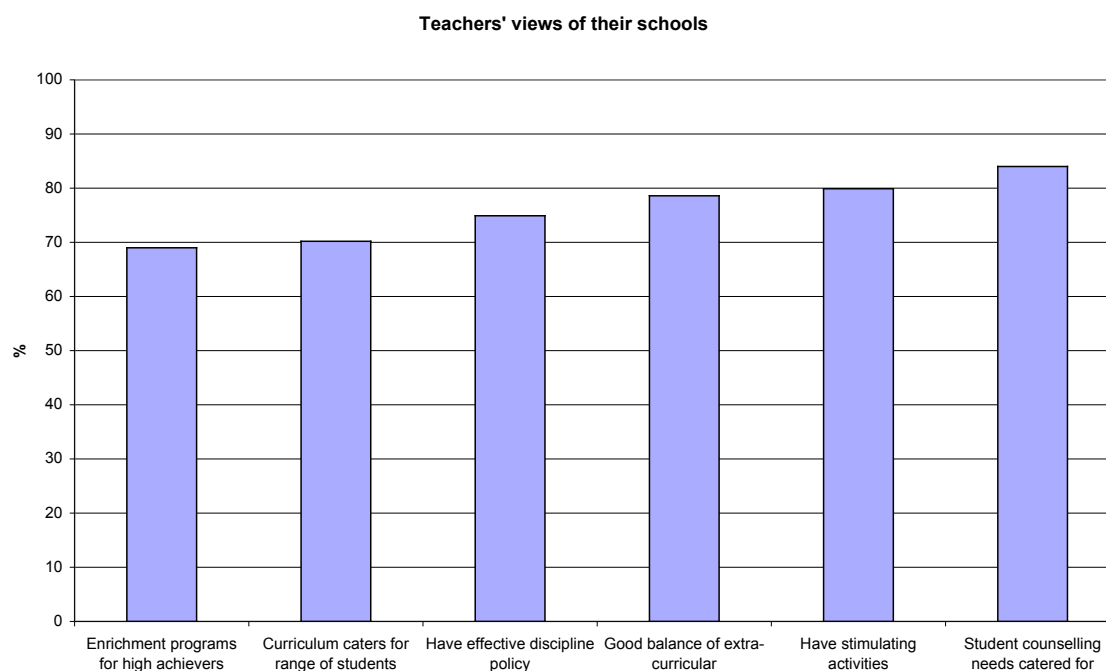
## **How Teachers See the Effectiveness of VET**

On the whole, school teachers were very positive in their views of the effectiveness of what schools do. With regard to propositions ranging from their schools' provision of a broad, inclusive curriculum to the operation of an effective discipline policy, teachers reported high levels of agreement (see Figure 6). Notably, however, the two items with the lowest levels of support both related to the school's management of diverse learning needs.

In this context, the current study is particularly interested in how the operation of a strong VET in Schools program affects a school's ability to provide a broad and inclusive curriculum. For this reason, a comparison of schools, based on their level of commitment to VET, is presented below. The methodology adopted for this study resulted in the selection of matched pairs of schools in most of the communities studied. The aim was to include in most locations a school with demonstrated strong commitment to VET and one with a more limited VET program. The process, described in the methodology, resulted in seven schools being assigned to the "strong VET" category and five to the "limited VET" category. "

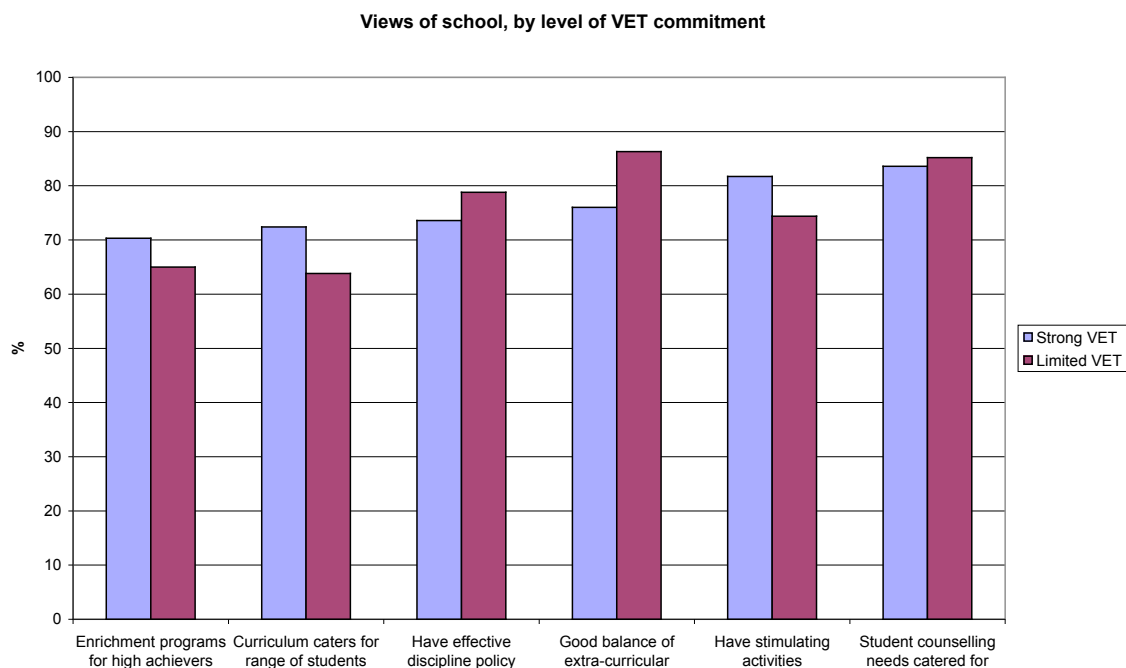
**Figure 6 Teacher views of the efficacy of their schools**





Using these categories, Figure 7 examined teachers' views of their schools broken out by the kind of school they work in. These data seem to show that the "strong VET" schools were better able than the "limited VET" schools to manage diversity – on measures of curriculum range, programs for high achievers and stimulating activities. However, on the other measures – discipline policy, extra-curricular activities and student counselling – they were perceived as less successful than the "limited VET" schools, although these findings may also be related to the nature of the clientele in the latter group of schools.

**Figure 7 Teacher views of school**

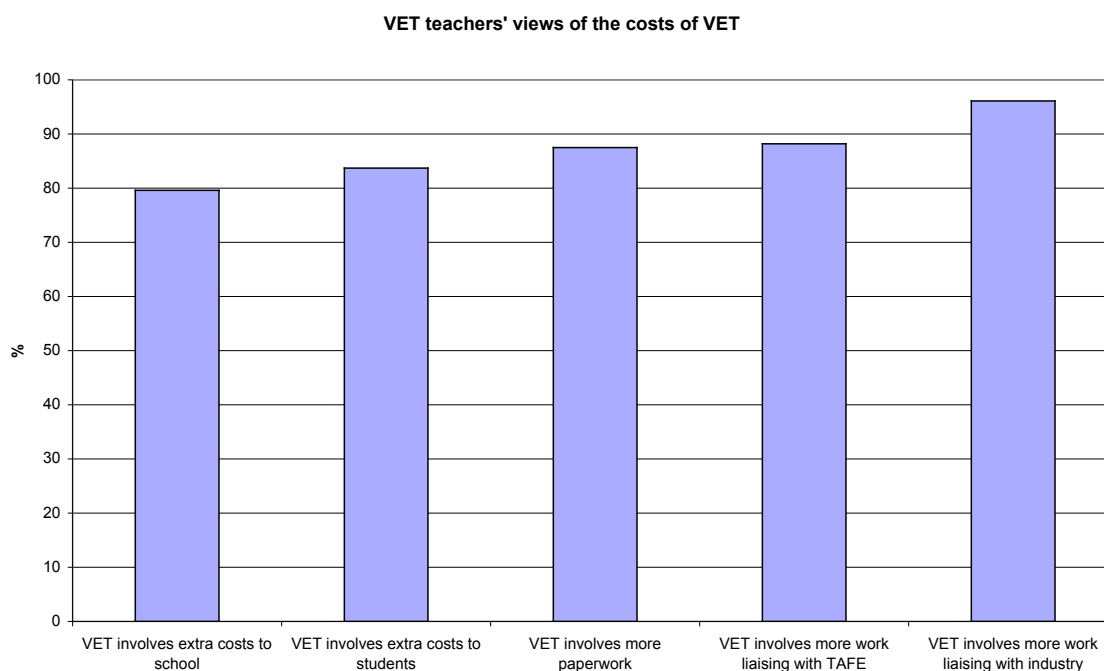


## How Teachers See the Resourcing of VET in Schools

The costs to schools of providing vocational education and training extend beyond the obvious monetary costs evident in fees charged by TAFE or costs levied from students, although these too are acknowledged by teachers. In any analysis of the cost of VET, the time commitments attached to teaching VET and the issue of training teachers and providing adequate infrastructure in the school must also be considered.

It is evident from the preceding chapters that these issues will affect different schools in different ways. For example, schools with adequate facilities and trained staff have some advantages. Others with the size and purchasing power to access TAFE programs are better able to “buy in” programs for their students at lower cost. Nevertheless, the data reported below in Figure 8 indicate that the majority of VET teachers saw all of these as significant issues. In particular, the issues associated with the extra work generated by being a VET teacher (liaising with employers, liaising with TAFE and completing paperwork) were the ones most likely to be nominated by teachers working in this field. These findings support the view that teaching VET carries responsibilities and time commitments additional to the normal load placed on teachers working in mainstream subjects. It also requires skills – dealing with industry and dealing with other VET providers – which have not been part of a secondary teacher’s normal duties in the past.

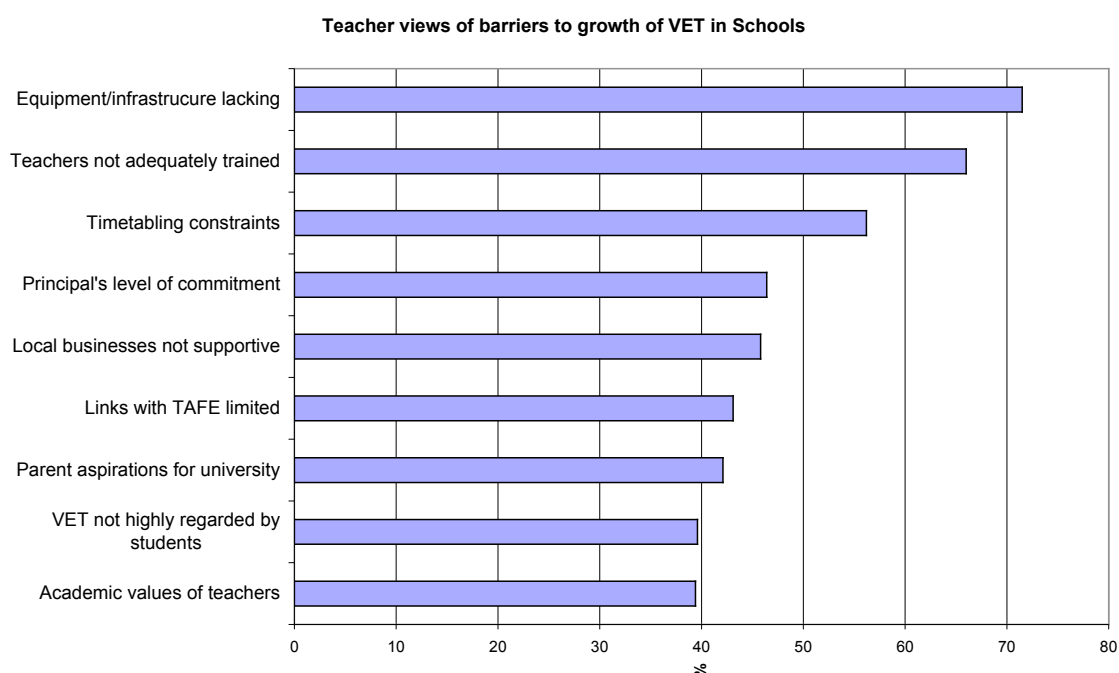
**Figure 8 Teacher views of the costs of VET**



These findings were supported by teachers' views of the potential barriers to the growth of VET in Schools programs. Many of the issues raised in preceding chapters were also nominated here by teachers as potential barriers. These included internal barriers such as the level of the Principal's commitment, the academic values of teachers and timetabling constraints (see Figure 9). They also included factors external to the school, such as parents' aspirations to send their children to university, the students' own views of VET and the difficulties in forging links with TAFE Institutes and other VET providers.

However, the two items which generated the highest level of support were those associated with resourcing issues – the training of teachers to work in the VET field and the provision of adequate facilities and equipment. It is evident that teachers were concerned with the lack of leadership in some school settings and with the conservatism and resistance to VET shown by some of their colleagues. Similarly, teachers understood that the students' own conservatism, often supplemented by that of their parents, would represent significant barriers to the growth of VET in Schools programs. Yet, interestingly, it is not these "cultural" barriers which teachers identified as the most important blockers to growth. Rather, it was the provision of adequate resources and the need for teachers to be trained to be effective providers of VET programs which were most commonly identified as potential barriers to the growth of VET.

**Figure 9 Teacher views of barriers to VET in Schools**



## Summary

The views expressed by teachers in relation to the role, the effectiveness and the resourcing of VET in Schools, as identified in the survey, may be summarised as follows:

### How teachers see the role of VET in schools

- Both VET and non-VET teachers consider VET programs to be an invaluable learning experience for many students including those interested in technology and business or who are academically average, but particularly those students intending to leave school early, or who are struggling with mainstream education.
- Teachers recognise the potential benefit of VET work placements to considerably increase and enhance students' self-confidence.
- Providing information to students about non-university options, including employment, apprenticeships and TAFE, are viewed as important as the provision of advice about university courses. However, teachers are slightly less likely to strongly endorse the role of creating links with TAFE and with employers.
- VET/non-VET teachers differ in their opinions of which groups should be catered for through VET programs. Non-VET teachers appear more inclined to recommend VET programs for students in Year 10 or below, and who are average academically, whereas VET teachers strongly support the introduction

of VET only in Years 11 and 12 and advocate VET programs for students of all skill levels including students who are above average academically.

## How teachers see the effectiveness of VET

- Schools with strong VET programs are perceived to be better able than those with limited VET programs to manage diversity in the way of a varied curriculum, the availability of programs for high achievers and stimulating activities.
- Schools with strong VET programs are perceived to be less successful than schools with limited VET programs in delivering adequate discipline policies, extra-curricular activities and student counselling.

## How teachers see the resourcing of VET in schools

- VET teachers have a greater workload and responsibility (in addition to their role as mainstream teachers) generated by liaising with employers, TAFE and other VET providers and completing associated paperwork.
- There is a shortage of suitably trained teachers in order to effectively deliver VET programs in schools.
- Schools lack the adequate infrastructure and resources necessary to be able to deliver and expand VET programs.
- Internal pressures preventing the promotion and growth of VET in Schools include lack of support and commitment from Principals, the perceived academic value of teachers and timetabling constraints
- External factors limiting the promotion and growth of VET in Schools include parental influence on the career path and educational choices of their child, student perception of VET programs and links with TAFE Institutions and other VET providers.

While teacher sentiment is generally very positive towards the role and effectiveness of VET programs in delivering positive educational outcomes for secondary students, there still remain a number of key issues that will significantly influence the availability and accessibility of VET programs to young people in the future. These seem to be tied in to the financial and structural constraints associated with the operation of high schools and which make the broader mission of delivering VET both complex and time-consuming.

# The Student View

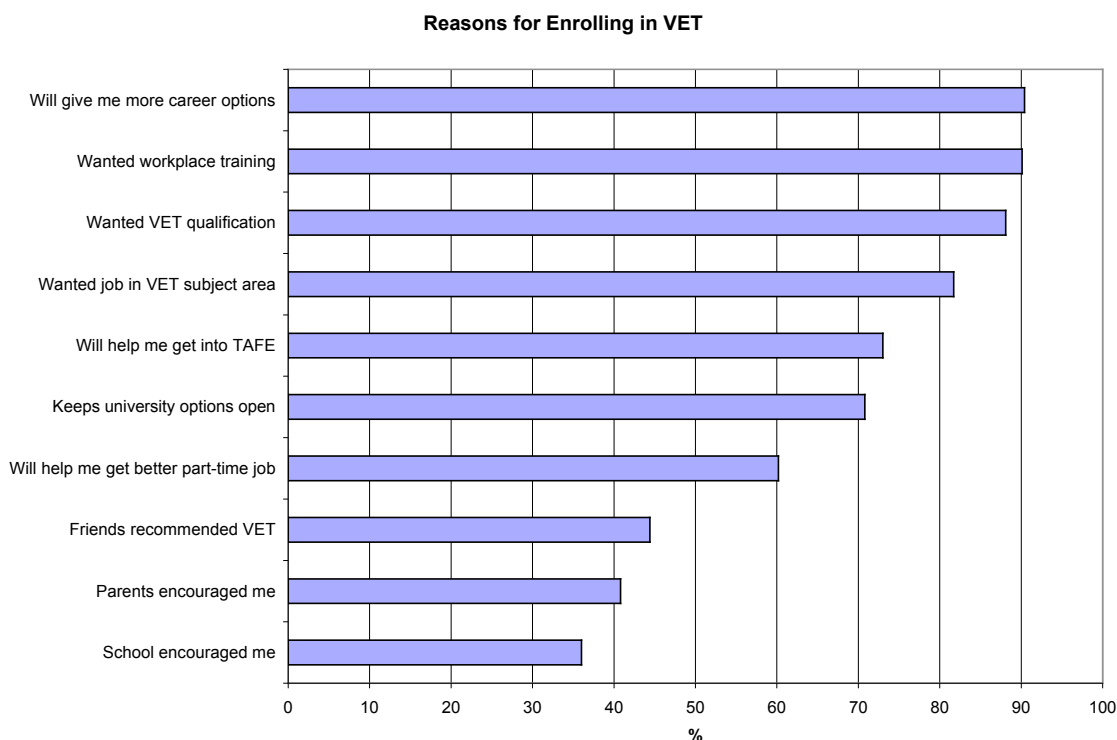
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This chapter is based on 1180 student survey responses collected as part of the classroom-based survey of the current Year 11 students in the eleven survey schools which provided data. This survey was conducted in September-October 2002. It examines students' views of VET, of structured workplace training and of work experience. It also examines students' perceptions of the barriers to participating in VET. As previously stated, these students attend a range of metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools in three states and in the government and non-government sectors. While not strictly representative of the views of all Year 11 students across Australia, their perceptions give us insights into the concerns of senior secondary students regarding VET and the barriers to participating in VET programs in a range of typical school settings.

## Views of VET in Schools

The survey data tell us a great deal about the reasons these students give for enrolling in VET in Schools programs. Most important among these reasons are the widening of career options, the opportunity to get workplace training and the desire to gain a VET qualification (see Figure 10).

**Figure 10** Students' reasons for enrolling in VET in Schools



The first of these reasons, chosen by nine in ten respondents, reflects the students' need for flexibility and choice. For many young people, career choices are fluid at this age and VET presents itself as a useful additional or alternative pathway which provides both training for a particular job but also a widening of the choices available.

The second reason, also nominated by about nine in ten respondents, reflects the concern many young people have with obtaining useful experience and skills, so that they can access jobs. With the range of job opportunities available to young people largely confined to low-skilled, poorly paid jobs (often located in the retail sector), the need for broader experience in a range of sectors is crucial. Structured workplace training provides these broader opportunities and creates links with employers which may be beneficial to school leavers seeking employment in the future.

Also of great importance in the eyes of this group of students is the qualification itself. A VET qualification, for most early school leavers, is their only qualification upon leaving school and therefore their only currency in the labour market. Even for those who obtain their senior certificate, it might be argued that they would regard a specific vocational qualification as being of equal or greater value than that embodied in a generic and general school qualification. There is also some evidence that employers would take a similar view (Polesel et al. 1999). It might also be argued that an entry-level qualification such as those obtained in a school environment provides young people with some motivation and confidence to continue in or re-enter the world of education and training at a later date. While much has been written about the supposed devaluation of qualifications in the labour market, it is revealing that young people themselves value qualifications very highly.

The range of reasons for enrolling in VET discussed above would support a view that VET is seen as providing flexibility and options. However, we, also find that over eighty per cent of these students were doing their VET program in order to get a particular job in the VET subject area they were studying. Clearly, working towards a specific job goal and keeping open alternative pathways are not mutually exclusive objectives.

Other reasons also emerged as important. Over seven in ten students chose VET because it improves their chances of getting into TAFE or because it keeps their options of going to university open. The theme of flexible pathways emerges again here. Vocational training, by definition, prepares these students for work, but it also keeps open other options, including the pathway into university. The integration of VET into the senior curriculum has meant that choosing a VET option no longer severs the link to the academic, university-oriented curriculum. These data would indicate that students are well aware of this.

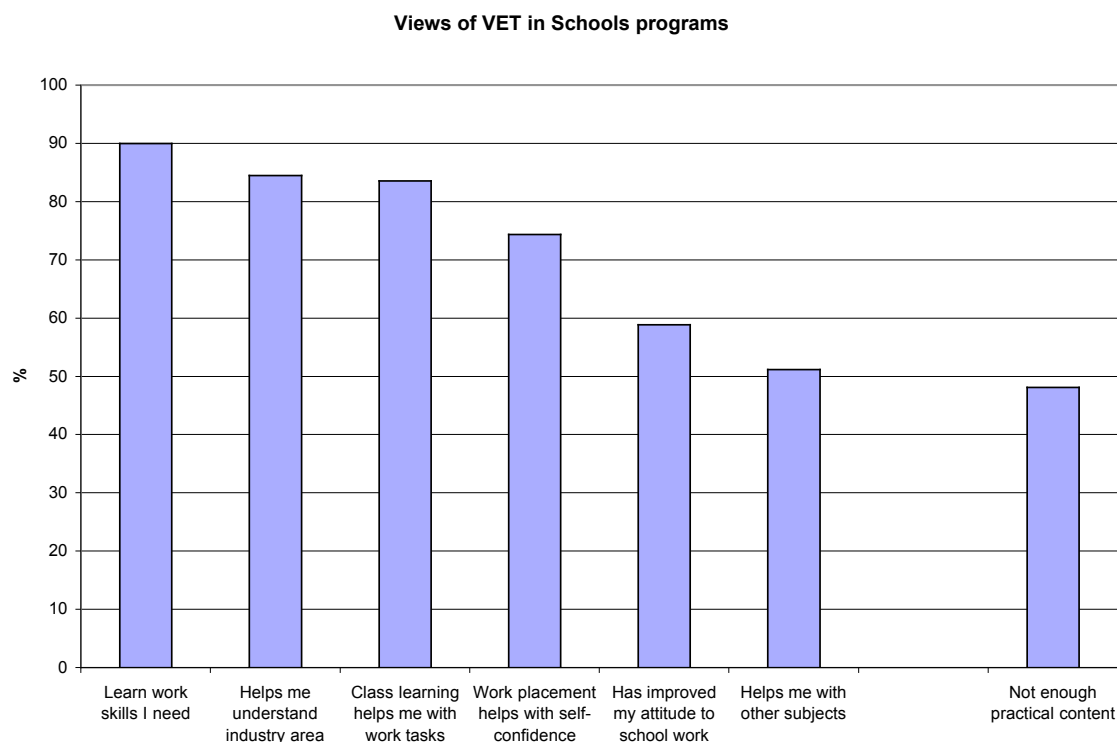
Also of importance to six in ten respondents was the usefulness of VET in providing access to better part-time work than they might get without training. This may reflect the growing importance of part-time work to students in the senior years of secondary schooling and in university.

Gender differences in the reasons students give for enrolling in VET were also explored and, for the most part, no statistically significant differences were found between male and female respondents. The one item in which a difference emerged was the reason relating to parent's encouragement. Male students were more likely than female students to report that their parents' encouragement was a reason for enrolling in VET. This may be an indication that parents' conservatism regarding the role of VET may be more entrenched in consideration of their daughters than of their sons.

How these students actually regard their VET programs provides some evidence that their motivations for doing VET, as expressed in the discussion above, are justified. Certainly their strong need for workplace experience seems to have been largely satisfied (see Figure 11). Nine in ten respondents reported that they were learning the skills they need for work. Over eight in ten (84.5 per cent) believed that their VET program had helped them understand their industry area and a similar proportion (83.6 per cent) reported that what they learned in class helped them understand the tasks they would do in their job. Similarly, over seven in ten respondents reported that their work placement had helped increase their self-confidence, echoing teachers' views of the role of work placement.

**Figure 11 Students' views of VET in Schools programs**





Lower proportions of respondents believed that VET has improved their attitude to their school work (six in ten) or helped them with their other subjects (five in ten), although these numbers suggest that VET is successful for some students at least in improving their approach to learning more generally. For somewhat fewer than half the students, their VET studies could have provided more practical content, although this finding must be seen in the context of predominantly positive views overall of their VET programs.

## Views of Work Experience and Workplace Training

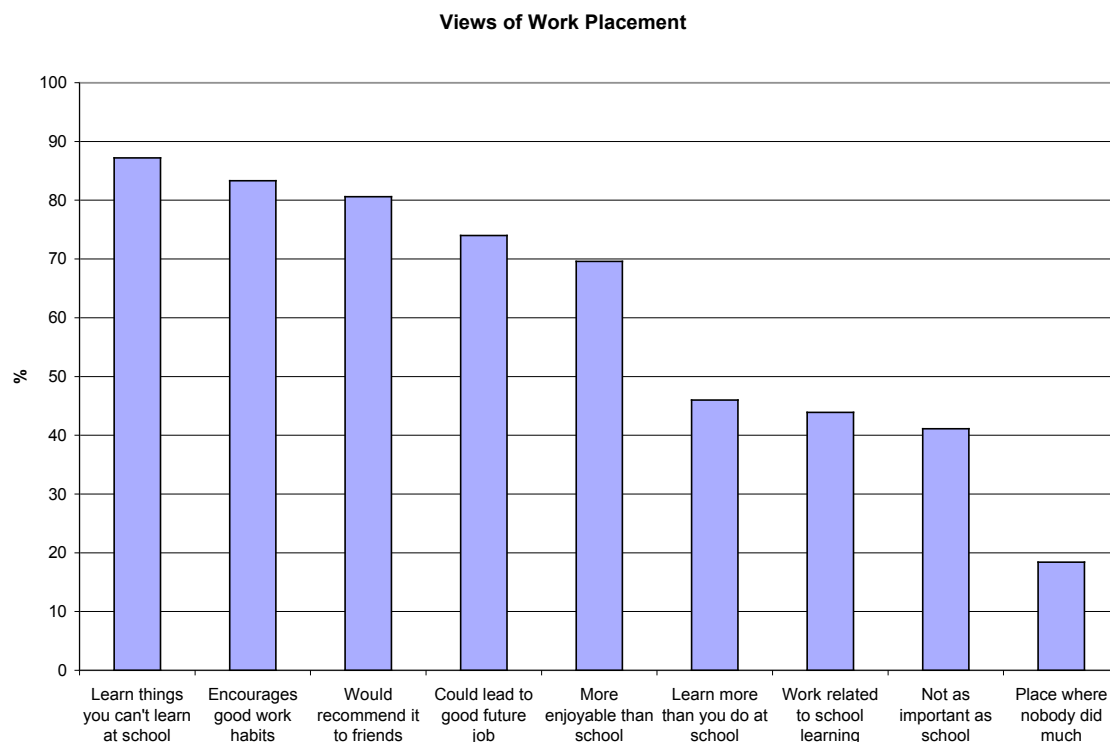
Approximately six in ten of the students surveyed had completed work experience at the time of surveying. Of this group, a minority reported a predominantly positive view of the experience. For most (45.2 per cent), there was a view that they “learnt a few things, but it was mostly routine”. For a further 10.8 per cent, the experience was mainly negative – “It was boring. I didn’t learn much. Just a job”. The mainly positive option provided on the menu of choices (“It was challenging and interesting most of the time”) was chosen by just over four in ten respondents (44.0 per cent).

Of those students in VET in Schools programs, approximately three-quarters (75.3 per cent) indicated that they had participated in a work placement already or that they expected to do so in the future.

Views of work placement (structured workplace learning) were, however, more sanguine (see Figure 12). Among those who indicated that they had already taken part

(36 per cent of VET in Schools students), a menu of items designed to elicit views of the placement provided mainly positive images.

**Figure 12** Students' views of work placement



Students saw their work placement as providing benefits which their school cannot. Nearly nine in ten reported that they were learning things which they cannot learn at school. Over eight in ten believed that their work placement encourages good habits, and over seven in ten saw it as providing an opportunity to move into a good job in the future. A similar proportion regarded it as more enjoyable than school, and a majority of students would recommend it to their friends. Negative images (“not as important as school” and “a place where nobody did much”) attracted low levels of support. Despite these very positive views, most students, however, stopped short of claiming that their work placement is a situation in which they learn “more” than at school.

Comparing the responses of this group of students with those regarding work experience highlights the fact that students see work placement in a more positive way than they do work experience. For the majority (52.0 per cent), a predominantly positive view prevailed (“It was challenging and interesting most of the time”). For a further 38.2 per cent, there was a view that they “learnt a few things, but it was mostly routine”. For 9.8 per cent, the experience was mainly negative – “It was boring. I didn’t learn much. Just a job”.

## Comparing VET and non-VET Schools

It has been argued in this report that schools with a strong commitment to VET are better placed to offer a range of curriculum programs and careers advice and support relevant to the diverse needs of young people. Data presented in the last chapter showed that teachers working in schools strongly committed to VET were more likely to believe that their school could offer a curriculum that catered for a range of students.

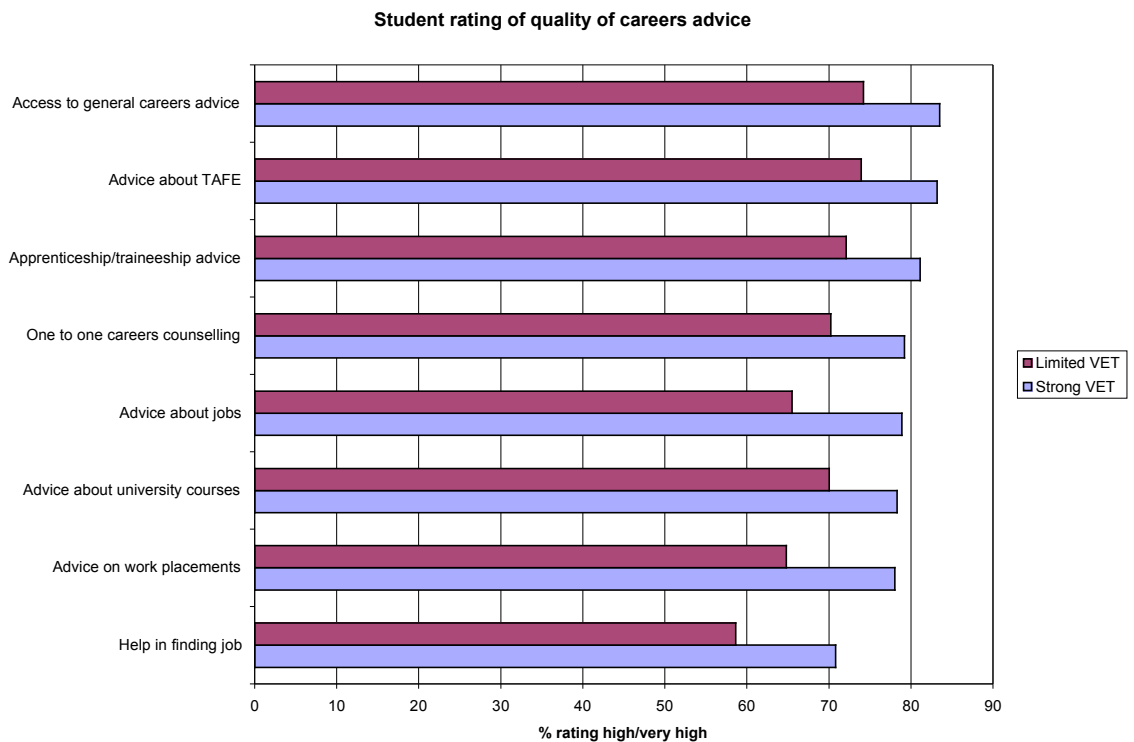
The views of students in Year 11 support this view. In fact, on a broad range of measures relating to their schools' effectiveness, students in schools strongly committed to VET were more positive.

Figure 13 presents students' views of the quality of their schools' careers advice and programs. Students in schools with strong VET programs consistently rated each item more highly than students in schools with limited programs. These differences occurred across a range of career-related services, from help in finding a job to advice about university. On each item in the chart, the differences were statistically significant.

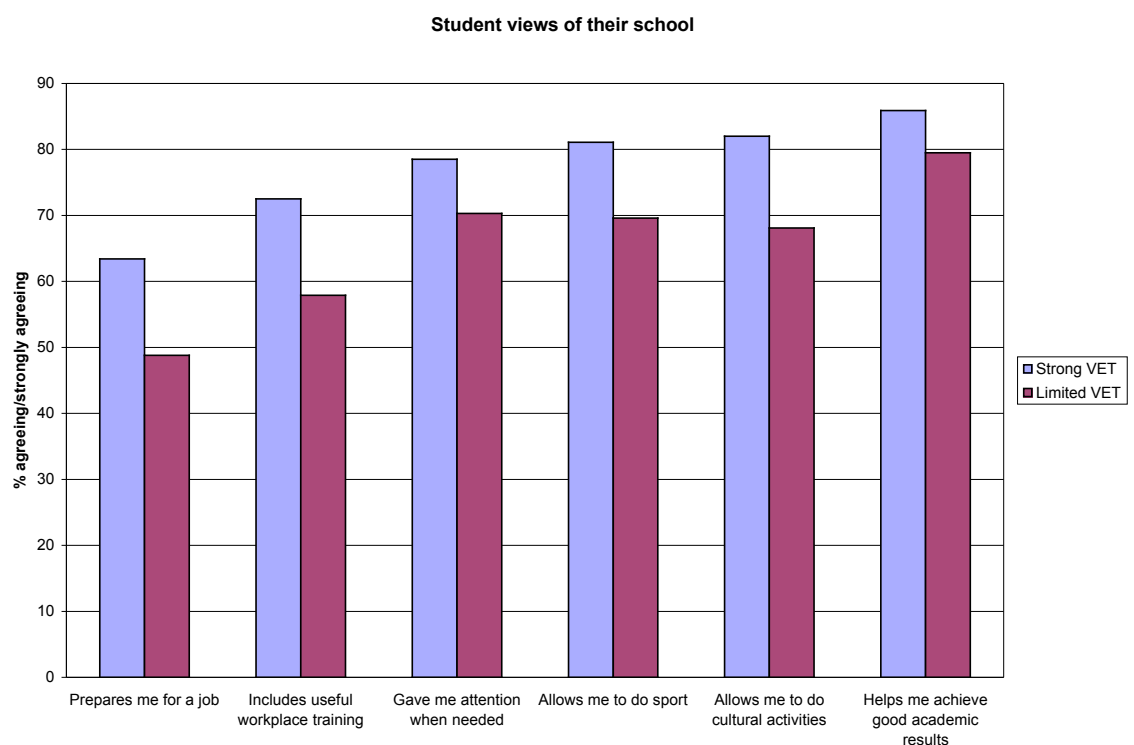
Figure 14 examines the students' perceptions of the success of their schools in achieving a broader range of goals. Once again, students in schools with strong VET programs were more likely than students in schools with limited VET to agree that their school is successful in achieving each of these goals.

Given the implied commitment of these schools to vocational training, these differences might be expected in endeavours such as preparing students for a job or giving them access to workplace training. However, what is interesting is that they also applied to their schools' ability to achieve good academic results, provide assistance with difficulties and provide access to sporting and cultural programs. These latter items have nothing to do with VET. Yet the consistency of the pattern suggest that some of the characteristics of good VET schools might also be responsible for this broader range of positive outcomes.

**Figure 13** Student views of career services, by school type



**Figure 14 Student views of school, by school type**



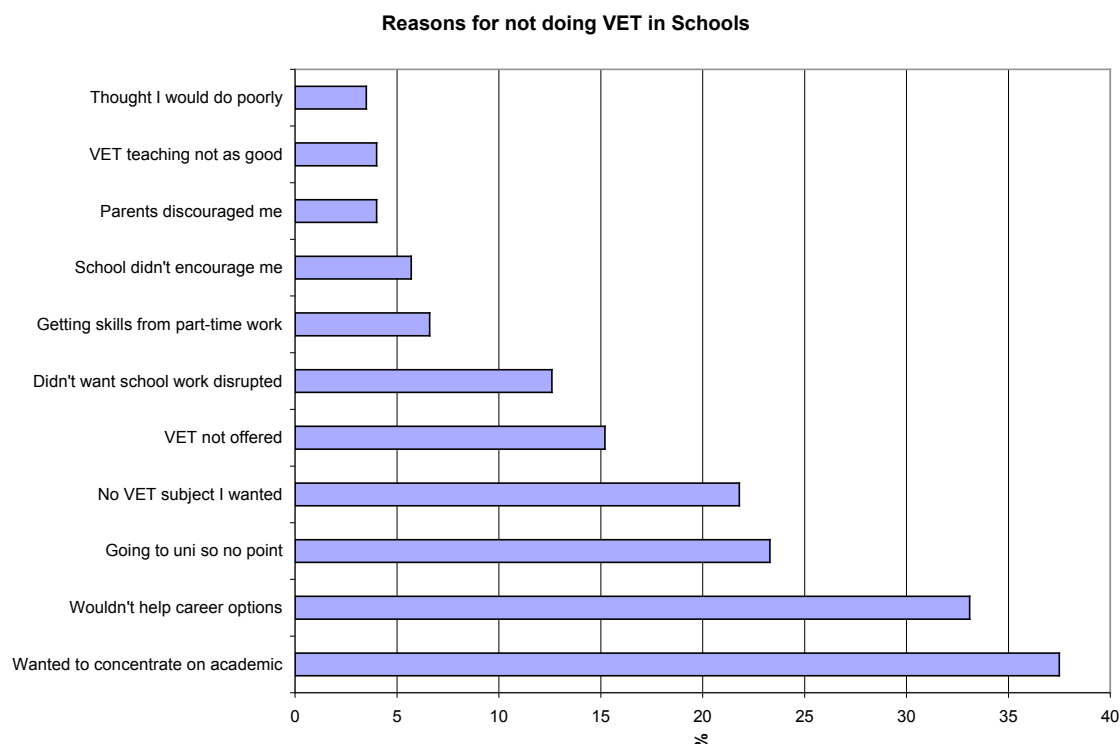
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It is likely that these would include some of the characteristics of successful VET schools which were outlined in the chapter “The School View”. Large enrolments and pro-active leadership on the part of the Principal would be likely to play a role, since the schools in our study with large numbers of students seem better able to offer a range of programs and services and good leadership may be seen as having a pervasive influence on outcomes more generally. In relation to school size, the schools in our study with a strong VET program tended to be larger than those with a more limited VET program, although this study is not large enough to claim a statistically significant link between enrolments and breadth of program choice.

## **Barriers to VET**

What then are the barriers to increasing VET participation? We know that there has already been significant growth in the number of young people undertaking VET in Schools programs. Since the early 1990s, when approximately one in ten students who were enrolled in Years 11 and 12 participated in vocational education, reforms of the senior secondary curriculum in all states have seen participation in VET increase to nearly four in ten, or 153, 616 students across Australia (MCEETYA, 2001). Nevertheless, many secondary students still do not enrol in VET in Schools programs and it has been speculated that VET participation may be approaching saturation point.

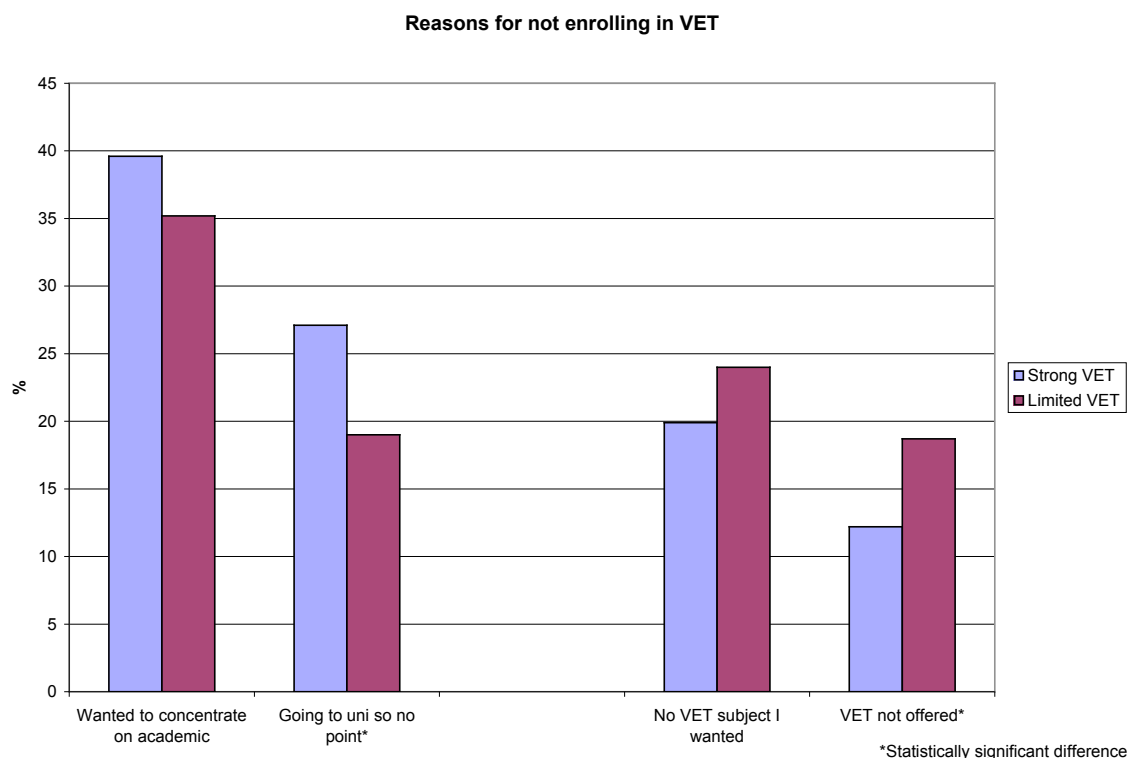
**Figure 15** Year 11 students’ reasons for not enrolling in VET subjects.



However, the data reported in Figure 15 illustrate that barriers to VET remain. The reasons given by non-VET students in our study for not enrolling in VET programs indicate that non-participation is in part based on attitudinal barriers and in part based on structural factors of access. Interestingly, negative perceptions of VET *per se* do not seem to play a significant part in preventing students from taking on VET programs.

The main reasons given by these students for not enrolling in VET seem to be associated with the academic, university-oriented trajectory of the student's program. They include the need to concentrate on academic courses and a view that because they are going to university they do not need VET. The perception that VET will not help their career choices is also strong.

**Figure 16** Reasons for not enrolling in VET, by type of school



However, there is also the question of access. For fifteen per cent of respondents, there was a perception that VET was not offered and for nearly one-quarter there was no VET subject that they wanted to do. Although all schools in the study offered *some* VET programs, there is a perception among some students that they are not accessible or that they do not meet their needs. Many students, when given the opportunity on their surveys to comment freely on their subjects, complained about timetabling clashes caused by the blocking of subjects. This was seen as limiting their options to subjects which could “fit into their timetable”. This was a comment echoed in the teachers’ comments reported in previous chapters. Many students also expressed their disappointment at not being able to do specific VET subjects they wanted because they were not offered. Again, the likelihood of this being an issue for students may well depend on the schools’ level of commitment to VET, as is discussed below.

On the other hand, negative perceptions of VET were given relatively little importance by the respondents as reasons for avoiding VET. Very few students believed that VET programs are taught badly. And very few were willing to claim that their parents or their teachers had discouraged them from enrolling in VET. This would tend to support the views expressed by the actors in previous chapters that the image of VET may well be improving.

Figure 16 examines those items where a difference between schools with a strong commitment to VET and schools with a limited commitment to VET appear. This chart would seem to support a view that access to VET is less an issue for students in schools with a strong VET program, compared with those in schools with a limited

VET program. On the other hand, a perception that VET does not fit in with their academic trajectory seems to be more important for students in strong VET schools than it is for those in schools less committed to VET.

In regard to other identified barriers, a series of questions regarding the ease with which VET fits into the timetable, whether it requires too much travel outside the school and whether it involves extra costs indicates that financial costs are the main concern of students. The majority of respondents reported that VET fits in easily into their overall school timetable (86.5 per cent) and very few agreed that VET required too much travel outside school (15.3 per cent). However, over half of these VET students agreed that VET involved extra costs to them personally.

It would seem that, as for the teachers in our study, the financial costs of VET are seen as one of the major concerns in the delivery of VET. This further supports the argument that cultural factors, while still a factor in preventing the take-up of VET, may no longer be as important as they once were. For the students and teachers in these schools, it is the cost of VET which is emerging as the major barrier to its development and delivery.

## Summary

Students' views of the accessibility and delivery of VET in Schools and Structured Workplace Learning programs are mainly positive, although there is also an acknowledgment of the limitations of VET and barriers to participation in it. These views are summarised below:

### Views of VET in Schools

- VET students regard VET programs as an opportunity to broaden the overall scope of their career choices and to gain insight into particular industries whilst acquiring industry-specific skills through structured work place training (work placements).
- VET students view VET programs as a tool which assists in developing closer links with employers thus enhancing employment prospects, but also as a way of developing the life skills necessary to assist in becoming independent individuals upon leaving school.
- VET programs offer students the opportunity to undertake work place training (in addition to that offered as work experience), which contributes towards gaining an accredited qualification that may be used in a specific industry area.
- Students recognise that participation in VET expands their career options and that VET study does not rule out further academic study in the future.



## Views of Work Experience and Workplace Training

- Students' perceptions of work experience are varied. Some consider work experience to be "challenging and interesting most of the time" while others see this form of an introduction to employment as less stimulating and "mostly routine" with little to be learnt.
- VET students who undertake a work placement are generally much more positive about this employment experience. They regard this event as one where they are able to learn things which cannot be learnt at school, which encourages good work habits and which will facilitate their entry into a "good job" in the future. Many VET students also find work placements more enjoyable than school.

## Comparing VET and non-VET Schools

- Students attending schools which are strongly committed to VET rate careers advice and associated programs more highly than students attending schools with a limited VET focus.
- Students see schools demonstrating a strong VET commitment as exhibiting a greater capacity to achieve good academic results, to assist students with various difficulties and also to make sporting and cultural activities accessible.
- Students attending strongly committed VET schools also rate consistently higher, factors such as advice and assistance with employment, TAFE and university choices, apprenticeships/traineeships and work placements.
- Students in schools strongly committed to VET programs also rate more highly the support offered on job preparation, access to sporting and cultural programs, and in achieving high academic results.

## Barriers to VET

- Barriers to the acceptance and undertaking of VET programs at secondary school level seem to be more structural than social or attitudinal.
- The survey data suggest that students in strong VET schools who do not enrol in VET tend not to do so because they want to pursue a more academic course of study, or because VET study would not assist them in attaining university.
- Students not enrolled in VET in schools with only a limited VET focus are more likely to suggest that they did not enrol in it because there was no VET program offered by the school, or their particular VET subject was not offered.
- The costs involved in undertaking VET are an important issue for students in being able to access such courses. Factors such as timetabling of VET and travelling to and from external VET providers are of less concern.



# Student Pathways

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This chapter is based on student destinations data collected as part of the exit survey of the 2001 cohort of Year 12 students, which was conducted in September/October 2002. It is based on 403 returned surveys from 9 schools. *Surveys from two more schools are expected and the data will be updated in the final draft.*

## The pathway into study and work

Past research suggests that students who enrol in VET in Schools subjects and those who do not have quite different study and employment destinations when they leave school (Lamb et al. 1998, Walstab et al. 2002, Polesel et al. 2001). The literature also points to the fact that VET in Schools graduates access a wide range of study and labour market destinations. A recent Victorian study notes, for example, that VET in Schools graduates are more likely to end up in full-time work or in apprenticeships or traineeships than their non-VET peers (Polesel and Teese, forthcoming). They are also more likely to go to TAFE than are other school graduates. However, university remains an important destination for significant numbers of VET in Schools graduates – over one in five in the study quoted above. This underlines the breadth of the VET in Schools program as a platform for accessing a variety of work and study destinations. The current study confirms these findings.

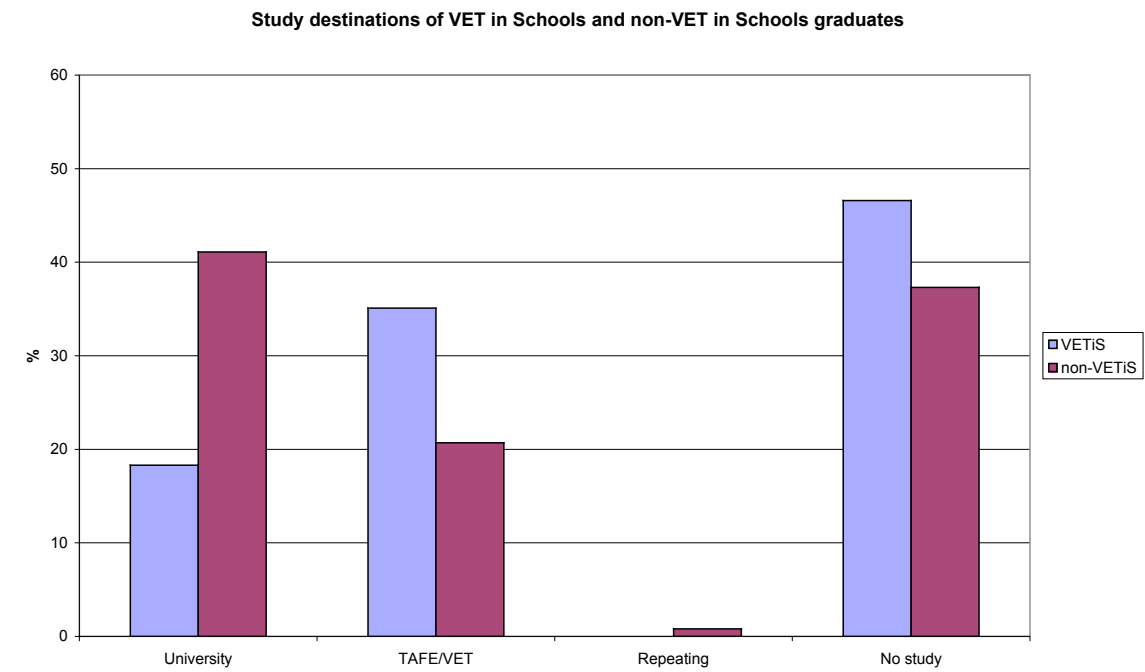
Figures 17 and 18 compare the post-schooling destinations of VET and non-VET students who exited our sample schools at the end of 2001. The first chart shows that non-VET students were approximately twice as likely to go to university as their VET classmates. This is in line with the findings from similar studies in the past. Also in keeping with past studies is the fact that approximately one-fifth of the VET graduates used their studies to access a university destination. The rates of entry to TAFE (and other VET providers) reverse this pattern, with the VET in Schools graduates in the study much more likely than their non-VET peers to end up in a VET provider. Again, this is reflected in past studies. Overall, the proportion of VET in Schools students not accessing a study destination is 9.3 per cent higher than for non-VET students.

This latter finding is explained when we examine the labour market destinations of these young people. The VET in Schools graduates were much more likely than their non-VET peers to enter full-time work and apprenticeships and traineeships, an unsurprising finding given the vocational orientation of their senior certificate studies. VET in Schools graduates were also more likely to be in the labour force overall.

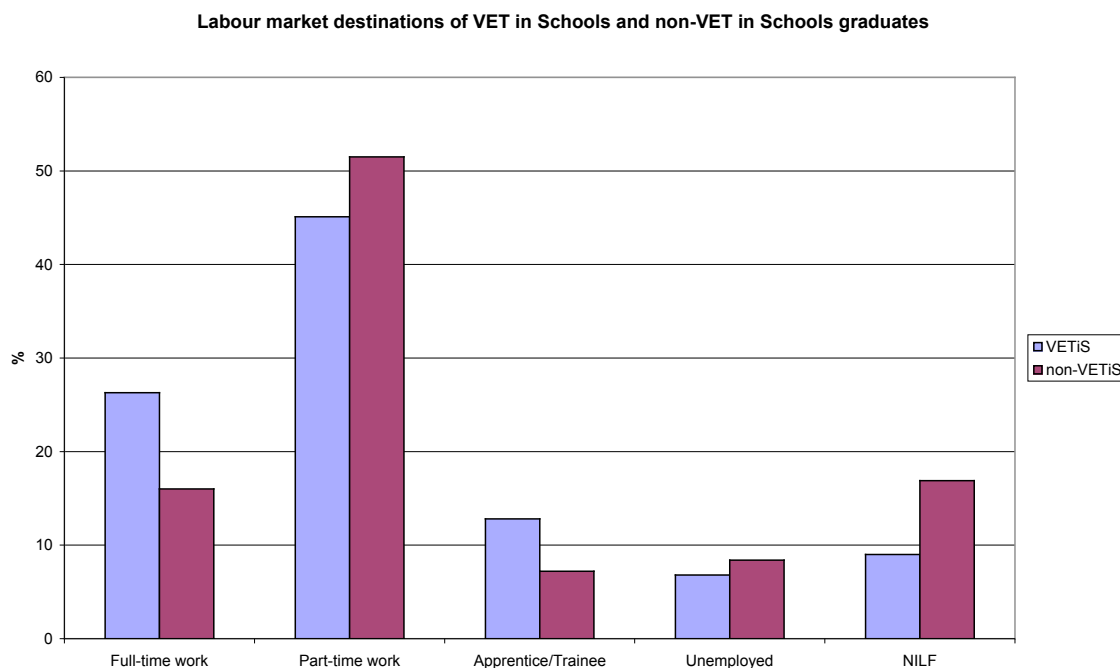
What is surprising then is that their unemployment rate was also lower than that of their non-VET in Schools classmates. Despite a greater likelihood of entering the labour market without further study (and consequently a greater dependence on work), they were less likely to be unemployed – a finding which confirms the value of

VET in Schools as a tool for accessing jobs and also highlights its flexibility in helping students access a range of post-schooling destinations.

**Figure 17**Study destinations

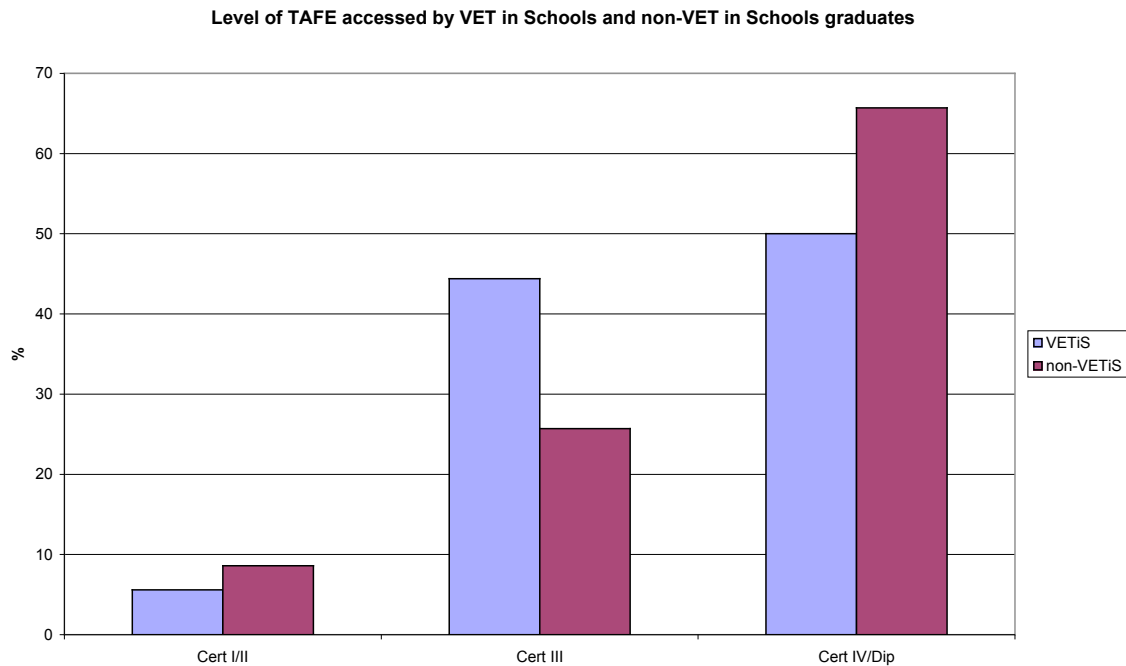


**Figure 18**Labour market destinations



Comparing the level of study accessed in TAFE by VET and non-VET school graduates provides further confirmation of the value of the VET in Schools program. The vast majority of these entrants to post-schooling VET (94 per cent) entered the former of these two options – TAFE. Figure 19 shows that the VET in Schools group was most likely to enrol in TAFE at Certificate III level (44.4 per cent) or Certificate IV, Diploma or Advanced Diploma level (50 per cent). Only 5.6 per cent enrolled in entry-level courses.

**Figure 19** Level of TAFE accessed



By contrast, students who graduated from “mainstream” programs in their senior certificate were more likely than their VET in Schools peers to enter at the higher level (Certificate IV and above), a finding which may reflect their more academic orientation at school. But interestingly, they were less likely to enter Certificate III courses and more likely to enter Certificate I and II courses, although the differences at the entry-level were not large.

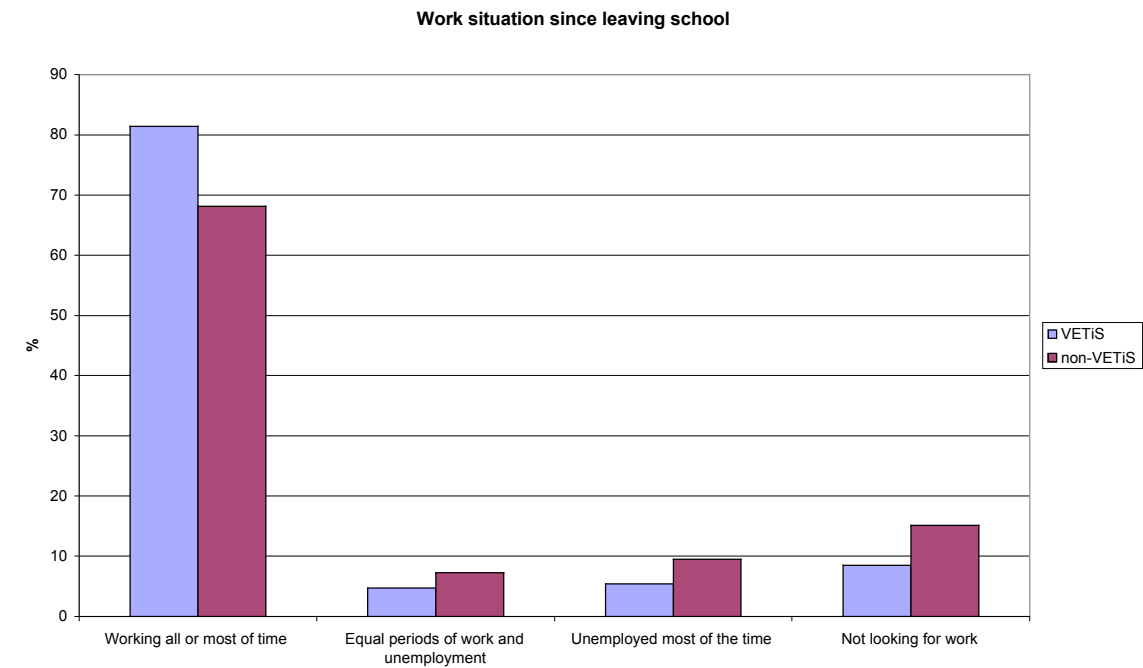
## The experience of unemployment

The proportion of VET in Schools students nominating themselves as unemployed was very low – some 6.8 per cent of the overall cohort. This was slightly lower than the rate for non-VET in Schools graduates, which was 8.4 per cent, and was evidence of good labour market outcomes for students who enrol in VET studies while at school.

However, the survey of school leavers also shows that VET in Schools graduates were more likely to have been in work *for most of the time* since leaving school and were less likely to have been unemployed for long periods since leaving school (see Figure 20). While 81.4 per cent of VET in Schools graduates reported that they had a job for most of the time, the same was true for only 68.1 per cent of mainstream graduates. While this is partly due to the lesser likelihood of the latter group entering the labour market, the non-VET group was also almost twice as likely as the VET in Schools graduates to have been unemployed for most of the time since leaving school. They were also more likely to have had approximately equal periods of employment and unemployment since leaving school. Overall, these data were indicative of the benefits which may be accruing to VET in Schools graduates at least in the short term with

regard to their labour market experience and the avoidance of long periods of unemployment.

**Figure 20**Labour market experience of VET in Schools/non-VET in Schools graduates



## Views of Careers Education and Guidance

In the previous chapter, Year 11 students' views of careers education and guidance were examined in the context of their schools' commitment to VET. Students in schools highly committed to VET generally gave a more positive assessment of their

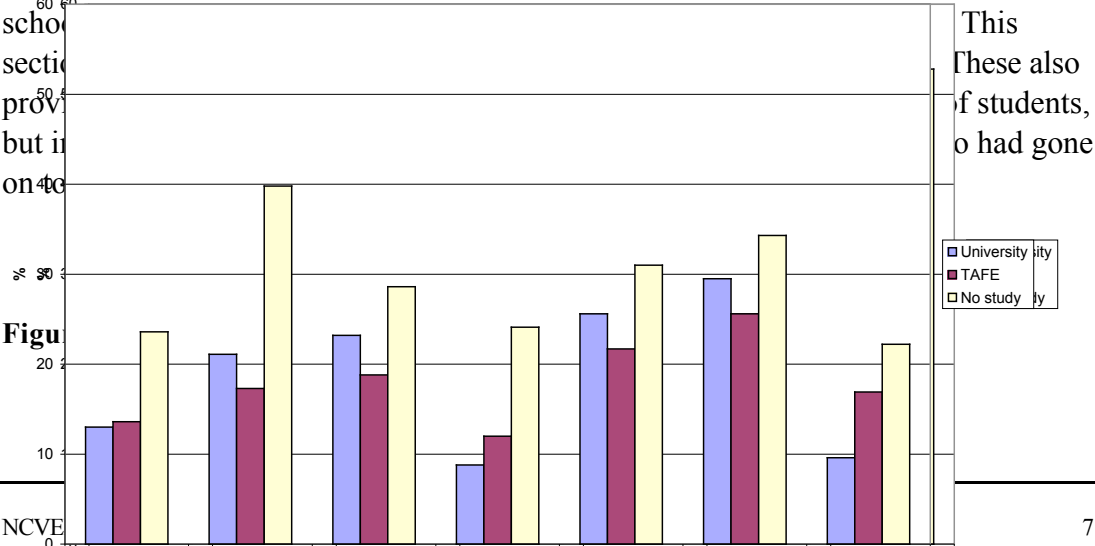


Figure 21 reveals views regarding specific aspects of careers education and guidance which are largely dependent on the school leaver's study destination – university, TAFE or no study. For example, the upper chart shows that there were only small differences in the proportions of the three groups finding “careers education and guidance” and “one to one careers counselling” to be very useful. However, larger differences appeared between the three groups in relation to more specific aspects of careers guidance. University and TAFE students were much more likely to have found the advice they received on further education very useful than did those who did not enter further study. Similarly those studying were much more likely to rate highly the assistance they received with job search skills and advice on local employment than were those who went to university or TAFE.

However, the lower chart shows that those school leavers who did not enter further study were also more likely than their peers to classify the advice they received in each category as “not useful”. This was so in all categories, even in those relating to job search skills and advice about local employment, where their assessments clustered at the two extremes of the scale – “not useful” and “very useful”. We may interpret these findings as supporting a view of careers education and guidance which works more effectively for those students who go on to further study in university or TAFE. Even in those areas relating to job skills and employment, where students were more likely to have received useful information than did their tertiary-bound peers, approximately one-third characterised the advice they received as being of no use.

## Summary

The great strength of the VET in Schools program is its flexibility in catering for the learning needs of a range of students and in preparing and creating pathways into a range of post-schooling destinations. This strength is highlighted by the evidence presented in this chapter which suggests that VET in Schools is able to achieve these outcomes despite the pressure placed on it to cater for a range of ability needs and the consequently higher proportions of academically weaker students who enrol in it.

The data suggest that VET graduates are not only more likely to move into full-time work, apprenticeships or traineeships after the completion of their secondary studies, but they are also more likely to enter the labour force overall, or pursue VET options through TAFE Institutions, when compared with non-VET graduates. VET students also seem to be less likely to find themselves unemployed or to have been unemployed for long periods of time since leaving school.

Data presented in this chapter also indicates that while approximately twenty percent of all VET graduates undertake university study, VET participants are more likely to pursue post-secondary study in VET. On the other hand, non-VET students demonstrate twice the likelihood of undertaking university study following the completion of their senior certificate. Of the students entering post-schooling VET (both VET and non-VET graduates), ninety-four percent do so through a TAFE Institution and while VET graduates seem more likely to enrol in TAFE at Certificate



III level, non-VET graduates appear more inclined to enrol in TAFE study at Certificate IV or Diploma level, and less likely to enrol in TAFE at Certificate III level.

The data also support a view of schools' careers education and guidance as being more in tune with the needs of tertiary education-bound students than of those who enter the labour market without further training.

Whatever the motivating factors, it would appear that participation in VET in Schools clearly offers advantages in attaining employment or undertaking further vocationally-oriented study in any field. However, it is also evident that schools need to make the advice they offer to students who are not planning further study more relevant.

# Conclusion

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In the context of significant growth in the provision of VET in Schools programs in the past decade, this study sought to investigate the place of VET in school culture and policy, and to identify the factors that influence the success of VET programs. The study also investigated cross-sectoral tensions associated with the delivery of VET in Schools programs.

The study gathered information from twelve schools and six TAFE Institutes in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. The school data represented the views of over 300 teachers, over 1100 Year 11 students and over 400 exit Year 12 students.

This chapter addresses the research questions specified at the outset of the project.

## **1. What are the factors within a school culture which support a successful VET program?**

The development of good VET programs was seen by teachers to depend on both attitudinal change (among staff and the school community) and structural change (in the school's operation). To achieve change at both these levels, a wholly supportive Principal was seen to be essential, in order to ensure innovative use of available funds, time release to allow teachers to focus on the heavy administrative demands of VET, and the establishment of a team of dedicated VET staff, rather than individuals acting in isolation.

Other characteristics associated with sites which were able to offer more comprehensive VET programs included:

- High enrolments
- Ability to offer courses on a cost-neutral basis or to charge students for courses
- A view of VET as improving learning
- Positive, modern view of VET
- Proximity to a TAFE
- Good relationship with TAFE.

## **2. What cultural factors inhibit the successful development of VET options within school curricula?**

Although some evidence of resistance to VET was observed, issues associated with adequately resourcing VET programs seemed to be more important. Factors which were seen to limit the ability of schools to provide quality TAFE programs and/or expand existing provision included:

- A shortage of adequately trained teachers prepared to accept the additional workloads associated with VET teaching;
- Costs associated with training teachers to the standards needed to meet AQTF compliance (including time release for industrial experience);
- Providing adequate facilities for delivering VET within the school (and the costs associated with updating aged facilities or building new ones);
- Costs of “buying in” provision from a TAFE (or other) provider;
- Fees charged to students.

Consistent with the qualitative findings reported above, teachers too were less concerned with “resistance” *per se* than they were with issues associated with the resourcing of VET programs, including the provision of infrastructure and training, and the costs of delivering VET. The majority of VET teachers perceived the following as significant resource issues associated with VET provision:

- The extra workload and responsibility generated by VET (e.g. liaising with employers and TAFE, increased paperwork) compared with mainstream subjects;
- Fees and charges to students, which place significant limitations on VET provision;
- Shortage of adequately trained teachers;
- Inadequate facilities and resources for delivering VET onsite;
- Resources (time, money, effort) needed for compliance with AQTF requirements.
- Internal pressures such as lack of support from principal, timetabling constraints, lack of commitment from other teachers.

From a student’s point of view, both attitudinal and structural barriers were identified as being important. The main reasons for not enrolling in VET were associated with an academic, university-oriented trajectory, and an associated perception that it is not relevant to their future study and career plans. This view was more likely in schools with strong VET programs, whereas students in schools with limited VET programs were more likely to cite reasons associated with limited access, such as VET not offered or that there was no VET subject they wanted to do.

However, further analysis indicated that an important barrier to participation was also cost. This was seen as more important than other school-related issues such as timetabling constraints or the need to travel outside school. Financial costs were also identified by teachers as the main barrier to student participation in VET programs, due to the need to charge fees.

Negative perceptions of VET were given relatively little importance by the respondents as reasons for avoiding VET. Very few students believed that VET programs are taught badly, and few were willing to claim that their parents or their teachers had discouraged them from enrolling in VET. This tends to corroborate the positive views of teachers towards VET and highlights the increasing acceptance of VET in the senior secondary curriculum.

3. **What do teachers think of VET and its place in school curricula? On the basis of what considerations -- philosophical, factual -- do they make their assessments of its importance? Do teachers in the same school tend to be united in their views and attitudes regarding VET, or is division more common and, if so, over what issues does division occur?**

In most of the schools in our study, the consensus was that VET plays an essential role in making the curriculum inclusive of a broader range of needs. VET was also viewed as a useful means of improving learning, giving many students a chance of success at school, some for the first time.

While teacher sentiment was generally very positive towards the role and effectiveness of VET programs in delivering positive educational outcomes for secondary students, there still remain a number of key issues that significantly influence the availability and accessibility of VET programs. These are summarised as follows:

- Teachers were generally very positive about VET. Virtually the entire sample agreed that students struggling with the mainstream curriculum and those intending to leave school early need VET programs.
- Similarly high proportions of teachers saw the value of VET for students who are interested in technology or business, regardless of their ability, and for students who are only average academically.
- Over three-quarters felt that vocational education and training is important even for those students who are above average academically.
- Teachers valued the role of Work Placement in increasing students' self-confidence.
- In a strong indication of support for non-university pathways, teachers endorsed the role of schools in creating links with TAFE and employers, and in providing advice about apprenticeships, traineeships and employment to an even greater extent than the provision of advice about university.
- Schools with strong VET programs ("strong VET" schools) were judged by teachers to be better able than "limited VET" schools to manage diversity in the way of a varied curriculum, stimulating activities and the availability of programs for high achievers.
- However, on the other measures – discipline policy, extra-curricular activities and student counselling – "strong VET" schools were perceived as less successful than the "limited VET" schools, although these findings may be related to the nature of the clientele in the latter group of schools.

The issue of whether teachers in the same school tend to be united in their views of VET arises principally in relation to the role of VET for students from different

academic backgrounds. VET and non-VET teachers differed in their opinions of which groups should be catered for through VET programs. Non-VET teachers appeared more inclined to recommend VET programs for students in Year 10 or below, and who are average academically, whereas VET teachers strongly supported the introduction of VET only in Years 11 and 12, and advocated VET programs for students of all skill levels, including students who are above average academically.

The interview data supported these findings but also identified issues of resourcing and timetabling as potential sources of division. Some teachers saw the commitment of resources to VET as potentially reducing the resources available for other subject areas, and some teachers remained concerned that workplacements and timetabling and travel issues might affect the students' attendance in other subjects.

**4. In careers education and guidance, how well profiled are employment, apprenticeship and VET options? To what extent do schools communicate with TAFE institutes, other VET providers, and state training authorities in designing careers education and guidance programs? How do students rate careers education and guidance and to what extent do their assessments differ according to planned and actual destinations?**

Students in schools with strong VET programs were more positive than students in schools with limited programs about the quality of their school's career-related services, including advice and assistance with employment, and information about university and TAFE courses. Moreover, these students were more likely than students in schools with limited VET to endorse the success of their school in a broader range of measures relating to their school's effectiveness, such as achieving high academic results, and providing access to cultural and sporting activities. Large enrolments and good leadership, seen by the teachers in this study as crucial to the success of VET, are also likely to have contributed to the success of these schools in providing a range of quality programs and services.

From a teacher's point of view, advising students about employment, apprenticeships, TAFE and university were all regarded as important by a majority of teachers, with over eighty per cent in each case describing these kinds of advice as "very important". However, taking the more active step of actually creating links with employers or with TAFE, while still regarded as important by the majority of teachers, was less likely to generate the view that this was "very" important. It is evident that teachers have taken on board the need to provide students with a broad range of careers advice, but it may be the case that the more time-consuming and resource-intensive creation of links with VET providers and employers which are necessary to translate this advice into meaningful careers learning for students are somewhat harder to achieve. Moreover, although a number of schools indicated that they took students to the local TAFE for information sessions and provided them with literature about TAFE options, there was no evidence of co-ordinated approaches to the provision of careers education and guidance programs.

Students' views of careers education and guidance were also dependent on their post-schooling study destinations. University and TAFE students were much more likely to have found the advice they received on further education very useful than did those who did not enter study. Similarly those studying were much more likely to rate highly the assistance they received with job search skills and advice on local employment than those who went to university or TAFE. However, school leavers who did not enter further study were also more likely than their peers to classify the advice they received in each category as "not useful". This was so even in those categories relating to job search skills and advice about local employment, where their assessments clustered at the two extremes of the scale – "not useful" and "very useful". We may interpret these findings as supporting a view of careers education and guidance which works more effectively for those students who go on to further study in university or TAFE.

**5. In developing curriculum policy with respect to VET, do schools consider the post-school destinations of students? Are the views of students factored in to the process of curriculum decision-making?**

In line with previous research, non-VET students were about twice as likely to go to university as their VET counterparts. Also in keeping with past studies is the fact that approximately one fifth of the VET graduates used their studies to access a university destination. The rates of entry to TAFE (and other VET providers) reverse this pattern, with VET graduates in the study twice as likely as their non-VET peers to study through a VET provider. VET graduates were much more likely to enter full-time work and apprenticeships and traineeships, which is consistent with the vocational orientation of their senior certificate studies. These findings support an argument that schools with VET are achieving success in catering for the post-school destinations of their students.

Despite a greater likelihood of entering the labour market without further study (and consequently a greater dependence on work), VET graduates were less likely to be unemployed, a finding that confirms the value of VET in schools as a tool for accessing jobs, and indeed a range of post-schooling destinations.

VET and non-VET students appear to access TAFE (the main provider of post-school VET) in different ways. VET in Schools graduates are more likely than their non-VET peers to enter TAFE at Certificate III level, which suggests that they are building on their VET experiences at school. In contrast, non-VET graduates were more likely to enter TAFE at Certificate IV and above (reflecting a more academic orientation at school) or, alternatively, at Certificate I and II level. This 'split' in the non-VET cohort suggests that VET programs delivered a tangible advantage to many VET students that was not available to their non-VET counterparts. Thus there appears to be a group of students who stand to benefit from VET programs at school whose needs are not being adequately catered for by the traditional academic curriculum.

Further evidence for this argument may be found in the data relating to student's views of work placement and their perception of their schools' ability to prepare them for the workforce. Students strongly expressed a need for work placement and practical learning experiences. Students in schools with strong VET programs were more likely to agree that these needs are being met. The answer to the research question regarding whether students' views are factored into schools' decision-making processes then would seem to depend on whether or not the school is prepared to extend its commitment to these issues to the establishment of a strong VET in Schools program.

The strength of the VET in Schools program appears to be its flexibility in catering for the diverse learning needs of school students, and in preparing pathways into a range of post-schooling destinations. This strength is highlighted by the evidence presented in this report that VET in Schools is able to achieve these outcomes despite the pressure on it to cater for a range of ability levels and the consequently higher proportions of academically weaker students who enrol in it.

**6. How do regional TAFE institutes view the growth of VET programs in schools? Is there a sense of competition or one of co-operation? What is the experience of TAFE institutes in delivering VET to early school leavers? Is there a view that this falls outside TAFE's role, that it should be managed by schools (or ACE providers), or alternatively that TAFE should be involved with this group and are perhaps better placed to address needs? How active is the communication from TAFE institutes to schools? Do the institutes see school leavers as an important market, and if so, how do they endeavour to profile their programs to make them attractive to this client group?**

The views of TAFE staff regarding the main aspects of the relationship with schools and with a school-aged clientele may be summarised as follows:

- TAFE Institutes differ in the roles they play for early leavers. Very young early leavers (13 and 14 year-olds) are not regarded as suited to most TAFE environments.
- There is a perception that the range of programs available to TAFE Institutes to cater for early leavers has narrowed in recent years.
- TAFE staff question whether they have the experience and resources to deal adequately with the needs of this group.
- TAFE and VET in Schools
- TAFE questions the quality of much of the training offered in VET in Schools courses. The lack of adequately trained and experienced staff is seen as a major problem.
- There is a perception that TAFE and schools are carving out niches in the training market, whereby schools provide the kinds of courses their facilities and staff profile will allow, while TAFE provides training which schools cannot offer from within their own resources.

- Better co-operation between the VET sector and the schools sector is needed to avoid wasteful duplication of resources.
- There seems to be a greater acceptance in schools of TAFE as a legitimate post-schooling option for students completing school, although resistance in some schools continues.
- There is a perception that many school leavers continue to reject places offered in TAFE courses.
- Application for a TAFE place through a tertiary admissions committee does not suit all TAFE applicants.

## Summary

These findings are indicative of a sea-change in schools. Resistance remains among some teachers. There is a view among some in the more academically inclined subject departments that VET is disruptive, that it does not fit easily into the timetable, or that it is simply not needed. But in the schools in this study, such teachers seem to be in the minority. For most, VET plays an essential role in managing diversity, in improving learning and in securing a range of good outcomes for school leavers. Even among non-VET teachers, there is a majority view that VET is needed and that it is effective.

Among students too, VET is seen as providing opportunities and pathways which are essential. Alternatives to the traditional pathway to university are provided in VET programs, giving these young people a senior schooling experience which caters for their diverse needs and learning styles. It would seem that students, if they choose not to do VET, do so because it does not fit their view of an academic trajectory, rather than because they view it negatively. Students enrol in VET to widen career options, to obtain workplace training and to gain a VET qualification. More than half the students enrolled in VET to provide access to better part-time work than they might get without training, reflecting the importance of part-time work to students in senior secondary school and in university.

Students' feedback strongly suggests that VET has satisfied their need for work-related skills and experience, and that the work placement has contributed to increasing their self-confidence. There is also encouraging data to suggest that VET has contributed to student learning more generally. Re-engaging disaffected learners and creating pathways to further education and training (in addition to the well-trodden university pathway) are important steps in forming the confident lifelong learners of the future.

The feedback from TAFE staff seems to confirm these views. There is an acknowledgement that schools and students are beginning to view VET (and consequently TAFE itself) in a more favourable light. By valorising VET, schools are also paving the way for a more positive view of TAFE as a post-schooling option.

Yet, despite these changing views, problems remain. These seem to be problems rooted in the institutional structures of schools and in the financial arrangements



which constrain the relationship between the sectors. All of the stakeholders have focussed on the financial difficulties involved in accessing VET in Schools programs. The vexed relationships between individual schools and individual TAFE Institutes cry out for resolution of the institutional arrangements which make productive and efficient co-operation so difficult. From the students' point of view, the financial demands of VET (often most prevalent in those schools with the least capacity to address them) make access to programs which can improve both the schooling experience and the prospect of future pathways more difficult.

Institutional arrangements relating to access to senior secondary VET curriculum and accreditation arrangements are somewhat different from state to state. Yet, in the schools in the three states chosen for this study, the themes which run through this report are common ones. While both TAFE Institutes and schools have done much to accommodate the need for high quality VET programs for school students, many issues need to be addressed. The need for funding and administrative flexibility is chief among them. While access to VET remains complex and troublesome, residual resistance to VET will remain and some students who need VET programs will continue to miss out.

There is a need for a frank appraisal of the issues facing schools in different settings if they are to offer high quality VET programs to all students who need them. These issues include access to TAFE programs, funding arrangements, school size, isolation and the provision of trained teaching staff. These issues all involve funding and affect different schools in different ways. Unless adequate acknowledgment of the need to provide quality VET in a range of settings (and not just in those where it is easy) is made, access to VET will continue to be constrained for many young people in Australian schools.

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# Appendix 1 Issues Paper

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This paper summarises the main issues for schools and TAFE Institutes that emerged from the NCVER funded study of the place of VET in school culture and policy. It focuses on the relationship between TAFE Institutes and the School sector, in the context of increasing delivery of VET programs to school-aged students, both within the school system and within TAFE Institutes. This paper addresses key issues that emerged from discussions with school personnel from twelve schools in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, and reports commissioned from the three TAFE research partners in this project.

## **Part 1: The school view**

### **The role of VET**

In most of the schools in this study, VET in Schools was perceived as useful and valuable. Some schools saw VET as an opportunity to find appropriate subjects and pathways for all students and have adopted VET programs to cater for and retain students who are not regarded as candidates for university entry. Several schools commented that students enjoyed their VET learning, responding well to its modular structure and competency-based assessment, with some students experiencing success for the first time. Schools also valued the role of SWL in giving students firsthand experience of the world of work and careers.

Increasing the numbers of students going to TAFE was not necessarily the first priority for some schools. Many schools saw VET as valuable as an end in itself for the reasons cited above, rather than as a pathway to tertiary-level VET. Indeed, some schools explicitly cited VET in Schools as a means for improving students' chances of entering university.

Several factors were cited that affect the ability of schools to offer good VET programs. Some are internal and involve physical and cultural resources, whilst others involve the relationship with the TAFE sector. These factors are outlined below.

### **Perceptions of VET**

While factors such as the nature of the school's clientele, school size, teacher attitudes and parent expectations all impact on the acceptance of VET, the Principal's leadership and support (or lack of it) was highlighted in many schools as the key factor making the difference between a successful VET program and an unsuccessful one.

Resistance to VET has its origins in school policies and culture which see VET as a poor alternative to academic studies. Only where the needs of students are diverse and pressing does the provision of VET become a priority.

Within schools, teacher resistance to VET was evident in teacher reluctance to accommodate VET activities, such as removal of students from classes to attend VET-related activities or to timetable changes to accommodate SWL and workplace assessment. Several schools demonstrated innovative strategies for addressing this issue.

Parents were also viewed as a source of resistance, many of whom continue to equate VET with traditional trades and blue-collar occupations. Schools commented that migrant parents are particularly resistant, wanting their children to aspire only to university entrance and white-collar occupations. Encouraging for schools were examples of shifts in parental attitudes as a consequence of their children being involved in VET and happy and successful at school for the first time.

It was felt that negative attitudes to VET would persist until its role in improving student learning is more widely recognised and a broader view of VET - one which includes the technological, artistic and commercial fields - gains acceptance in the community.

## **VET and the Senior Certificate**

An issue which impacts heavily on the acceptance of VET is the relationship between VET curriculum and the senior certificate in each state. The status of VET is heavily dependent on the institutional value accorded to VET through recognition (or non-recognition) of VET subjects' contribution towards satisfying the requirements of the senior certificate and the calculation of a tertiary entrance rank.

States take different approaches to VET in relation to recognition issues, but a recurring difficulty was uncertainty associated with the effect of subject choices on tertiary entrance rank outcomes. These issues reduce incentives for enrolling in VET and therefore undermine its role as a viable aspect of (or alternative to) conventional Year 12 studies.

Moreover, Board of Studies regulations in some states which prevent students from enrolling in VET before Year 11, place a further barrier between schools and the VET sector. Any VET courses completed by these younger students while at school cannot be counted towards fulfilment of the senior certificate and this presents a strong disincentive to enrol in VET for students who may stand to benefit greatly from VET courses in Year 10.

## **Resourcing VET in Schools**

The resourcing of VET involves both the provision of adequately trained teachers and the availability of facilities appropriate for the delivery of industry-recognised training (or the ability to buy such training from an outside provider, such as TAFE). On both

these fronts, schools are aware of severe shortcomings. The costs associated with releasing teachers for industry experience and retraining was also considered a major impediment.

The expense of updating aged facilities or building new ones was often weighed against the need to fund non-VET facilities (science laboratories, music facilities, etc.). Schools also have to assess the relative costs of providing VET themselves or buying in VET provision from a TAFE (or other) provider. This relatively simple solution – outsourcing VET – comes at a cost. The need for TAFE Institutes to recover costs means that charges are passed onto the school (or directly to the student). VET programs can become unviable if the school is unable to subsidise students who cannot afford to pay the fees which TAFE charges. It was felt that VET in Schools numbers would greatly increase if costs to students were lower.

Another obstacle to such access is distance. Time spent travelling to a TAFE location and the costs of transport can remove this option from consideration.

Schools with higher student numbers and good facilities were in a much stronger position to offer VET, buying in resources or staff where necessary, and offsetting these costs with income from school-delivered courses.

## **The Relationship with TAFE**

As discussed above, cost emerged as the major issue affecting schools' relationship with TAFE. While TAFE insists, with justification, on cost recovery, schools are differently placed in their ability to pay for courses or to charge their students for these costs.

Some schools have addressed these issues by expanding the range of programs they can provide themselves, or turning to private providers.

Other issues that emerged in relation to TAFE provision were teaching methods and timetabling that were considered inappropriate for school-aged students, poor communication (including the inaccessibility of TAFE staff) and administrative inefficiency.

However, the nature of any given TAFE-school relationship appeared to depend heavily on the players involved. TAFE Institutes experienced in dealing with schools appeared to be better able and prepared to offer services sensitive to the needs of school-aged clients, whilst schools with a stronger commitment to VET and some experience in dealing with the TAFE sector were better able to negotiate and maintain a relationship which was mutually beneficial to both parties.

In general, the following characteristics seemed to be associated with sites which were able to offer more comprehensive VET programs:

- High enrolments;
- Ability to offer courses on a cost-neutral basis or to charge students for courses;

- Pro-active Principal;
- Positive, modern view of VET;
- Proximity to a TAFE Institute.
- Good relationship with TAFE.

## **Part 2: The TAFE View**

This section presents a TAFE perspective on the relationship with schools and on the role of TAFE in dealing with school-aged students, including early leavers.

### **TAFE and VET in Schools**

VET in Schools programs were seen as effective in providing a “taster” of the options available in training. However, with the possible exceptions of IT and office administration courses, schools were not judged to be capable of delivering accredited vocational training.

Concerns with the quality of VET delivery in school were consistently expressed in TAFE. Chief among these concerns was the ability of teachers to deliver vocational competencies to acceptable standards. They believed that a key weakness of school-based delivery was teachers’ lack of relevant and recent industry experience.

TAFE staff were particularly concerned that the accreditation of poor quality training in schools would result in students entering TAFE without the competencies implied by their school-delivered qualifications. There was also a view put forward that such poor quality training would have a negative impact on the way industry viewed VET qualifications.

These concerns extended to school facilities, which were judged to be inadequate for most VET programs. TAFE personnel were concerned about inappropriate and outdated resources and equipment in some schools, and the Occupational Health and Safety conditions in school workshops. They also questioned the suitability of the school setting for teaching skills relating to the adult world of work.

The alternative to school delivery of VET - TAFE delivery - creates its own problems and is perhaps the greatest single source of friction between TAFE Institutes and schools. As discussed above, the purchase of TAFE delivery involves considerable expense to the school or to the student, which is not fully covered by the school’s operating grant. With the exception of special taster courses, funded by some states in order to market VET courses to school students, TAFE Institutes are not funded to deliver training to these students, and must recover their costs. Schools, unused to the commercial and contractual realities of VET, are consequently critical of TAFE’s



business-like attitude to recovering its costs. There is also a perception, in both sectors, that there is competition for the limited resources associated with student enrolments. One TAFE Institute noted that schools are reluctant to allow their students to enrol in TAFE courses while at school because of the threat this poses to their funding and staffing entitlements.

One of the strongest incentives for schools to persist with school-level delivery appears to be the administrative and financial problems created by the purchase of delivery from TAFE, whether this involves students attending a course at TAFE or bringing TAFE staff into schools.

In the context of the concerns raised here, it is no surprise that TAFE Institutes are highly critical of VET in Schools. There is a view that schools do not fully cater for the needs of their clientele, either in their general courses, which do not meet the needs of the weaker students or in their VET delivery, which is perceived as being increasingly less accessible to the academically weaker students, and not accessible to at risk students. There is also a view that needless and inefficient duplication of resources is occurring, with schools trying (ineffectively) to imitate what TAFE is already doing.

This was not always the case. One TAFE Institute reported close collaboration with about 100 schools in the management and delivery of VET in Schools Programs, and commented on the value of this partnership in delivering high quality and consistent training.

In general, a process of accommodation seems to be emerging in which a narrow range of industry areas (such as Business, Information Technology, and Tourism and Hospitality programs) are becoming the domain of school-based providers while TAFE is increasingly relied upon to deliver the more resource intensive programs.

## **TAFE and Early School Leavers**

The respondents in this study unanimously agreed that TAFE Institutes have an important role to play in catering for the needs of early school leavers, and all were able to outline this role in the context of a strategic plan, giving evidence of strenuous efforts to develop relationships with local schools.

Respondents felt that the adult environment and teaching style of TAFE was better suited to some students and that the variety of training options available in TAFE put it in a strong position to meet the needs of 'at risk' students.

Despite this clear commitment to early school leavers, several concerns were expressed. Reflecting a view common in schools, respondents acknowledged that the TAFE environment may not be appropriate for very young students. As adult learning facilities, TAFE Institutes cannot always offer relevant pastoral care, appropriate levels of supervision of minors and a classroom environment designed for adolescents. Given the additional costs associated with providing these services, TAFE respondents argued strongly that if TAFE was to be expected to deal with

early school leavers, then it should be funded at the same level of schools for the same clientele.

Even for the “older” early school leavers, 15 and 16 year-olds, the provision of adequate services and facilities was regarded as potentially problematic. Classrooms in which noise or boisterous behaviour might be disruptive to neighbouring classes were mentioned as examples of such difficulties. Safety, “duty of care” to minors and issues such as smoking were also raised. On a number of sites, this problem has been addressed, at least partially, through the provision of special courses on separate campuses or in separate locations on campus.

With regard to the youngest early school leavers, a common view was that TAFE should not be dealing with this group at all. For many respondents, the perception was that 15 should be the minimum entry age to TAFE. It was not deemed appropriate for 13 and 14 year-olds to be attending TAFE. In particular, the placement of very young teenagers among adults and in classrooms and programs designed for adults was considered inappropriate.

However, some exceptions to this view were evident, with some TAFE institutes offering programs for very young school leavers and youth-at-risk. Respondents emphasised however that students were encouraged to stay at school and were only referred when it was clear that they could not cope, in academic or social terms, in a school environment. Aware that TAFE is not the ideal setting for such a young clientele, another TAFE enrolls students on a short-term basis, with the ultimate aim of getting them back into school.

The second concern raised by staff was the inexperience (and sometimes reluctance) of TAFE teachers in dealing with groups of young, disengaged learners, and the need for professional development to equip TAFE personnel to meet the needs of these students.

The third reservation regarding early leavers related to the provision of appropriate programs, and again there are differences in the approaches taken by individual TAFE Institutes.

Literacy and numeracy issues were paramount in the discussion of appropriate courses for these students. The CGEA (Certificate in General Education for Adults Level 1) was regarded as particularly strong in this respect, with its emphasis on literacy and numeracy. However, the point was also made that some students would be better served by a “taster” vocational course which made them aware of the range of VET options which are available or a specific vocational program at a very basic level (pre-Certificate I). A number of respondents made the point that some certificate courses were too advanced for early leavers, and recommended pre-vocational courses, which are available in some TAFE Institutes.

Reflecting the concerns of schools, TAFE acknowledged the difficulties for young people accessing TAFE and the need for liaison staff who are trained to work with young people. There was evidence of increasing collaboration between TAFE

Institutes and schools towards better serving the needs of these clients, for example by providing dedicated liaison officers to work with schools. Taking this concept further was the initiative of one TAFE Institute to develop a TAFE-based senior college (Years 11 and 12) as a means of providing an appropriate learning environment for this clientele.

## **TAFE and School Completers**

If the role TAFE plays for school students is fraught with difficulties, then its role vis a vis school completers may be described as fraught with uncertainties.

Public perceptions of TAFE are seen as a significant barrier to uptake of TAFE courses, and reflect outdated notions of the range and levels of TAFE training. TAFE expends considerable effort marketing its courses to school completers, but meets significant resistance from schools, students and parents who tend to view TAFE as a fall-back position should a student's attempts to get into university fail.

Where students are able to apply for their course through a university admissions committee (as in Victoria or New South Wales), TAFE is disadvantaged because TAFE courses, lined up against the university offerings, will always be placed lower on students' lists of preferences. Many students in fact reject their offer of a place in TAFE.

The rapid growth in the numbers of VET in Schools students enrolled in TAFE was cited as evidence of a fundamental change in attitudes to VET. TAFE personnel felt that this trend, as well as changes in the clientele of schools, is contributing to a change in perceptions that should translate into increased acceptance of VET as a post-school destination.

## **Conclusions**

This paper outlined several issues for schools and TAFE Institutes that emerged from this investigation of the place of VET in school culture and policy. Schools generally perceived VET in Schools as a useful and valuable means of managing diversity and improving student learning, as well as broadening students' ideas about post-compulsory pathways. Several factors were identified that influence the scope and success of VET in Schools programs. The most important factor was the commitment and leadership of the School Principal. Other factors that impacted on success included perceptions of VET as a legitimate option, school size, provision of adequately trained teachers and the availability of facilities appropriate for the delivery of industry-recognised training. Where TAFE delivery was involved, cost and distance were identified as the main constraints.

TAFE Institutes were generally critical of the ability of schools to adequately deliver vocational competencies to acceptable standards. The delivery of VET in schools was enhanced, and duplication minimised, when TAFE Institutes and schools worked in partnership to deliver VET programs. A process of accommodation appeared to be

emerging in which a narrow range of industry areas are becoming the domain of schools whilst TAFE is increasingly relied upon to deliver more resource intensive programs.

Schools and TAFE Institutes commented that outdated views of the scope of VET and its role in providing training for a wide range of careers is the main source of community resistance to VET (both within and beyond secondary school). These perceptions are changing slowly, as VET in Schools continues to expand. This project will also report on the impact of VET in Schools on students' post-school destinations.

# Appendix 2- Brief for TAFE Paper

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VET IN SCHOOLS  
CULTURE, POLICY AND  
THE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING IMPACT

BRIEF FOR DEVELOPING A TAFE PAPER  
ON THE ROLE OF TAFE IN CATERING FOR  
POSTCOMPULSORY SCHOOL-AGED YOUTH

An NREC-funded project involving

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE/RMIT UNIVERSITY  
CENTRE FOR POST-COMPULSORY  
EDUCATION & TRAINING

and

THE UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA  
THE LIFELONG LEARNING NETWORK

and

SYDNEY INSTITUTE OF TAFE  
BENDIGO REGIONAL INSTITUTE OF TAFE  
KANGAN BATMAN INSTITUTE OF TAFE

## What Is Required

The following questions/headings are suggestions only and are intended to guide the development of a paper on the role of TAFE Institutes in catering for postcompulsory school-aged clients and in dealing with schools.

The paper is divided into three broad sections -

- The role of TAFE in relation to early school leavers
- The relationship between TAFE and schools
- TAFE and school completers

It is intended that this paper will outline relevant aspects of your TAFE Institute's actual approach to these issues, but that it will also offer opinions on how these issues should be approached (i.e. what is happening and what should happen).

These papers will be used in two ways in our report to NCVER. Firstly, they will be presented as unabridged appendices to the final report. Secondly, aspects of the data they provide will be incorporated into the main body of the final report. In both cases, the data will be presented anonymously such that the authors of the reports and the TAFE Institutes from which they originate cannot be identified.

## Plan

### **Section 1 - In your opinion, what should the role of TAFE be in relation to early school leavers?**

Should TAFE Institutes be dealing with this group at all? Does your Institute target this group or should it be the responsibility of schools?

What are appropriate programs in TAFE to deal with students who leave without completing Year 11 (AQF level? Literacy/numeracy? Pre-voc)? Is there a need for new programs? If so, what should these comprise?

What are appropriate programs in TAFE to deal with students who leave with Year 11 but no senior certificate (AQF level? Literacy/numeracy? Pre-voc)? Is there a need for new programs? If so, what should these comprise?

Is there currently any liaison between your Institute and schools regarding this group? Could you please describe the nature of any such liaison? Are there aspects of

school-TAFE liaison which could be improved with regard to early school leavers?  
What should happen ideally?

## **Section 2 – In your opinion, what should the nature of the school-TAFE relationship be?**

In what ways does your Institute support schools in the delivery of VET in Schools programs? Should TAFE Institutes have a role in VET in Schools programs? If so, should this be a major role (delivery and accreditation, provision of staff, provision of courses on-site at TAFE)? Or should this be a minor role (advisory, etc.)?

In your view, are schools well-equipped to deliver VET in Schools? If not, why not (where are the problems)?

How can the relationship between TAFE and school be improved with regard to the delivery of VET in Schools programs?

Should there be greater co-operation between TAFE Institutes and schools in the delivery of VET courses (both VET in Schools and VET generally) – e.g. site sharing, sharing of staff, programs, etc?

What is your view of the current range of qualifications offered to school-aged clients (AQF and senior certificate)? Do these all the needs of young people? What else is needed? Who should deliver it?

## **Section 3 – What role does your TAFE play in relation to school completers?**

Does your TAFE send material to schools to promote itself, e.g brochures which advertise TAFE courses and programs?

Does your TAFE Institute offer places in Diploma courses to school leavers through a university admissions centre?

Is there an issue about school leavers being offered places in your Institute and then not taking them up?

Do you feel there is a perception amongst teachers in schools that TAFE is a “second choice” option? Can you provide any evidence or examples?

# Appendix 3 – Partner TAFE submission

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## **The Role of TAFE in catering for postcompulsory school age youth**

### **A perspective from BRIT in regional Victoria**

Barry Golding and Kevin Vallence

Quality & Research, Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE

November 2001

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## Introduction

### Preamble

This paper is designed as an Appendix to a major report on VET in Schools: culture, policy and the employment and training impact, being undertaken for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) through the University of Melbourne/RMIT University Centre for Postcompulsory School-Aged Youth and a number of other tertiary (university and TAFE) research collaborators.

The purpose of this paper is to guide the development of the main report: essentially about the role of TAFE Institutes in catering for school-aged clients and in dealing with schools. It is one of three papers being prepared by researchers in TAFE Institutes, the others being Sydney Institute of TAFE and Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE in metropolitan Victoria.

The guidelines for this paper were identified in a brief authored by John Polesel from the University of Melbourne. Those guidelines stressed the desirability of being normative as well as objective: that is to go beyond 'what is happening' and 'offer opinions' as to 'what should happen'.

It anticipated an anonymous response (both in terms of the author and the Institute). This report has been written by Barry Golding from BRIT in a way that references to 'BRIT' can be simply changed, if required, to TAFE, though this is not necessary from BRIT's perspective. In this version 'BRIT' has been left in so as to be useful for dissemination within the Institute as well as meeting the external research project requirements.

### Method

Information for this paper was compiled by conducting focus group interviews with key stakeholders within BRIT responsible for early school leavers, the school TAFE relationship and school completers. This included perspectives from BRIT managers, (including a regional campus manager), BRIT staff, VET in schools manager and program coordinators. It also included personnel involved in both the Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN) and Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs)

initiatives, currently being implemented on the networks and clients between school and post-school destinations in Victoria.

The interview schedule was based closely on the three themes (and associated sets of questions) identified in the brief:

- In your opinion, what should the role of TAFE be in relation to early school leavers?
- In your opinion, what should the nature of the school-TAFE relationship be?
- What role does your TAFE play in relation to early school leavers?

All interviews were taped and accurately transcribed by Trish Shaw of BRIT. Our thanks to all informants who generously contributed information and agreed to be interviewed. Information was provided on the understanding that informants would not be identified in this report. All informants were given an early draft of the report to ensure the information supplied was accurate and properly cited.

### **The role of BRIT in relation to early school leavers - Should BRIT be dealing with early school leavers (and whose responsibility is it)?**

#### **BRIT Manager**

Absolutely essentially, yes. To a large extent schools are unable to cater for all of that group and that's largely why some of them leave before getting to the end of Year 12. Schools have a different culture and they'll have to do a complete rethink to be able to cater with many of the sort of students that we deal with here. There's an overlap between secondary schools and TAFE. TAFE really is a 'safety net', [particularly] for kids who are 'push-outs' or early school leavers. And we've got to be there with that. It's only a small part of our business but ... it's essential we are there and we do have products for them. They have very highly specialized needs and we've got to target to meet those needs.

#### **Head of a Teaching Centre**

I think we definitely should. [However it's] not a homogenous group of students. I don't particularly believe we should be working with all students. And I guess when we talk about early school leavers, are we talking about the 15 post-compulsory school age, or are we talking about 14 year olds? Because there is a difference.

I have some concerns about 13 and 14 year olds coming here. TAFE is an adult environment and maybe from 15 upwards they're already moving towards that transition area stage into adulthood. And given that we've been teaching those young people, my experience highlights that we can offer them appropriate programs. We need to make sure we have professional development for teachers so that they are

skilled in working with this age group. There's a difference between working with a 15-year-old and a 16-year-old. ... But I think for the 14-year-olds, that lower age group, I have concerns. I don't think we've got the right physical environment. The attitudes of some staff means that we're not necessarily an open, inviting environment for young people.

Teaching a 15 to 17-year-old, is very different to teaching a 25 to 30-year-old. Even though we all say we're into individualised sort of teaching and learning and need to acknowledge different learning styles. I think there's also a difference about working with a young person and building rapport with a young person. And not all teachers have the skills needed.

Many young early school leavers are still developing to adulthood. They're still going through adolescence. There are issues there around duty of care and should a 15-year-old be smoking or not? Or what happens if something happens in the classroom? What's our responsibility for that when they are only 15 and still living at home?

Safety is the big issue. How well you get along with your peers is just so important in the classroom. [Adults] have more resilience or can last a lot longer in a classroom. If they don't get along with their peers then they're not going to turn up. Part of it is about just physically having posters and displays that are more youth-friendly and more inviting to young people. Young people tend to be a bit more boisterous. It's just the nature of that particular age. So there needs to be a bit more tolerance or we set up classes a bit further away from other areas.

## Manager VET in Schools

I believe TAFE needs to take a stronger role with the delivery of VET in schools. And I can probably see TAFE and secondary schools having a very close relationship in that. Whether it's a pathway and whether they become one or whatever.

We're really not allowed to talk about the 'old Tech school system' where there was a Tech school and High school. But people are identifying that that type of system, whatever you want to call it, is missing. Where there's students [who aren't] academically inclined [and don't want] to proceed with the traditional VCE subjects. They're looking for more of a 'hand's on' type of trade for those students at risk. And interestingly enough, TAFE offers a broader range of subjects, like your horse studies, hospitality, sport and recreation. The variety that TAFE can offer is something that secondary schools haven't got.

The secondary schools are starting to identify those students now. And they're certainly looking as early as Year 9 or Year 8 for some 'structured' programs. I don't even know if it's structured. It's more like a supermarket of schools that during those early years that perhaps the students will click with a particular competency and sort of see there's a pathway there for a career or something like that.

[If you take students out of] the traditional secondary school environment and place them into a TAFE environment where there are no bells and no whistles, then the students accept and really like that environment.

## Marketing person

We do target this group. We conduct campus tours and talk to young people via local youth group programs, [ACE providers] and Centrelink. Young people eligible for Youth Allowance can also apply for the Youth Voucher that subsidises 400 hours of BRIT time. Personal and carer's counselling and disability support is available free of charge to students.

## VET in Schools Program Coordinator

I think TAFE should take a stronger and a more committed role in regard to early school leavers. I think with VET in schools we're catering reasonably well at BRIT. However I believe early school leavers are a different group of young people that have different needs.

TAFEs can play a key role with VET in schools. However, I think that TAFE can still play a role with the really 'at risk' students which I don't think go into the VET in schools programs. I'm talking about the younger kids, the kids that just are not making it, and don't seem to see a reason for being at school.

I think you've got varying levels of early school leavers or at risk students. There are some that need intensive work and care and programs that suit that particular 'end of spectrum-type' situation. And then you've probably got a couple of varying levels of alternative type programs that are gonna suit that particular at risk [group] better than mainstream.

But one the key factors of early school leaving is the relationship with teachers. So, if the relationship with the teacher or the teachers is not good, it doesn't matter what program you've got in that school, they're still not gonna want to be there. So that's a key issue, relationships and rapport with young people. That's gonna help BRIT keep them in a setting.

I've watched over the years and I don't believe [BRIT] has made a solid commitment. I'm not talking about VET in schools. I'm talking more about the 'at risk' kids. You know there'll be funding that comes up periodically and they'll run a ten-week course and then the funding disappears so the course disappears. So there hasn't been a solid commitment from the Institute in regard to ongoing [programs].

## A Regional Campus Manager

I think our major role is to provide sort of entry-level training into TAFE courses for these particular students such as a pre-vocational type program. In the regional campuses there has been a distinct lack of particularly trade-type training over the years. It was centralised, our syllabus changed and more resources were needed for delivery. When it became centralised it made it very difficult for young school leavers

to get into trades. Unless they were apprenticed they couldn't do the pre-vocational programs because of travel problems. So there's certainly a role for [BRIT] there.

There's a blurring of the line [between TAFE and schools]. We've provided training in pre-vocational area using the voucher system for students and that's worked reasonably well. Although it's fairly narrow, we only operate in two specific area: that is retail and building and construction. But there's some demand from people in other areas where they'd like us to do some training, but perhaps it's an unrealistic demand. They expect us to be able to deliver a mirror of whatever's being delivered in [the major regional campus]. And of course we can't do that because of resources and also numbers.

## Managed Individual Pathways Worker

I think that TAFE have an obligation to provide appropriate training for early school leavers. I think that TAFE's really should work with that target group because of the resources that they have. [BRIT] targets this group in terms of providing services for young people who are entitled to the TAFE youth entitlement voucher. I think that that is a great start, but I don't think it goes far enough. I think that we have a huge population in [this regional city] of young people who have either school-refused or made choices, not in a clinical school-refuser sense, that school is not the option for them. We should be providing options for them regardless of their parental income threshold. Which is what happens with the voucher.

I use the term 'school refuser' because I think that it's a little bit different to a young person who doesn't feel like they need to be at school. School refusal may be around issues such as bullying. It's where a young person has made a choice and they have stood their ground and they will not attend school. That's different to a young person who may be attending school and not getting the most out of it, and different to a young person who maybe playing truant every now and then. It's actually a young person who has made a conscious decision that they're not going to school anymore.

## LLN Manager

There is a role for TAFE in relation to this group. That [view is] partly based on the understanding that alternative settings rarely work very well unless they're for very small groups of young people who really have such severe learning difficulties or needs that they actually can't manage them at all. Once you start setting up alternatives it's stigmatising and I think that there's a citizen's right for every young person to have access to mainstream education through secondary schooling or TAFE.

Even if the secondary school insists it isn't suitable for all young people, there is a role for TAFE. But that role should be negotiated with the secondary system on the end of the continuum, with high-level support, ACE and other employment and education support services on the other end.

There is a decision to be made about TAFE and this age group that's about resourcing and the planning. And TAFE as it's currently constructed doesn't really offer an

environment that is friendly enough for young people generally. Some like it because they are looking for a more adult environment. They don't mind that there are no basketball courts and there's not a lot of planned activities that they can link into. Nor a lot of support networks. But I think there are quite a lot of young people who would still prefer to have a proper, planned community. Not just sort in the adult learning sense to come in and out as you please and you may not speak to anyone all day. Or you may. I think that if TAFE's going to take on this age group they need to think in terms of how they deliver the general support and other services in a different way.

That actually raises questions about the appropriateness of the staffing to deal with these younger school leavers. Primary school teachers learn how to teach. Secondary school teachers don't do a lot of learning how to teach. [In a] TAFE environment we can focus on professional development to make people a bit more skilled and encourage people to learn how to learn. I think that's some skilled stuff that we may need to train people up or get new people in for.

### Summary: Should BRIT be dealing with early school leavers?

There is a consistent view from respondents that BRIT, along with a number of providers and community stakeholders, does indeed have a responsibility for, and should have a commitment to, early school leavers, and in particular, school refusers. Discussion around the assumption of this responsibility by BRIT revolves around four issues.

1. Schools are unable to cater for the group since the culture of schools is inappropriate for the group. BRIT can and should provide a 'safety net' for school refusers.
2. Although BRIT has not had recent, extensive involvement in this client group, it does offer a suite of appropriate programs and physical resources. It also has the advantage of having vestiges of a traditional learning culture closer to the old 'tech system' than are secondary schools.
3. The 'early school leaver group' is non-homogenous and a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is inappropriate. The group generally and individuals need intense and highly specialised intervention.
4. Structural and resource (funding) factors inhibit BRIT's ability to provide a proper, planned community environment for young people. Few teachers have the skills or experience to connect with or create learning environments for groups of young, disengaged learners.

## **The Role of BRIT in relation to early school leavers - What are the appropriate programs?**

### **BRIT Manager**

What you're essentially dealing with is the concept of bridging ... from what their current knowledge is to some level where they're capable of doing some sort of vocational course to get skills and get a job. I've never been totally satisfied with the products we offer in this area. We normally offer some sort of 'cut down' VCE or a different State version of that and that's the sort of thing that most of those students have been repelled from already.

One of the mistakes we've made in vocational education over the last few years is our lessening of the availability of true pre-vocational programs. They were very, very valuable indeed. And as far as AQTF level, you're looking essentially at levels one and two products that have a fair amount of general learning in them but are vocationalised. A pre-voc type of course is required. There is a responsibility on government to produce products that are appropriate within the TAFE sector.

[There is little difference in what's required] between someone with Year 10 and someone with Year 11. We all know to survive in this world you need to be educated far beyond Year 11 so one has to assume that they are also a push-out. They didn't like the product delivered in secondary schools. So there has to be something for them because a person educated to Year 11, essentially is going to be a laborer for the rest of their lives.

### **Head of a Teaching Centre**

People who have completed Year 10 but not year 11 are 15 or 16 year olds and higher. And the kind of programs we're offering at the moment are usually [at a] low certificate level. So we've got the CGAE ... which is a very good course in terms of the literacy and numeracy [modules].

A lot of the young people who come to us have literacy and numeracy issues and that course is quite appropriate for them. There's also the Certificate II in vocational education, which we're currently using for that group as well. In both the CGEA and the Certificate II in vocational education and training, they both have the opportunity to have electives or modules that have vocational kind of placements. 'Tasters', so to speak.

Some of them, even though they're leaving and haven't completed Year 11, may have a clear idea of what they want to achieve. So these kinds of programs may not necessarily be appropriate. They may not necessarily need them, they may actually want to go off and do some other study. A lot of our Social and Community Studies courses are for students who are a lot older. I have a limited understanding of some of the other programs across the college. But if [early school leavers] are not sure what they want to do, and if they do have literacy and numeracy issues, or one or the other, then these programs are quite good.

[The programs we offer] give [early school leavers] some opportunities to have a taster of different areas, but they also build on some of those, not only literacy and numeracy skills but life skills. Living skills emphasise connectedness. A lot of it's about getting them connected with their peers so that they're not at home by themselves, getting them connected back with employment possibilities. And it's about transition, about putting them on a pathway or negotiating with them where that pathway may lead. But also acknowledging that with some young people, it's like they need to have several stepping-stones before they eventually get to some point. So I think we do have a role at BRIT.

We need to be seriously looking at partnerships with schools. Schools do have a responsibility, and I'm sure they're accepting that to some extent, but I'd like to look at more options where TAFEs and schools are doing things jointly. And it may be that [young people] are at school still for two days a week and they're at TAFE for two days a week. Because one of the things that we can offer, particularly now that, Tech schools are no longer around, is some of those vocational options. Those Certificate levels I and II stuff.

We're talking about 15, 16, 17 year olds coming in to do vocationally orientated programs: at that age you do need the lower level competencies ... but the difficulty is that the competencies at a Certificate II level, even in construction, are still a bit too advanced for them.

It's like there's another step that they need to go into. Another more basic level of competency that they need to go through before they can then work on to that later. And that's, the dilemma: we have to offer accredited training and we can only go with what's around. So it's kind of like there's still a gap at that lower level.

## Marketing person

For pre-Year 11 students we offer Bridging Course in Maths and English and numerous Certificate 1 courses. These 'pre-apprenticeship' courses are skill-based and prepare people for specific employment areas, giving them a 'taste' of a particular study area before embarking on a particular apprenticeship.

For post-Year 11 we offer a range of courses through to Advanced Diploma. All Certificates have specific employment objectives. BRIT also offers tutorial assistance for students experiencing difficulties.

## A Regional Campus Manager

We chose building in particular [at our regional campus] because we had a number of people who had expressed interest in that area. It's a hands-on trade-type project. We've looked at auto[motive studies] but it's difficult to set up an auto shop resource-wise. We also chose retail because we were looking around for something else that we could offer, particularly for females. I mean there's no bars to females doing



the building construction course, but historically there haven't been many enrollments in that area.

It seems as though the VCE has failed for some people and there's been a gap there. Early school leavers and the community generally are looking to fill that gap. Now the schools have realised that they're moving towards changing their syllabus and now is the time to talk about the new proposed program. They're talking about offering TAFE programs down as low as Year 10. And I really have some major concerns about that. I believe [school] staff in particular don't understand training packages and the fact that training packages were framed around assessment, particularly on-the-job assessment. Year 10's in my view really aren't mature enough to go on the job and to actually do the assessments as they're written down in the training packages.

I think secondary schools, when they've realised they've got to do something else, have looked around and reached out and grabbed at TAFE rather than trying to develop programs of their own. I believe that's what they should do. I think that there's nothing wrong with them developing programs that fit into the training packages, But for them to come and use a training package and have participants in say Year 12 coming out with level III qualifications, I believe, is just way out of line. It's not targeted to the workplace and that's what the packages are really written for. And the [school] staff don't really understand the training packages. I mean it's hard enough for us to understand and they're our bread and butter.

I'd go back to the pre-vocational type courses in which they benefit from mixing with adults. That's another benefit I suppose of the TAFE system where if the program's run entirely at a secondary school, they haven't done all that cross-fertilisation.

It's a good role model where you've got adults who have perhaps got a bit of wisdom. It's wisdom, it's work ethic, it's responsibility, it's the fact that someone, adults, they'll have financial burdens on them. They realise that they do have to work and they're better, I know it's a generalisation, but some of them meet deadlines better. And they take the responsibility of going to a workplace at a higher level. The younger students perhaps won't dress appropriately, whereas the adult knows they've gotta present if they're going into an office to work. In one of our major factories and they need to dress appropriately and some of the secondary students don't realise that even though it's pointed out numerous times.

## Managed Individual Pathways Worker

I think that the appropriate programs are taster programs. Many courses that TAFE's offers for vocational training are not open to young people, because they haven't made a conscious choice "I want to be a tradey" or "I want to be a carpenter." If they think that they might want to work with timber [for example], it's important to put in taster programs that allow young people to have a snapshot of a different profession, so that they can make an educated choice about where they're going.

Young people who leave before Year 11 often haven't had work experience so they haven't had that traditional experience of having a taste of a career or an option. Or

that may not have been an option for them when they were at school if they'd stayed on 'til Year 11. Most young people who leave school before their VCE, their Year 12, they will often have made a decision that they don't want to do the final year, because they have a particular direction in mind or Year 12 is too stressful.

We have an obligation to provide some options that are more vocational and hands on. I think that [for those who leave earlier than Year 11 we have to provide hands-on learning training, not academic learning, for those young people who have different learning styles than the traditional 'sit down and shhh' model. So I think that the taster model is one that has not been explored enough and should be wider offered.

People that have finished [Year 11] are in a different situation. What they need is often a lot of support around them recognising that whatever course they are doing is equivalent to VCE. I think there's a lot of pressure in the community. Young people see VCE as the only option and if you don't do Year 12 you've failed. Traditionally young people if they'd finished Year 10, would be looking at an apprenticeships and creating pathways for themselves into apprenticeships or traineeships. And often they've done Year 11 because they were waiting for those apprenticeship or traineeship to come along.

So their needs for support are very different. Often they come with a lot of baggage about feeling like they've failed, about feeling like the option that they thought would be easy has not happened. So they are very disillusioned. And I think that we really need to look at giving them hands-on learning once again so that they can experience some success as soon as they walk through the door. And in some ways that's the same for under-Year 11 leavers.

The Certificate in General Education for Adults (CGEA) it's becoming more and more understood in the community. I think that's a good one to go with because if you start a new literacy or numeracy course or a new label for it, then the community isn't aware of it. But people who are offering apprenticeships and traineeships aren't aware of it. I like the CGAE.

## LLN Manager

Given the [State] government's commitment to 90 per cent of young people having Year 12 or equivalent by 2010, we do need to be looking at equivalent programs within the TAFE system. But I think there also needs to be an understanding that bridging is still always an important role that TAFE need to play. Literacy and numeracy skills may need further development ...

The new Certificate of Applied Learning model offers some potential for broadening the VCE. And I hope that that is implemented in a way that actually just broadens the VCE and doesn't become an alternative path but divergent path. I like the model. If you think about an Arts Degree, if someone's got an Arts Degree, it doesn't really tell you much all about what they might have done. You then need to say to them, "Well what were your majors?" If we look at VCE, it's, "So I've got my VCE." "Well what were your major areas of study?" It may be vocational. It may be academic.

I think, what I've learnt about the young people who are exiting early is that it really is about learning styles. And sometimes its about social and personality issues that they bring with them to the school context. I think they really need to learn how to learn because that hasn't happened for them in their formative years in the secondary system.

When they are exiting [school] that early there is a high chance that they don't actually understand how to learn and [therefore] reject learning. The ideas around project-based learning would promulgate the need for 'hands on', particularly for boys. They need to have some meaning in what they're doing. What is in it for them? How does it work? And how to actually do that and redirect interactive learning rather than rote. At that level when they're exiting they need to learn to learn.

### Summary: What are the appropriate programs for early school leavers?

Respondents identified few specific programs, but identified three program design criteria for successful programs. Those factors were:

1. The group need a vocational outcome and this probably requires a pre-vocational commencement point. Respondents referred to 'taster' courses that lead to a range of potential options – including work – that re-connect them to their peers and to the community. Delivery will need to respond appropriately to their idiosyncratic learning preferences.
2. Literacy and numeracy competence and self esteem that underpin and affect vocational participation and success. In responding to these requirements, the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA) and the proposed Certificate of Applied Learning are possible models.
3. Seriously negotiated partnerships and collaborations, such as those between secondary schools and BRIT as equals. At the moment there is a perception that schools see BRIT as quite separate to what they do and have little understanding of vocational competence and the training package infrastructure that supports teaching of those competencies.

### **The Role of BRIT in relation to Early School Leavers - Nature of the liaison between BRIT and schools**

#### Manager

There probably isn't as much liaison as there needs to be because there is too much competition between the TAFE sector and secondary schools. And that competition stops them from talking frankly about such issues. They try to keep the market to themselves. The liaison that is occurring probably isn't enough, which is why they created the LLENs. There's obviously a discontinuity between schools and TAFE just to create the whole concept of the LLENs. People are falling through the gaps. Somehow we've got to make it a seamless transition.

The LLEN is trying to essentially hold together some sort of pathway between different education systems, so kids aren't lost. Now it's early days yet, but I don't see how one person with a budget that [a LLENmanager] has got, could possibly cover the area and carry out the tasks [identified]. All [they] could possibly do is identify one or two key things that might make a difference, and concentrate on those.

## Head of a Teaching Centre

[Our current relationship] has an underlying competitive sort of element to it. On the one hand some of our VET in schools programs in our area are certainly working quite well. I know on the other hand that schools see us as very business like and think that we're too expensive and so on.

With our Youth Access program we're actually going around more and more to the schools. We have to be very careful though. We don't want to put an option in front of young people that says. "Come here." But we want to be able to say to schools, "Look, if this person is a school refuser for whatever reason, a couple of days at a TAFE would be appropriate to give them some [time at TAFE and some at school]"

It's a tension around trying to promote a program that should be seen not as an alternative but as a legitimate choice, but not wanting to open up a door that many young people may not have gone through had they not heard about it but stayed on at school. There needs to be some kind of selection process or assessment process. Because I don't think we [TAFE] are the answer to everyone.

## Manager VET in Schools

Part of my role as manager is to liaise on behalf of [the VET in schools program coordinator] or on behalf of the Institute. And sometimes it can be a confusing role. You can talk to a secondary college coordinator and their VET in schools is a big role and they'd probably like to see us doing all of the organisational structure of it and it can be difficult talking with them. Because you can walk away and think that we've clearly outlined what's going on, not in all cases, but in some cases. And you find that the message that comes back is totally different. They still want to proceed with their methods ...

It can range from auspicing a course delivered at the secondary college by the secondary college themselves, a total course. It could be a combination of BRIT delivering part of that course and the secondary school delivering part of that course. Or it could be BRIT delivering all the course. So there are lots of combinations.

Secondary schools are really paranoid about a memorandum of understanding. That's been drilled into them somewhere along the line. So part of the communication process is to get that memorandum of understanding right in the first place. And sometimes that takes quite a while. And fortunately enough this year we've changed our memorandum of understanding over to an ongoing contract. Which will take the pressure off us going back and negotiating for sometimes months on end about a

memorandum of understanding and how we should deliver. So there's lots of work there just in that negotiation.

We also find, even this year, it's quite interesting because we've got [one Secondary College] requesting multi-media studies. People [in schools] as far away as [50 to 100 km away] want to do furniture studies. There's lots and lots of new secondary colleges coming, coming and asking for VET in schools programs. They come to us because in the end it's the quality of the delivery that's accepted, it's a standard that we deliver and the support we can offer. You hear a lot about the 'tick and flick' people who are in and they're gone, but they don't offer the support. Their quality's not as good as what we offer [at BRIT].

## Marketing person

We regularly talk to students, including some at risk of leaving school early and take them on campus tours. This contact is nurtured through us meeting with Careers Teachers via the [Regional] Careers Association which meets monthly. We also talk to students and encourage them to attend Open Day and Tertiary Information Service evenings.

## VET in Schools Program Coordinator

It's mainly communication on the phone about delivery of VET in schools. Basically it's about nuts and bolts delivery.

When we started with VET in schools in '94, it used to be called 'dual recognition' back. And you build up the rapport and the relationships with the schools over time. I think that's really critical because I know that BRIT's reasonably pricey compared to other deliverers and yet they still don't seem to be talking to other deliverers. Because we've set up a really good rapport with those schools, they seem to just keep coming back, even though there are cheaper alternatives. We provide training delivery, venues, coordination.

## A Regional Campus Manager

We've had historically, had a thing called the 'Local Network that's been operating in [our regional town] for three years. It started off really well with a focus particularly on students who were in this difficult age bracket: the ones who weren't coping at school and they gave terrific support. It was mutually helpful. There has been a change in focus in recent times. The networks [like LLENs] have become increasingly more bureaucratic and focused on secondary school activities.

## Managed Individual Pathways Worker

Currently as part of the Managed Individual Pathways project, or MIPs, we work with all the MIPs in junior and secondary colleges. We consult with them about what options we're providing for young people and see if that's going to meet the pathways that young people are identifying. What happens [here] with the junior

schools is at the end of Year 10 they can actually identify whose not going onto [the local regional senior secondary] and why not. So they've actually got some information there about what pathways would be useful and what would be appropriate. So we're trying to tap into that pathway of knowledge and that information and create some more options: which is why we're doing a taster course next year.

MIPs has got a long way to go. We've only been running for three months in BRIT. I think that there are some real issues around how MIPs works in TAFE's in terms of it only being for young people who are on the youth voucher. I think, taking off my MIPS hat, I think the target group that is actually the most needy are those young people who cannot afford to choose and switch courses because they're not voucher-eligible. They often have to pay a couple of hundred dollars or more in some cases to do a course. If they change their mind half way through because it's not the course they wanted to do because they haven't been given the right guidance, then there's a real issue about them being able to afford access to training.

## LLen Manager

Yes, obviously the liaison in relation to VET in the schools has been almost a business-based one in terms of [BRIT] delivering programs for the schools or in partnership with them. So I don't think the liaison has really ever focused on looking at sharing the issues about the needs of young people who fall through the gaps. That is an aspect that we [at BRIT] need to get more involved in. I think the (MIPs) Pathways Project gives an opportunity for that. And currently BRIT is pretty involved through [the Managed Individual Pathways Worker]. I think they're doing a very good job of starting to connect with schools, with the young people and what's happening for them and where they're going.

## Summary: Nature of the liaison between BRIT and schools

Some of the issues about liaison were been alluded and summarised in relation to earlier questions. Additional points about 'liaison' were that:

1. Schools see BRIT as too business-like and competitive. Because the two sectors don't liaise, there is a perception that some young people 'fall through the cracks' between the sectors.
2. Because schools tend to be very set in their ways and not used to the commercial and contractual realities of vocational education and training, a lot of personal contact is necessary to develop and nurture collaborative and sustainable relationships.

## **The relationship between BRIT and schools through VET in schools - BRIT's role in VET in schools**

### **TAFE Manager**

VET in schools is structured not to succeed in my opinion. So it's not a matter of us getting on better with a local high school or looking at what we do and how we work together. It's a matter of government's sitting down at a very high level and working out how they are going to properly manage vocational education in the secondary education sector.

What they've created now is a hybrid system where they are pretending that high school teachers with a general education and who have lived in high schools all their life, are capable of delivering vocational competencies after completing a few hours of some course related to 'train the trainer' or the Certificate IV with a 'top-up' from a degree to a Certificate IV of Workplace Assessment and Training. Anybody who knows serious vocational education knows that's hopelessly inadequate. So basically the system is structured for high school teachers to attempt to interpret vocational competencies without the experiential base to successfully do so. Therefore there is a complete and utter compromise of standards of what occurs in VET in high schools. The structures that have been put in place will cause failure. There's no question. It's only a matter of time until the politicians realise that that's the case.

### **Managed Individual Pathways Worker**

I think the VET in schools is a good program in terms of providing the vocational snapshot. I think that VET in a lot of schools, even though it was set up for young people who perhaps couldn't cope with formalised education for a long period of time, has become another 'high achiever' program. And only those young people who are doing well who could represent the school well to the community are getting access to it. So I think that's a huge issue in itself and the criteria [for selection] needs to be refined.

Other than that I think VET as a principle, as a concept is a really good concept. It's about access and equity and the hands-on learning. I also think that maybe VET shouldn't always be run in schools. Often young people make a choice about leaving school because of some sociological things that are going on. They feel like they are labeled, they feel like the teachers don't like them, they feel bullied. Some of that other stuff means they really should have access to a choice about where they study. And that access is fairly limited in terms of where they can choose to do that.

[The situation in rural town is quite different to in cities]. The labels that are put to young people are very different. In our situation we have junior schools that feed into the one VCE College. What happens with that is that often young people go up to [the Senior Secondary College] with this vision of having this 'fresh start' but their labels have followed them. "This young person a troublemaker, rah de rah." So, that is an incredible difficulty: once a name is there for a young person, it does follow them. It's probably a little bit more of an issue in a regional or a rural area. Because

young people don't get the fresh start that they are told that they will get when they go to their Senior Secondary College.

BRIT is a big Institution. I think sometimes the smaller agencies feel that they are best suited because they are a small place and should get. I think there's a bit of 'nose out of joint' stuff about some of the funding that BRIT gets that they don't.

This being a big monolithic three-storey place is something that we're gonna be working on desperately in terms of our MIPs. What we're looking at doing is creating an area that is known as a 'youth information spot' or ... trying to create a 'youth unit'. But I don't necessarily know if that's the title. The difficulty that we have currently is that there is no one person [at BRIT] that young people can speak to. So we can't do any promotion around the theme "See so and so, they're friendly". And word of mouth is the most effective way to promote things. We can't actually do that because there's no one person that they can speak to.

As part of MIPs we are hoping to set up a process that workers, parents and young people can know there is this particular spot in TAFE. That they can ring on a certain number and they will get someone who is trained to work with young people. I think that long-term we need to work on some other structures about, say, the [BRIT] information centre or other places being more youth-friendly. As a short-term measure, we need to get young people feeling comfortable with the environment and having relationships. The research says that the most effective way to engage a young person is to have a relationship with them, and get to know them one on one. So that's what we're hoping to do. And I think that any BRIT or any TAFE that doesn't do that would have trouble accommodating young people's needs, unless the young people have got an incredibly high maturity level.

Some of the staff here [at BRIT] feel that young people having a right to participate in TAFE is an imposition. And whether that imposition is about their own career goals, that they don't want to work with young people or kids, they wanna work in the adult learning sector. I think a lot of staff feel that the young people are being pushed upon them. That has huge implications for how classroom activities are undertaken. It has huge implications for how much support a young person receives in an adult classroom. So there certainly are a lot of noses out of joint. Having said that, there are a lot of people who are going, "Yeah, great, just tell me how I can do it."

## LLN Manager

[BRIT] is obviously involved in some VET delivery. From the schools point of view they see BRIT as far too expensive and they're often looking to private providers or ACE providers to pick up some of the roles. So that's an issue that needs to be addressed in the whole planning of VET in school delivery. TAFE should have a major role, not only because it makes sense in terms of user-fee sources but also in the issues around trainers needing to have currency and needing to be closely linked with industry. TAFE is set up to focus on those aspects.



If the schools are to set up a strong vocational learning centre within them, they would need to develop that culture and that ideology and have more of a sense of industry people coming and going in jobs. And really, in that sense, the duplication doesn't make a lot of sense. But I do think that perhaps the schools could be delivering some of the Certificate I and II stuff at an earlier level that links in to help with some of that flung on then to a TAFE Institute and maybe the schools could do that. Certainly some of the transition vocational training and the Certificate of Applied Learning may have areas that would be leading into Certificate III and IV that are in TAFE.

### Summary: BRIT's role in VET in schools

This question about BRIT's role in VET in schools elicited two responses about VET in Schools itself. These were:

1. VET in Schools is a hybrid, unsustainable and 'pretend' system. It actually destroys the credibility and value of vocational education and training by using poorly prepared and inexperienced staff in inappropriate environments.
2. VET in Schools shouldn't be run in schools. VET in Schools has tended to become elitist with only the smarter and 'more presentable' students being successful.

There are some important repercussions for BRIT practice.

1. BRIT is perceived by several informants as a daunting institution and not particularly youth-friendly. Earlier comments suggested staff were poorly prepared or unwilling to work with younger participants.
2. In whatever planning BRIT undertakes, it is essential that students don't always and only refuse to attend school because of factors associated with VCE or VET. They leave for social reasons as well. Systems have to respect these choices.

## **The relationship between BRIT and schools through VET in schools - The ability of schools to deliver VET in schools**

### TAFE Manager

Fundamentally high schools are not in a position to teach vocational competencies. In a small range, a range of narrow areas [like computing] they are. But most of the areas are so vocationally focused on the job that high school teachers are not equipped to do it. And the problem for us is that their misinterpretation of the standards within competencies produces for us, a whole range of training that we have to recognise but we know is largely second rate. Industry knows it's second rate, every TAFE Institution in the country knows it's second rate. The only people who don't know it's second rate are the high schools and apparently our political masters. Now eventually you know what's going to hit the fan, and industry's going to be up in arms about the watering down of the standards of training in their industry training areas.

We are going to be blamed for it. You can go down to any area in [BRIT] and talk about VET in schools and they will give you horror stories about the quality of the graduates we are getting and the training we have to accept. And the retraining costs we are wearing because of the poor previous training. So fundamentally, when I talk about government making decisions, they've got to decide – where is vocational education taught? Or indeed how is it taught? And I believe government has got to force a situation where proper vocational educators are used in high schools to teach vocational training.

And by that I'm not talking about TAFE teachers,. I'm talking about vocational educators with industry experience. And it means that either high schools have to reduce the number of generalist teachers that they actually employ and employ people similar to the way TAFE does, out of industry, part-time. Or they use TAFE lecturers or lecturers from another RTO [Registered Training Organisation]. Or they send their people here to TAFE with other RTO's to do their training. It's the only way they're going to do it.

## Manager VET in Schools

It depends on the area: it's a yes and no. In hospitality and in office administration, secondary colleges would normally be set up with their own labs for office administration, I.T. When you start getting into engineering studies, automotive, furniture and some of those subjects ... the secondary colleges haven't got the resources there but interestingly enough, they may claim they've got the qualified staff. But that's part of our role: to check the qualifications of the people delivering the course. A good example is we had a secondary college math's teacher delivering automotive. When it came to the issue of issuing a qualification, we were strong enough to say, "No. We won't give those students that qualification because of the qualifications of the person delivering the course. And they accepted that and fixed that up.

## VET in Schools Program Coordinator

In hospitality you need a trade certificate. You need to be a chef to be able to deliver the cooking components. And you need to have had food and beverage experience for front of house. That's critical from a quality point of view, because if you're delivering it in a 'Mickey Mouse' way, then it's just not worth doing from the student's point of view. And I think the students really like the change of venue and atmosphere that TAFE has. They really enjoy coming to a TAFE college, they say. And they're being treated like adults.

## A Regional Campus Manager

VET in schools is a good thing. It's a way of introducing students to a different environment. But I've concerns about it actually being delivered in the secondary schools. There's the staffing. They have wound down the workshops in the secondary schools and the trade staff haven't been replaced. Some trade areas are

being run by teachers who are craft teachers, not tradesmen. And even the maintenance of the equipment in the workshops is deteriorating.

There are major occupational health and safety problems in [school] workshops. The whole area needs to be re-invigorated in the secondary schools. They need to perhaps take their focus away from VET programs to develop their own programs, which would link into VET programs, into our training packages. But in some areas, like the computer area in particular, those programs have worked quite well. The barriers between qualifications at a secondary school and a TAFE are much reduced in that they'll fit in much better.

The negotiations between the provider and the regional schools as to costs and charges and classroom times are difficult. The money's paid to the secondary school. They want to hang onto it as much as they can. We wanna get paid a reasonable rate so it doesn't cost us money and all that stuff becomes real murky. The [person] has proved to be fairly difficult to deal with, because he's always looking for a deal. He wants to change the rules and get a better deal for his kids. Which is reasonable, but all those things then mess up the waters and it becomes more difficult, more time consuming and then at the end quite often the results are their responsibility to process and they're not done. That happens frequently.

You can't turn the clock back but I think back to prior to '87 we operated TAFE out of the regional [Tech] college. It was a good system where staff members could move between both areas. It gave the staff a bit more variety. They had secondary school students and they had a part load of TAFE students. For them, for us, and I was one of them at that time, that was a terrific way to operate.

## LLEN Manager

Well I think that the culture of teaching is very different in the school system and that there is not as much focus on adult learning as a model. And I think that the old [school] pedagogy and cultures are still alive and well. That doesn't equip them well for the lead into VET. As it is currently constructed with competency-based learning, there are problems in terms of resourcing. The whole idea of doing mock, artificial learning environments doesn't work in many areas of study. The real opportunity is in Hospitality: TAFEs usually have a restaurant that's a real one. They usually have a Hairdressing facility that's a real one. And that's a better environment I think for learning.

## **The relationship between BRIT and schools through VET in schools - The VET in schools relationship**

### TAFE Manager

There is tension between TAFE colleges and high schools right across this country and it's caused by competition for students. And the current government is encouraging competition and it is being dysfunctional, well and truly.

The average high school ... is funded on the basis of the number of students that they have and that determines their structures, how many of this they can have, how many of that, their salaries. The entire lot is there. And then a school goes ahead and forms a program of education to deliver covering a wide variety of subjects. They are given an amount of money that funds VET in addition to the budget they get for their normal delivery. But it's a top-up amount of money. It doesn't fully fund the VET delivery. The top-up they get is meant to fund the difference between the teacher pupil ratios in a high school and the teacher pupil ratios in a TAFE college. They're funded at about 25 to one most of them, something in that order. We're funded at 14 to one. They're funded for the additional ten.

So to make the funding work, they've got to drop off a couple of their traditional subject areas, use that money plus the top-up to buy VET to replace those subject areas. What they actually do is deliver all the usual ones, have the small amount of money which is the top-up to buy a bit of extra VET and then blame TAFE because they're too expensive.

That fundamentally is the stress between TAFE colleges and high schools. It's going to require someone at a very senior level to sit down and say, "Hey, sort this out, let's put a structured place that properly does it." And the answer is, to drop off those two subjects and to then employ vocational educators instead with the top-up money or drop off those two subjects and that money comes to TAFE for us to deliver it. They're the only serious answers, they really are.

## Manager VET in Schools

[Schools would] love to see the cost of the delivery reduced or removed. If that happened we'd have an enormous influx of students. I think cost is the big issue. Secondary colleges say that they are bearing the burden of the costs of delivery and that TAFE's too expensive. Whereas what TAFE is saying is that we need to recover our costs for that delivery. That's fair enough on both parts. So to improve the issue there really needs to be someone looking at the delivery of fees and charges..

The other interesting thing in improving delivery is school busing. Most secondary colleges have school buses. Within [BRIT's] region and the large area that we cover, the issue of getting students to us for training is a big one. Students could travel by bus from [another town half an hour away] to here.

I'm not really sure how we improve [the relationship between TAFE and school]. It's an administrative thing, it's a careers thing, it's visits to us, it's visits backwards and forwards between TAFE and secondary. It might be training some of the secondary staff in some of the programs that we do so that they do know what's going on. It certainly is a big issue. If that relationship was improved the flow on benefit, whether we're looking at students at risk or we're looking at pathways for the young people, would certainly be great.

## VET in Schools Program Coordinator

I think [the relationship can be improved] by going and chatting and getting to know people. And it's that rapport that you build up over meetings and so on. It's networking and PR And to be seen to be providing a supportive, quality service. The fact that TAFE students do get jobs is proven. There are job pathways there.

TAFE doesn't play a big enough role at the moment but can, in regard to skilling up. Whether it be for jobs or whether it be for life skills. And there's a lot of work that could be done in that area that TAFE currently isn't doing. There's a huge area out there that could be explored in regard to alternative type-life skill programs. People could learn how to build their own home, they could learn how to set up their own vegie garden and be more self-sufficient.

## LLEN Manager

There's a funding issue that needs to be addressed because I think that's partly causing big problems in the [school TAFE] relationship. There needs to be a sense of who owns the programs or who owns the students when they're getting the programs, and sort that out for a funding base. I think there also needs to be more cooperation and partnership in the planning that's focused on what's the best outcome for the young person. Not necessarily what's best thing for the profile and budget of [the provider]. It should be done in a way that's going to create the best opportunities for the young people about being able to do a certain course. So I think concentrating on the partnerships and sorting out areas of responsibility [is important]. And one dovetails into the other.

Things like site sharing or sharing of staff are important. That sort of cooperation needs to occur at the senior level. For instance in [this regional city] the principals meet [at the same time day each week]. I believe that the [TAFE Manager] should be a part of that to get issues get raised at that level rather than the leadership not driving and understanding what some of the issues are. The cooperation should start there. There should be task groups formed to look at the idea of sites here and there Not only for cost efficiencies but for better delivery. We obviously do it in a couple of [BRIT regional campuses].

## Summary: The ability of schools to deliver VET in schools

The inappropriateness of staff in secondary schools to teach to an acceptable level of competence was the main and consistent concern in response to this question. There were some specific exceptions (IT was noted). The end result is seen to be a problem for industry having to accept second-rate graduates, and for BRIT having to retrain under skilled graduates at our own expense.

Schools have few acceptable physical resources and little experience of an adult learning model and none with competency based training and assessment.

## **The relationship between BRIT and schools through VET in schools - Is VET in schools meeting the needs of young people?**

### **BRIT Manager**

My answer is no. I don't think they possibly could because the culture [of secondary schools] is one of general education, developing the person, their thought processes rather than vocational skills. And VET is seen as an add-on.

So the bias is always toward general education. I would argue that in the cohort Year 11 and 12, there is a very strong argument that the emphasis should be on vocational education, not general education. Vocational education should be the main thrust with a bit of general education in there to support it, which really is the TAFE model. I don't believe most generalist educators in high schools would agree with that statement at all. And because of that they don't offer a range of products in Year 11 and 12 that meet the needs of that group, that genuinely need vocational education.

And you get absurdities such as - there are high schools and indeed the Department of Education in this State currently talking about pushing TAFE courses and Certificates down to grade 10 and grade 9. You know, again they're only doing that because they've got kiddies that are playing up in that area because their products aren't meeting their needs and they're trying to solve it by throwing them into a TAFE course. I do believe there is an argument to maintain a generalist education to a certain level before going vocational. And I think you've got to think very seriously before pushing vocational courses to that level. Because really: you're locking in some kid to a future career when they're 12 or 13 years old, which is a little bit unfair.

### **Manager VET in Schools**

I think the current qualifications that TAFE offer are actually new and exciting to secondary school students. Where you have horse studies, hospitality, you have sport recreation, you have, you know, things that they've never heard about. On a recent visit from one of the secondary colleges with the students over to our industry-training centre, the first thing these people wanted to see was the plumbing department. Because "That's what we do back home." Everyone does plumbing, and the mindset wasn't even opened up to furnishings and carpentry. What's carpentry? Building houses. What about cabinet making? What about all these sorts of things? So the scope of offerings is quite exciting.

The secondary colleges are starting to back at say Years 8 and 9. They're not asking us to deliver a full course of whatever it may be, but they're asking us to deliver 'sprinklings' of competencies. Like a little bit of a supermarket of skills to entice the student to continue on. The other thing that would worry me about VET in schools ... is the pressure that's put on those young kids to do another course on top of another course. So they're doing their VCE even though VET in schools and the programs we do is part of that, but suddenly a student finds that they've got a full engineering

program on their plate. Almost an apprenticeship in the same year as they're doing their VCE. So lots of pressure on the kids.

## VET in Schools Program Coordinator

I think the VET in schools programs are terrific. However, I do believe that some kids, that real 'at risk' category, are not really being catered for that well. I think the VET in schools is terrific but there are some programs that could be developed for the more at risk. And I wouldn't say a VET in schools student now was an at risk person at all. I think the quality of the student has improved over the years. Maybe originally it was seen as a 'soft option'. I don't think it is anymore. I think it's seen as something that's worth having. Kids that don't even get to VCE are needing programs that suit their needs. But I think that's where we are lacking [at BRIT].

## A Regional Campus Manager

I have some concerns that people can come out with a level III qualification that may not match our standards. That's really the major concern. The other is starting TAFE programs in Year 10. Now it may be Certificate I, and perhaps if it is then we're right, but I'm sure they'll be looking to go higher than that.

## LLN Manager

In terms of the way the qualifications have been constructed, the moves are to take away the predominance of the Board of Studies and everyone aiming towards getting their VCE and going to University, and then if they fail, ending up doing it at TAFE. There should be a broader range of qualifications within the VCE. There's areas like the arts that will maybe get picked up but as part of Applied Learning. But we should be creating on a much broader education base for young people as a qualification. If you look at emerging industries there's a whole lot of areas that we're not preparing young people for the new jobs. Some of the stuff around maybe environmental issues, greenhouse gas, that we're not really thinking ahead to start preparing young people with qualifications for the jobs that haven't even happened yet. And we can only do that if we start making better connections between the educators and industry and the innovation that's happening.

## Summary: Is VET in schools meeting the needs of young people?

1. Previous references to culture, standards and staff, predicted a negative answer to this question. A number of reasons have been given.
2. VET in schools students are under additional pressure – they are doing one course on top of another.
3. Regardless of the success or otherwise of VET in Schools courses, they are not catering for the group of school refusers.
4. VET in Schools isn't catering for students wanting access to 'emerging industries'.

## **BRIT and school completers - Marketing BRIT to school completers**

### **TAFE Manager**

We not only send materials to schools, we send personnel to brief students. We do have resistance there because the high schools tend to be general educators. Most of their counsellors are general educators and most counsellors in the high school sector show a bias towards continuation of general education, not vocational. But nevertheless, the material we do get to them and get to them quite well. We certainly do offer TAFE Diploma alternatives through the university admissions system and we get a lot of our students in that way.

### **Head of a Teaching Centre**

We send materials to schools to promote BRIT. Marketing are often involved or have a connection with careers counsellors at schools and we send information along to them. We wouldn't necessarily send along information about all our courses. That information is sent to careers officers from marketing. There's probably a bit of a gap there though in terms of what careers officers see, or how they perceive TAFEs, and whether they see them as a legitimate choice or not. We need to make stronger connections with schools. It's happened on a fairly ad hoc basis but is part of [the MIPs Manager's] role, to have those stronger connections with all the schools around here.

### **Marketing person**

We prepare a monthly flyer for the [Regional] careers association that is distributed via email. We send flyers on particular courses such as pre-apprenticeship courses on a request basis from Departments. Open Day is promoted widely as a showcase day for all campuses with postcards targeted to Year 11 and Year 12 students throughout our catchment area. Some of our courses are also listed on the VTAC guide. Other publications included the 'short course' guide, the course handbook and all the information available on our website.

### **A Regional Campus Manager**

We send out brochures but quite often our timings not right. We do attend publicity days when they have all the schools. To some extent we could be overlooked by some of the local school population because there's only three programs that we offer full-time: office administration, retail and building construction.

### **LEN Manager**

I don't think [marketing] has much impact. Brochures really may be waste trees. ... I don't think young people actually engage much with brochures. They get a whole lot of them in a bag and then they go out in the rubbish. In the expos that come to their school or they go to I think they're more interested in the lollies other than the bags. I



think it's the basic marketing tool, it's relationship marketing. And BRIT, the material that we should send, should be much more interactive. We could use the Website in a more constructive manner. To promote learning generally in the community we should, instead of brochures, have some stuff happening in the local papers about learning. That would have more impact on people than moving out to the paths that lead them into TAFE.

### **Summary: Marketing BRIT to school completers.**

1. BRIT expends considerable effort in marketing to schools but young people don't relate much to brochures.
2. Careers counsellors in schools are seen to be a barrier. Some informants do not see BRIT as a legitimate choice for school completers.
3. Relationships with schools need to be re-thought.

## **BRIT and School Completers - Offering BRIT places to school leavers**

### **TAFE Manager**

School leavers are being offered places in the Institute then not taking them up [It's a huge problem]. I've seen it in every TAFE College I've been in. It's a complete and utter mess. This concept of centralised enrollments through an admissions centre is fraught with difficulties for TAFE. They're trying to fit us into a university mould and it doesn't meet our client needs. Our clients want to wander through the front door of this place, enroll and be guaranteed a place. That's basically the client base we're dealing in.

### **Marketing person**

Some courses require VTAC entry as for uni courses for young people. For non-VTAC courses, students apply direct to BRIT. If they are suitable they are sent a letter of offer.

### **LLEN Manager**

In the past young people often put TAFE down as a lower priority. If they get an offer at University they would then take that up and not take up the place. But I don't think it creates issues that are not [insurmountable]. It just means that someone further down the list gets an offer.

### **Summary: Offering BRIT places to early school leavers**

1. School leavers not taking up places is a problem. Many see applications as a 'sifting process'.
2. A VTAC model doesn't suit BRIT participants.

## **BRIT and School Completers - Is BRIT a 'second chance' option?**

### **TAFE Manager**

The majority of high school teachers would see TAFE as a second option without question, though the number of enlightened ones who see TAFE as a genuine alternative to university is increasing. It has increased significantly over the last four to five years, no question. But the vast majority still see TAFE as a second option.

### **Head of a Teaching Centre**

I think that [a 'second chance'] is the general perception within the community. Teachers are part of that. Schools are part of that. That's a long historical sort of attitude that's going to take us a long time to shift and change.

With the VET in schools program it's shifted a bit. Being a parent ... I've actually been along to some of these sessions. Where schools have talked about options ... the emphasis is still on the road into universities, that's the pathway. That's the best pathway that your children can go. They are certainly talking more about TAFE, but it's usually only TAFE in terms of like a VET in schools program. Not as a legitimate long-term goal to do a traineeship or an apprenticeship. Or even a diploma course at a TAFE Institute. I don't hear that when I go along to these forums.

### **Manager VET in Schools**

A lot of teachers think it's about the tenth choice. There are some teachers that really encourage pathways into TAFE, but normally you'd find the direction from career advisers that you should be going to uni and you should be reaching for the stars. And down the bottom of the list, if you fail all those, then you can go to TAFE.

### **Marketing person**

It's definitely the widely held perception, but we're working towards altering this perception by highlighting our strengths. When some teachers contact us for campus tours they typically say "I have a group of kids who aren't going to make uni. I would like them to look at TAFE" or similar.

### **VET in Schools Program Coordinator**

I do definitely. Yeah I think probably because teachers have been to university and they've got a mind set on what they've done. It's easy for them to give advice about how a young person can continue on in the university mode. I don't think they know a huge amount about TAFE. But I do think they consider that it is way down the list. It's not as prestigious obviously as getting a university degree ... in their own little mindset.

## A Regional Campus Manager

A lot of people [in county towns like this] see that tertiary education's a way of spreading their wings and getting out of [town] and doing something different. The local population seem to think it's a great thing if the kids stay in [town] and they are part of the whole picture. And they don't go out of the town and that's a good deal too. But gee. I'm quite pleased that my kids left town. They grow more, they see more ...

## Managed Individual Pathways Worker

I think that's an actual community perception. That unless you're looking at some of the trade certificates where BRIT has been known as 'the trade provider' in terms of the training, yes. In a lot of courses and a lot of options people think that TAFE is like a cop-out. You couldn't make it in school. I think the perceptions improving because of the name and the quality of training we provide. But I certainly don't think that we're alone in that. A lot of other places like [ACE providers] certainly have that reputation. BRIT has done a lot of marketing around that and I think the issue is becoming smaller and smaller.

If we want to get anything happening for young people, whether we're looking at promoting it to young people, to parents, to community groups, to schools, to whoever, it needs to be an individual relationship with someone they trust. And I think the best way to promote things to schools is through providing the option of secondary consults. Our enrollments or the number of possible enrollments for next year has increased, the schools say, three-fold to how many they would have referred last year. Because they feel safe talking to someone they know they've got the right answers. They know that whoever they're speaking to is not just pushing BRIT. They're pushing what's best for the young person. We need to have good staff with good reputations, who the community trusts and we need to promote that, the individual relationship stuff. For young people, for teachers, for everyone.

We need staff with proven a history in the field. A reputation around providing quality services, which is always a hard one to check out in an interview. Someone with an understanding and knowledge of networks, someone with a knowledge and understanding of what secondary consults means. So secondary consultation in terms of saying "You can ring me if you've got a young person, don't use names, maintain confidentiality". "Give me a ring, check me out, I'm accountable to my community, see what I say". And secondary consults really is just a way of providing information without meeting that young person. But I think that secondary consults are more than that. I think they're a way to hold yourself up into the community and be accountable.

I think that in a lot of ways, a lot of staff in TAFE Institutions haven't necessarily proven themselves in the field and I think that's a huge implication. Because we're trying to promote services and training and say "Come to us, we'll train you really well." And people are looking at the teacher going, "God, they couldn't even cop it in the field, how can they train people to cop it in the field?" So I think that's a real issue

and I think we need to promote and make ourselves more accountable [if we are to be seen as something other than second chance].

## LLEN Manager

Yes, anecdotally from young people [we are seen as second chance]. They report that that's what's said to them by career's advice teachers quite directly. That you can always go to TAFE if you don't get into the Uni. So there's not positive planning for coming towards TAFE. And there's anecdotal stuff around about metals manufacturers. And teachers taking books to the factory and saying, "If you don't study hard you'll end up being left like this." It needs quite a bit of marketing to turn it around. That TAFE is certainly the second option.

## Summary: Is BRIT a 'second chance' option?

1. Society and community does!
2. The conventional 'pathway' doesn't have BRIT (TAFE) identified as a destination.
3. Not a legitimate option.
4. (Careers) teachers are a real problem.
5. BRIT is still perceived as a 'trade' school.
6. Again, it is individual relationships based on the specific needs of young people that will make the difference.

# Appendix 4 – Partner TAFE submission

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VET In Schools  
Culture, Policy and  
The Employment and Training Impact

A TAFE Paper on the Role of TAFE  
In Catering for Postcompulsory School-aged Youth

Paper Prepared by:

Mr. ....

Manager

Post Compulsory Educational Pathways Department

ABC TAFE

Ms. ....

Coordinator

Vocational Pathways Program

ABC TAFE

## **Section 1 - In your opinion, what should the role of TAFE be in relation to early school leavers?**

Should TAFE Institutes be dealing with this group at all? Does your Institute target this group or should it be the responsibility of schools?

ABC TAFE undertakes its role as a public provider with careful consideration to the needs of its key stakeholders and the broader community. The core organisational values embrace ABC's commitment to its role as a public provider. These values include:

- Providing quality educational services in an atmosphere of social justice
- Being community focused
- Being a leading and vibrant institute
- Equal opportunity for all
- Working together in teams
- An environment based on trust and loyalty
- Business success
- A responsible approach to environmental issues in the workplace

As the 2001 Victorian Training Provider of the Year it is appropriate that ABC TAFE takes a leading role in the delivery of Education and Training programs for the post compulsory years. From the discussion paper of the Victorian Qualifications Authority – Broadening Opportunities for Young People – it is stated that “The Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria identified the range of qualifications available in the immediate post-compulsory years as a critical obstacle to enabling students to take full advantage of potential educational and training opportunities. This is especially the case for those students whose aspirations and preferred learning styles have been unable to be accommodated adequately within the VCE”.

While schools are more resourced than TAFE to provide educational, personal development and pastoral care programs suitable for the school aged cohort, many early school leavers look to TAFE for a new environment or for different programs. It is our responsibility as a public provider to respond to this community need. This response is an integral part of the provision of an “atmosphere of social justice”, since the overall educational, training and employment outcomes of early school leavers are poor.

ABC TAFE as a public provider has broad responsibilities for providing vocational education for 15-19 year olds. We have been particularly successful in the area of

apprenticeships and traineeships. We currently provide training for around 5000 of Victoria's apprentices and trainees, and approximately half of these are 15-19 years of age, which is higher than the national average (NCVER 2000). In 2000, the position of a dedicated Apprenticeship and Traineeship Coordinator was established to establish, develop and implement across the institute the coordination of apprenticeships and traineeships.

Our response in terms of VET In Schools has also been effective. In 2001, we had over 3000 VET In Schools students and almost 100 school partners. Our Options For Work and Education (TAFE Taster) program has also grown quickly, and serviced more than 300 students in 2001. This program targeted Year 10 students. It is our desire to enable this age group to access Vocational Education and Training, and create connection for these young people to the VET sector, and to ABC TAFE. We have actively sought this connection by providing since 1998 a key contact for all schools program in the Schools Liaison Coordinator.

Yet, we recognise that we need to do more to cater for this cohort in our provision of pastoral care, extra supervision and available courses. We are currently reviewing all of these areas in parallel with the ongoing development of our Managed Individual Pathways Program.

What are appropriate programs in TAFE to deal with students who leave without completing Year 11 (AQF level? Literacy/numeracy? Pre-voc?)? Is there a need for new programs? If so, what should these comprise?

Students who leave school without a Year 10 pass have limited options at TAFE. They can consider:

- Certificate I in Automotive
- Certificate I in Hospitality
- Certificate in Engineering (Basic)
- Adult Literacy Program- ESL/Literacy- units from the Certificates in General Education for Adults levels 1-4
- Young Adults Industry Training Scheme (YAITs)- Literacy & Numeracy plus Automotive skills
- Other Pre-apprenticeship programs.

At this stage, students with a Year 10 pass are eligible to enrol in the following pre-apprenticeship and pre-vocational courses:

- Certificate II in Automotive
- Certificate I in Furnishing
- Certificate II in Furnishing

- Certificate II in Building
- Certificate in Engineering (Basic)
- Advanced Certificate in Engineering (Welding)
- Certificate in Engineering (Avionics)
- Certificate in Engineering (Aircraft Mechanical)
- Certificate in Engineering (Aircraft Structures)
- Certificate II in Horticulture
- Certificate II in Sport & Recreation
- Certificate I & II in Retail Operations
- Certificate I in Business/Office
- Certificate I - III in Millinery
- Certificate I in Cookery
- Certificate II in Business (Office Administration)
- Certificate II in Information Technology
- Certificate III in Community, Health & Services (Personal Carer)

The following basic education courses are available:

- Adult Literacy Program- ESL/Literacy- units from the Certificates in General Education for Adults levels 1-4
- Basic Education- Reading and Writing Stream/Oral Communication Stream- units of the Certificate in General Education for Adults levels 3 and 4
- Bridging Program (maths/science skills)- units of the Certificate in General Education for Adults – students must be over 18 and at least 12 months away from full-time education, and have literacy skills
- Young Adults Industry Training Scheme (YAITs)- Literacy & Numeracy plus Automotive skills

Young Koorie people are eligible to enrol in:

- Coorong Tongala Course- Certificate I
- Certificate II in Koorie Education, Training and Employment

The following programs are available to young people in the juvenile justice system:



- Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre offers 14-17 year old males educational assessment and vocational counseling. Courses commenced there can be completed later at as part of mainstream ABC TAFE classes
- Senior Youth Training Centre offers an extension of the programs offered at the Melbourne Juvenile Justice Centre
- Parkville Youth Residential Centre offers 14-21 year old women educational assessment and the Certificate In General Education for Adults

There is a need for new programs. Currently, young people who have reasonable literacy but who have met with limited success at school, have to choose between adult VCE at TAFE or a specific vocational program, focusing on an area they may know very little about. There is no general education (at less than VCE level) or general vocational program (offering a taste of different industry areas) offered as an introduction to the TAFE adult learning environment.

While units of the Certificate in General Education for Adults (CGEA) Level 1 may be offered as part of basic literacy programs, the whole Level 1 CGEA is not offered at ABC TAFE because it has been considered too low a level. The Level 2 CGEA requires a level of literacy that some of this cohort have not achieved at school, particularly those who have not passed Year 10.

This year the Institute has well over 200 youth voucher student (who are aged 15 to 17 years old) enrolled in many different departments across the institute. This comes about because these students identify their area of training or education, with limited knowledge or support from their school. Most students enroll in Automotive, Administrative Studies, pre-apprenticeship programs in Building Furniture and Electrotechnologies, and the VCE group. Completion rates for these students tend to be lower than other students probably at least partly due to their ill informed choices at the point of entry. Often students will be enrolled in VCE as it represents the option to which they have been taught to aspire and they have limited awareness of other options. Those students who have exited the school system without any clear goals, who only know they wish to work and don't necessarily desire to undertake the VCE in the manner delivered by secondary schools, or indeed TAFE; this group, usually made up of significant numbers of youth voucher students, would probably benefit more from a generic vocational program which could link them back into the traditional VCE, a VET focused VCE or apprenticeships

Some options we are currently considering to address this concern in the future are:

- A general Certificate II in VET
- Victorian Certificate in Applied Learning (VCAL)
- Certificate in General Education for Adults Level 1

What are appropriate programs in TAFE to deal with students who leave with Year 11 but no senior certificate (AQF level?

Literacy/numeracy? Pre-voc?)? Is there a need for new programs? If so, what should these comprise?

The situation for Year 11 completers is not much different than for those who have not completed Year 11. Compared with Year 10 completion, the only additional courses available after completing Year 11 are:

- Certificate III in Information Technology
- Certificate I in Electrical

For these students, the same concerns arise:

- The need for a broad vocational option that enables them to test their interest in different industries/VET programs
- The need for focus on personal development, communication skills, literacy and numeracy.

We would look to the same options we are considering for those who have not completed Year 11.

Is there currently any liaison between your Institute and schools regarding this group? Could you please describe the nature of any such liaison? Are there aspects of school-TAFE liaison which could be improved with regard to early school leavers? What should happen ideally?

In 2000, the Post Compulsory Education Pathways Department was established in recognition that liaison between ABC TAFE and schools needs to be coordinated. The functions of this department comprise:

- Schools Liaison Coordinator- key contact for school-TAFE partnerships for VET in Schools delivery and Year 10 Options for Work Education (TAFE taster) programs.
- North West Work Education Development Group (North West WEDG)- an Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEP) funded cluster- for work placement coordination for VET in Schools student in the North West of Melbourne
- North West Pathways- a ABC TAFE service which provides Pathways Negotiators to local secondary and coordination and Pathways Negotiators for ABC's own program.

Ideally there should be more staff for each of the areas above. With increased staffing there could be:

- Improved response time to school requests for information, which at peak periods can be slower than desirable

- More work placements for VET In schools students in a wider range of industries
- Larger numbers of young people in schools could be serviced by our Pathways Negotiators
- ABC TAFE's MIPs program could more quickly implement broad changes within the institute and more dramatically improve intake and advisory services as well as outcomes for students
- Staff to drive the decision-making and implementation of new courses to suit the school-aged cohort

In addition, ABC TAFE has made a strong commitment to the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) in the area. This includes:

- Hume Whittlesea LLEN
- Maribyrnong Moonee Valley LLEN
- Inner Northern LLEN.

This, of course, involves planning in conjunction with schools.

## **Section 2 – In your opinion, what should the nature of the school-TAFE relationship be?**

In what ways does your Institute support schools in the delivery of VET in Schools programs? Should TAFE Institutes have a role in VET in Schools programs? If so, should this be a major role (delivery and accreditation, provision of staff, provision of courses on-site at TAFE)/ or should this be a minor role (advisory, etc.)?

ABC TAFE developed a philosophy of supporting school in their delivery of VET in Schools from as far back as 1999 when it developed the full time position of secondary college liaison coordinator. The purpose of this position was twofold. Primarily the role was established to facilitate partnership arrangements between the Institute and the secondary colleges, and to coordinate the delivery of the VET in Schools programs. Secondly the position was about liaising with schools, students and parents in regard to the TAFE sector, training options in the post compulsory area and arrange attendance by Institute staff at careers nights, careers network meetings and Tertiary Information Service events.

TAFE has a key role in the VET in Schools programs. As an RTO ABC TAFE is responsible for the quality of delivery, appropriateness of staff qualifications, accreditation of courses. The Institute also provides staff to schools for delivery of programs, as well as students attending the Institute. Our partnership model, where schools deliver some or all of a program, includes at least 3 visits to each school, for each program being delivered by relevant Institute staff to oversee delivery and assessment. As ABC TAFE has partnership agreements with around 100 secondary

colleges in 2001 we have also found a side effect of having staff regularly in schools is that we have been as a moderator for programs. All programs across the 100 schools with the Institute are achieving the same standard of delivery and assessment. We are creating a level playing field for more than 3000 VETIS students.

**In your view, are schools well equipped to deliver VET in Schools? If not, why not (where are the problems)?**

ABC TAFE works with many schools in 17 program areas from Pakenham, Werribee and Corio to Whittlesea, Benalla and Seymour. Our experience indicates there is a wide range of expertise/resources in schools.

Some are very well equipped to deliver VETIS programs, having invested funds to develop and maintain facilities. Others however have very limited resources. What were previously “High Schools” were never equipped to deliver in the trade areas and so these schools have to be limited to delivering internally courses such as Office Administration and Information Technology. Most past “Technical Schools” still have facilities and equipment, but unless ongoing investment has been maintained, this tends to be fairly old and dated.

**How can the relationship between TAFE and school be improved with regard to the delivery of VET in Schools programs?**

Schools have become familiar with dealing with TAFE institutes to source specialist facilities and equipment. Open partnership arrangements can be structured to limit movement of students and maximise access to appropriate facilities.

The biggest problem now facing the school sector is the level of vocational competencies and relevant recent industry experience of the teaching staff. Under the new Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) this is an area of significant concern for all RTOs. Strong partnership arrangements, with appropriate supervision, are a way to address this issue. To address this shortfall in knowledge, skill and experience the school sector will need to look at programs such as industrial release, vocational training, certificates in VET, etc.

ABC TAFE’s relationship, on the whole, is very good with the secondary sector. The result of over 3000 students from almost 100 schools demonstrates that a customer service model is one that schools appreciate. Creating a position that covers all departments within the Institute to coordinate relationships and delivery has been a large improvement.

Currently schools regularly make contact to discuss a range of issues which include welfare and discipline, attendance, delivery issues etc. by department staff developing relationships. Through the 3 visit partnership arrangements actual teachers of classes at the school and their TAFE mentor regularly communicate and discuss issues. In

most areas these coordinators of VET programs have developed networks of staff made up of TAFE, VET coordinators and VET teachers in schools.

Should there be greater cooperation between TAFE Institutes and schools in the delivery of VET courses (both VET in Schools and VET generally) – eg: site sharing, sharing of staff, programs, etc?

I agree that there could be even greater cooperation between the sectors than currently exists, however this is now dependent on meeting the new requirements of the AQTF which must be complied with by June 2002.

What is your view of the current range of qualifications offered to school-aged clients (AQF and senior certificate)? Do meet these all the needs of young people? What else is needed? Who should deliver it?

As outlined earlier there are issues with the current offerings for this cohort. The training sector is not funded along similar lines to schools to address areas other than specific vocational training.

### **Section 3 - What role does your TAFE play in relation to school completers?**

Does your TAFE send material to schools to promote itself, eg brochures that advertise TAFE courses and programs?

ABC TAFE's Marketing area and Customer Service Centre (established in October 2000) are primarily responsible for the promotional material and coordination of events which serve to promote the Institute and its courses.

In past years, we have distributed Careers Kits annually to all secondary government, catholic and independent schools, as well as local community organisations. The kits comprise: course brochures, career options and a corporate video and we are currently in the process of converting the kits to CD ROM in an effort to minimise costs and keep information up to date.

The Customer Service Centre also coordinates an annual Tertiary Information Services (TIS) event (held at Broadmeadows Campus) to promote the courses on offer at ABC TAFE and provide information to prospective students. During this event the institute plays host to over 1000 local Year 12 students who are able to obtain general information about the VTAC process before moving on to the "supermarket" which consists of various individual stands displaying in full detail, the range of courses offered.

In addition to this, the Customer Service Centre also coordinate Careers Expo events upon request, where they visit secondary schools and showcase the range of services and courses ABC TAFE have to offer.

Does your TAFE Institute offer places in Diploma courses to school leavers through a university admissions centre?

ABC TAFE offers a range of courses from Certificate IV level to Advanced Diplomas through the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC).

Is there an issue about school leavers being offered places in your Institute and then not taking them up?

Upon consulting a range of departments across a number of Diploma areas at ABC TAFE, it was revealed that in areas such as Administration Studies, Accounting, Public Relations, Advertising and Marketing, approximately 50% of students who have been offered places do not turn up to enrol. Areas such as Hospitality and Tourism, experience approximately 5-10% not accepting offers where the course has been their first preference and approximately 50-60% not turning up where the course has been their sixth preference.

In any of the above cases, a letter is then sent to the prospective student to determine whether they wish to enrol in their selected course. If they are no longer interested, the TAFE will then accept direct entries.

Do you feel there is a perception amongst teachers in schools that TAFE is a “second choice” option?

In speaking to a number of schools in Melbourne’s North West region, the perception that TAFE is viewed as a secondary option certainly seems evident. Yet what also appears evident is that this perception amongst teachers is slowly changing with the gradual promotion of TAFE within schools and the broader community in recent years.

The status of TAFE is certainly improving which is clearly evident through the increased offering of TAFE programs through VET (Vocational Education and Training) in schools. Since the inception of VET in schools at ABC TAFE in 1996, the number of VET students has jumped from 40 in 1996 to 3,128 currently in 2001. In spite of this rapid growth, although VET Coordinators and Careers teachers are very committed to the promotion of TAFE in their schools, some teachers still undervalue the VET sector avenue and thus choose not to promote it as strongly to their students.

Many teachers in schools are in fact very supportive of TAFE, yet find that their obstacle lies with the student’s parents, who still harbour more traditionalist ideas seeing University as the only valid option for their child. This can severely limit the student's options in an example for instance, where the student achieves a high ENTER score, hence having numerous University options, yet wants to become a Chef and therefore pursue an Apprenticeship in Commercial Cookery, a course which would not be available to them at University.

In an effort to bridge these gaps and educate parents, schools often conduct evening seminars specifically targeting parents to demonstrate valid alternative pathways to VCE and the benefits of TAFE.

On a statistical level, a study of our VTAC reports in conjunction with the growth of VET in schools (mentioned above) reveal some contrasting information. For instance, looking at a section of our Business group division which incorporates Hospitality, Travel and Tourism and Finance, Management and Marketing, from 1997 to 2001, these areas have experienced a decline in enrolment numbers (from first and second preference students) of approximately 20 – 40%. These findings are in direct contrast with the growth of VET in schools which has steadily increased from 449 students in 1998, 1,506 in 1999, 2,518 in 2000 and 3,128 in 2001.

Through speaking to these schools and examining the statistical data, there certainly seems to be evidence of a generic perception amongst schools that TAFE is a secondary choice. This may further be supported by the above findings, illustrating a decline in TAFE enrolments. Yet the rapid growth in VET in schools and discussions with teachers indicate that teachers are definitely recognising that although University and TAFE are indeed different, they are both valid and complimentary educational options. As a result, teachers in schools are increasingly both acknowledging and promoting TAFE as a valid avenue for career advancement.

# Appendix 5 – Partner TAFE submission

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VET IN SCHOOLS  
CULTURE, POLICY AND  
THE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING IMPACT

BRIEF FOR DEVELOPING A TAFE PAPER  
ON THE ROLE OF TAFE IN CATERING FOR  
POSTCOMPULSORY SCHOOL-AGED YOUTH

An NREC-funded project involving

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE/RMIT UNIVERSITY  
CENTRE FOR POST-COMPULSORY  
EDUCATION & TRAINING

and

THE UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA  
THE LIFELONG LEARNING NETWORK

and

SYDNEY INSTITUTE OF TAFE  
BENDIGO REGIONAL INSTITUTE OF TAFE  
KANGAN BATMAN INSTITUTE OF TAFE



## **Section 1 - In your opinion, what should the role of TAFE be in relation to early school leavers?**

Should TAFE Institutes be dealing with this group at all? Does your Institute target this group or should it be the responsibility of schools?

- TAFE should be a public provider that provides second-chance opportunities for early school leavers.
- There is strong evidence that suggests many young people leave school after Year 10 and then for various reasons decide that a TAFE College is a more appropriate learning environment to renew their studies, especially at HSC level.
- There is equally strong evidence that many school leavers leave after Year 10 because of the academic nature of Years 11 and 12. A preferred option for these school leavers is to find suitable employment through apprenticeships or traineeships and then complete an appropriate VET course. Recent developments in NSW that have led to a change in HSC curriculum are perhaps resulting in this cohort remaining at school.
- Sydney Institute does target early school leavers. Institute promotion campaigns advise students of a range of both non-vocational and vocational courses that are available. XYZ Institute's Strategic Plan anticipates that early school leavers will be part of the Institute student population up to 2005.

What are appropriate programs in TAFE to deal with students who leave without completing Year 11 (AQF level? Literacy/numeracy? Pre-voc?)? Is there a need for new programs? If so, what should these comprise?

- XYZ Institute provides a Certificate 11 in General and Vocational Education. This course is for people who want to improve their chances of entering the workforce or completing further study. Completion of this course allows early school leavers the opportunity to continue their studies at TAFE through enrolling in higher level Certificate 111 or IV courses.
- XYZ Institute also offers Pre-vocational courses in Literacy and Numeracy. These courses are designed to assist young people and/or adults to improve their reading, writing and maths skills in order to improve job opportunities and pathways to further study. There is current debate in NSW that a delivery model should be established at XYZ Institute that would allow Year 11 and 12 students opportunities to participate in pre-vocational and vocational studies within the Institute environment.
- There might be other opportunities for providing specific pre-vocational courses in occupational areas, for example, TAFE NSW offers a pre-vocational course in

Printing for young people who leave school in Year 10. The course develops skills that will allow students to seek work in the Printing industry.

- Recent developments in apprenticeships and traineeships are also providing enhanced opportunities for students who leave without completing Year 11 to enter vocational education and training.

Is there currently any liaison between your Institute and schools regarding this group? Could you please describe the nature of any such liaison? Are there aspects of school-TAFE liaison which could be improved with regard to early school leavers? What should happen ideally?

- There are strong liaison between XYZ Institute and schools regarding students who leave without completing Year 11 and also students who intend to complete Years 11 and 12 and include a VET in Schools component.
- XYZ Institute has a fulltime VET in Schools coordinator who liaises with various school stakeholders in both the public and private secondary education sector.
- Generally, the relationships between XYZ Institute and both school sectors is good but there are instances where particular schools appear to have a policy of not advocating TAFE as an alternative option.
- There are also strong linkages between the secondary school sector and TAFE NSW at the DET level that results in the developments of policy and planning practices.
- As indicated above, there are current considerations to establish a “senior college” at XYZ Institute that would allow the development of a particular learning environment for young people within the TAFE Institute.

## **Section 2 – In your opinion, what should the nature of the school-TAFE relationship be?**

In what ways does your Institute support schools in the delivery of VET in Schools programs? Should TAFE Institutes have a role in VET in Schools programs? If so, should this be a major role (delivery and accreditation, provision of staff, provision of courses on-site at TAFE)? Or should this be a minor role (advisory, etc.)?

- XYZ Institute strongly supports the current VET in Schools program.
- This support is demonstrated by the Institute delivering a range of VET in Schools programs on-site at XYZ Institute and also providing teaching staff to deliver programs within the School environment.

- Enrolment statistics for VET in Schools at XYZ Institute were 907 enrolments in 2000 and 723 in 2001 (data collected 25/5/01). Major areas of study for VET in Schools are:
  - Child studies
  - Construction and furnishing programs
  - Design
  - Hospitality and accommodation services
  - Agriculture/horticulture
  - Library services
  - Information technology
  - Manufacturing
  
- All VET in Schools programs delivered at XYZ Institute can be accredited towards enrolment in a higher-level course. Most VET in Schools students would receive an AQF qualification on completion of their course.
- TAFE also plays a major role in the training of secondary school teachers who wish to deliver VET in Schools programs within their school environment.
- Experience at XYZ Institute has demonstrated that the role of the VET in Schools coordinator is significant in building relationships with both public and private schools who engage in the VET in Schools programs.
- Recent developments in funding models have seen a decline in VET in Schools enrolments at XYZ Institute with a corresponding increase in the secondary school sector. There are questions of quality of provision that need to be explored and 2002 should provide an indication of quality of delivery in the Schools sector through those students who wish to articulate to higher-level courses.
- XYZ Institute has introduced a Vocational School Student of the Year Award as part of its annual Awards program. This is open to all students who enroll in a VET in Schools program at the Institute. This Award has provided valuable publicity for the VET in Schools program.

In your view, are schools well-equipped to deliver VET in Schools? If not, why not (where are the problems)?

- This is a vexed issue.

- Within NSW secondary schools are members of Registered Training Organisations and thus, from a quality perspective, should be delivering the same quality programs as other RTOs.
- There are concerns that the qualifications and industrial training that secondary school teachers have gained, compared to TAFE teachers.
- There are equal concerns regarding the level of facilities and resources available in the Schools. One might compare the standard of commercial kitchens in a TAFE College to that of secondary schools but obviously there will be instances where schools have good facilities.
- A model seems to be emerging where secondary schools have the human and physical resources to deliver Business, Information Technology, and Tourism and Hospitality programs, but rely on TAFE Institutes to deliver programs that are more resource intensive.

How can the relationship between TAFE and school be improved with regard to the delivery of VET in Schools programs?

- Through the development of partnerships that are focused on the effective and efficient use of resources and clearly defined student outcomes.
- The current model appears to maintain promotion and teaching opportunities within the secondary school system.

Should there be greater co-operation between TAFE Institutes and schools in the delivery of VET courses (both VET in Schools and VET generally) – e.g. site sharing, sharing of staff, programs, etc?

- This expands on the point above.
- The following case study presents a model of how probably NOT to deliver VET in Schools:

*Jones High School is a small inner city school located within 15 minutes walking distance of XYZ Institute. The school recently submitted an application for a grant of \$400,000 to develop a VET Centre with new facilities being developed in IT, Business, Tourism and Hospitality, and Retail. At the same time, XYZ Institute has embarked on a \$48 million building construction and refurbishment program that includes these vocational areas. Suggestions that the same set of facilities be used for both VET in Schools and mainstream TAFE students is not accepted.*

What is your view of the current range of qualifications offered to school-aged clients (AQF and senior certificate)? Do these all the needs of young people? What else is needed? Who should deliver it?

- The current AWF qualifications available to school-age clients appears to be satisfactory.

- As has been indicated in this paper previously, NSW is currently investigating opportunities for the development of a Senior College within XYZ Institute. Further information on this can be made available in the future.

### **Section 3 – What role does your TAFE play in relation to school completers?**

Does your TAFE send material to schools to promote itself, e.g brochures which advertise TAFE courses and programs?

XYZ Institute plays a strong role in relation to school completers through the following:

- Participation in school leaver study and job forums
- Communication with school vocational councilors
- Provision of numerous printed material to various schools
- Individual visits to schools by Institute staff, where appropriate
- Significant advertising in newspapers and magazines

Does your TAFE Institute offer places in Diploma courses to school leavers through a university admissions centre?

No.

Is there an issue about school leavers being offered places in your Institute and then not taking them up?

- Yes.
- Many Year 12 students hedge their bets and apply for a number of university and Institute places. The issue of universities consistently dropping their entry requirements means that students who would normally study at TAFE might now prefer the university option.
- The major issue here is the difficulty in planning for efficient delivery since it is often into Weeks 3 and 4 of first term before Class Rolls at XYZ Institute become clear.

Do you feel there is a perception amongst teachers in schools that TAFE is a “second choice” option? Can you provide any evidence or examples?

- There is still a perception that TAFE is “second choice” option but this is not as strong as it was, say, five years ago.

- There are still schools within the XYZ Institute catchment area who provide limited advice on TAFE options.

## Appendix 6 – Year 11 Instrument

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Insert hard-copy here.

# Appendix 7 – Exit Survey Instrument

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Year 12 Student Destinations Survey: School Culture and VET

ID no: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Gender:            ☐ Male                      ☐ Female

2.      Last year you were in Year 12 at .....  
Could you let us know if you:

–      Satisfactorily completed the year and achieved an ENTER?

–      Satisfactorily completed the year but elected not to apply for an ENTER?

–      Remained at school until end of year but did not obtain Certificate?

–      Left school during the year? (go to q.3 )

3. Thinking about the reasons you left school before the end of Year 12, was this because:

*You may choose more than one option*

☐      You wanted to work / do an apprenticeship

☐      You wanted to do a course at TAFE

☐      You felt you weren't doing well enough to continue

☐      For financial reasons

☐      You didn't get on with your teachers

☐      School work didn't interest you

☐ You felt you didn't fit in

☐ Health reasons

### **Studying/Training**

4. When at school, were you advised to apply for a place at TAFE this year?

Yes      No

5. Did you apply for a place at TAFE?

Yes      No

6. Were you offered a place at TAFE this year?

Yes              Accepted Offer              Rejected Offer

Did you *reject* the offer because

You were going to work full-time

You were going to study at university

You were going to study at a PTC

It wasn't really what you wanted to do

**7. Are you now studying?**

☐ Yes                      No



**If *now* studying (part-time or full-time), are you:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Enrolled at University	Studying	<input type="checkbox"/> full time	<input type="checkbox"/> part time
	Name of University		
	Name of Course		

<input type="checkbox"/> Enrolled at TAFE	Studying	<input type="checkbox"/> full time	<input type="checkbox"/> part time
	Name of TAFE		
	Name of Course		
	Level		
<input type="checkbox"/> Enrolled at Private Training College (PTC)	Studying	<input type="checkbox"/> full time	<input type="checkbox"/> part time
	Name of PTC		
	Name of Course		
<input type="checkbox"/> Enrolled at Adult and Community Education provider	Studying	<input type="checkbox"/> full time	<input type="checkbox"/> part time
	Name of Provider		
	Name of course or unit		
<input type="checkbox"/> Repeating or completing Senior School Certificate (e.g. VCE)	Studying	<input type="checkbox"/> full time	<input type="checkbox"/> part time
	School		

- NO, I was studying but discontinued (go to q 10)
- NO, I have not been in study since leaving school (go to q 9)
- NO, I have deferred my place

8. Would you agree that:

Please make a response to each option

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Your course will help you get a job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your course is personally interesting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
From advice provided by school you got a good idea of what your course would be like	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your course has increased your self-confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your course will widen your options for the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your course has improved your communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You are making good progress in the course so far	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You are satisfied with how the course is taught	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You received good advice and assistance at school in making your course selection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The course content is relevant to the tasks you have to do at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your school helped you in making the transition from secondary to tertiary study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**[GO TO Q 11]**

**If you are *not* studying now, is this because:**

***Please make a response to each option***

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
You don't have time (work or family commitments, other interests)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You don't have information on what's available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There would be too much travel involved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You've tried to get into a course, but weren't offered a place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You don't feel ready for more study at this point in time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You don't see the relevance of doing any more study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You don't meet the entry criteria for a course you might like to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

You can't afford the costs of the course you'd like to do



10. Do you agree with the following reasons for why you might have left your course?

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
The course was not interesting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The course was too difficult	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The course had a poor standard of teaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The course was not relevant to your career plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Class times were inconvenient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complex enrolment procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Course was “leading nowhere”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Course had poor reputation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Problems fitting in socially	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Changes in family commitments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You wanted to work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accommodation problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### **Workforce status and experience**

11. Thinking about work, since leaving school have you:

Please choose the option that best suits you

- ☐ **Had a job for all or most of the time**
- ☐ **F/t**      ☐ **P/t**
- ☐ **Had about equal periods of employment and unemployment?**
- ☐ **Been unemployed for most of the time**
- ☐ **Not been looking for work for most or much of the time**

12. Are you currently working?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> full time	What is your job?
	<input type="checkbox"/> part time/casual	
	<input type="checkbox"/> undertaking an Apprenticeship	
	<input type="checkbox"/> undertaking a Traineeship	
<input type="checkbox"/> No, I am unemployed and looking for work [GO TO Q. 14]		
<input type="checkbox"/> No, I am not in the labour force [GO TO Q. 15]		

Thinking about your current job, would you agree: *Please respond to each option*

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Unsure</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
<b>You need training to do the job well</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>It's personally interesting</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Most tasks you can do well</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>It's mainly routine – not a lot that changes</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>It's a job you'd like to continue in</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>You're getting on well at work</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Most of your workmates have had training for the job</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

GO TO Q.15

If you are currently looking for work, what would you say are the *main* barriers to finding a job? *Please make a response to each option*

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
<b>There are no jobs</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>No vacancies for the jobs that I can do</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Need to travel too far to get some jobs</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Don't have the right training</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Have not got enough experience</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Employers prefer people with more qualification</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Employers want you to have a good report from school</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**I don't feel confident enough to apply for some jobs**



**I have trouble expressing myself when I go for jobs**



15. Just returning briefly to your experience of school, and thinking back over your time at school, how much do you agree with the following:

Please make a response to each option

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
I have happy memories of school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I got on well with my teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making extra effort at school was worthwhile	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel that I coped well academically at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Before you left school, how would your teachers have rated your ability?**

- ☐ In the top third of the class in most subjects
- ☐ About average
- ☐ In the lowest third of most classes

17. Looking back, how useful were careers advice or other services which you might have received at school? *Please make a response to each option*

	<i>Offered</i>	<i>Usefulness</i>		
		<i>Very</i>	<i>Some Help</i>	<i>Not Useful</i>
<b>Careers education and guidance</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Careers counselling (one to one)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work Experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advice about further education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assistance with job search skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advice about the local employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
References	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18. Was VET in Schools offered at your school?

- ☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Unsure

Did you participate? ☐ Yes ☐ No [GO TO Q.21]

What was your field of study? \_\_\_\_\_

19. You may have had a range of reasons for enrolling in a VET subject while at school. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about why you enrolled in a VET program? Please make a response to each option

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
My school explained the benefits of VET well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wanted something less academic and more practical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There was an opportunity to receive training in the workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I thought it would be useful to have a VET qualification too	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I wanted a course that would help me get work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advice about the local employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It would help me get into a TAFE course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends were doing it or had done it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. Do you think doing a VET in Schools subject last year helped your study outcomes?

Yes a lot

Yes, somewhat

No

21. Would you be willing to be recontacted in the future?

☐ Yes

☐ No



*This concludes the interview. Thank you very much for your time.*

# Appendix 8 – Teacher Survey Instrument

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## VET in Schools

### Teacher Questionnaire

Name of School:.....

**1. How long have you been teaching?** (*count years actually teaching*) \_\_ \_\_

**2. What is your age?**

- |            |                          |
|------------|--------------------------|
| 21-25      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 26-30      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31-35      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 36-40      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 41-45      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 46-50      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 51-55      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 55 or over | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**3. Are you?**

- ☐ Male      ☐ Female

**4. Are you of non-English speaking background?**

- ☐ Yes      ☐ No

**5. Where were you born ?**

- ☐ Australia    ☐ Overseas-English speaking country  
☐ Overseas – non-English speaking country

**6. Are you an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person?**    ☐ Yes    ☐ No

7. What is the postcode of your home address? \_ \_ \_ \_

8. (a) What is the highest educational qualification you have completed?

- Primary teaching certificate ☐  
Undergraduate diploma ☐  
Degree ☐  
**Postgraduate** diploma ☐  
Masters degree ☐  
Ph.D./D.Ed. ☐  
Other (specify)..... ☐

8. (b) Are you currently undertaking postgraduate or higher degree studies?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

9. What is your position within the school?

- Casual / relief teacher ☐  
Classroom teacher (no extra allowance) ☐  
Classroom teacher holding promotion position or in receipt of an allowance ☐  
Aboriginal Resource teacher/ Special Education Teacher ☐  
Deputy/ Assistant Principal ☐  
Principal (or person in charge) ☐  
Other (please specify)..... ☐

10. How long have you been teaching in your current school? (count years actually teaching) \_ \_

11. At what Year level(s) do you teach/work? Please mark all that apply

- Year 7 ☐  
Year 8 ☐  
Year 9 ☐  
Year 10 ☐  
Year 11 ☐  
Year 12 ☐  
ungraded ☐

12. In what subject area(s) do you teach/work? Please mark all that apply

- The Arts ☐  
LOTE ☐  
Health and Physical Education ☐  
Mathematics ☐  
Science ☐  
Technology ☐  
English ☐  
Studies of Society and Environment ☐  
Cross-curriculum ☐  
VET ☐

Careers Advice ☐

Other (please specify)..... ☐

**13. How much do you agree or disagree with the following general comments about your school?**

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Basic literacy skills are a continuing cause of concern	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have enrichment programs to challenge high achievers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The curriculum caters for the full range of the students who attend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have stimulating activities to expand students' horizons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is a good balance of extra-curricular activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is adequate provision for music	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
An effective discipline policy is in operation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student counselling needs are well catered for	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student social skills are, on the whole, well-developed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**14. How important do you think it is to**

	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Not Important</i>
Give students information about employment, apprenticeships and VET options	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create links with employers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Create links between schools and TAFE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advise students about applying for University	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advise students about applying for TAFE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**15. How much do you agree with the following statements about the provision of VET in Schools subjects at your school?**

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
The provision of VET has meant other subjects have been removed from the curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The removal of students from class to attend VET work placements is disruptive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand how VET in Schools works	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand how VET in Schools is assessed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VET involves more work liaising with industry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VET involves more work liaising with TAFE/other providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VET involves more paper work than other subjects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**16. How important is it to provide good VET in Schools programs for the following student groups in your school?**

<b>Students who are:</b>	<i>Very Important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Not Important</i>
Struggling with the mainstream curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intending to leave school early	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interested in technology or business, whatever their ability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly focussed on a particular industry area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Average academically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Above-average academically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**17. How adequate is your school's VET in Schools program for the following student groups?**

<b>Students who are:</b>	<i>High Quality</i>	<i>Adequate</i>	<i>Poor</i>
Struggling with the mainstream curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intending to leave school early	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interested in technology or business, whatever their ability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strongly focussed on a particular industry area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Average academically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Above-average academically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**18. At what stage in secondary schooling should students begin VET in Schools programs? (Mark one box only)**

Only in Years 11/12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Year 10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Below Year 10	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flexible, should depend on student	<input type="checkbox"/>

**19. Are your school's VET in Schools programs delivered by:**

*Please mark all that apply*

- ☐ the school      ☐ TAFE  
☐ a private provider

**20. Would you consider retraining to become a VET in Schools teacher?**

- ☐ Yes  
☐ Only if I were paid to do so  
☐ No  
☐ Am already teaching VET

**21. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the VET in Schools program?**

	<i>Strongl y Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagre e</i>	<i>Strongl y Disagre e</i>
Students learn skills they need for work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

There is not enough practical content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is not enough theoretical content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VET fits easily into the overall school timetable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VET involves extra costs to students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VET involves extra costs to the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VET has helped students understand the industry related to their area of study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VET requires too much travel for students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doing VET has improved student attitudes to school work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doing VET helps students with their other subjects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The work placement helps students with their self confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VET is too hard for some students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**22. How significant do you see the following potential barriers to the growth of VET in schools in your school? Mark ONE box only for each item**

	<i>Very Significant</i>	<i>Significant</i>	<i>Some Significance</i>	<i>Not Significant</i>
Teachers are not adequately trained	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equipment & other infrastructure are lacking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local businesses are not supportive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Links with TAFE and other VET providers are limited	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VET is not highly regarded by students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Timetabling constraints (e.g. for work placements)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents' aspirations are too focussed on university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The academic values of teachers work against VET	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Principal's level of commitment to VET	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**23. What is your general attitude to the place of VET in the curriculum?**

*Mark one box only*

Generally in favour as a positive development	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have reservations about its value	<input type="checkbox"/>
Generally unconvinced about its suitability	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have not seen enough of VET to comment	<input type="checkbox"/>

***This ends the questionnaire  
Thank-you for your assistance***