

DIRECTOR



9 October 2002

Mr Richard Selth
Secretary
Standing Committee on Education and Training
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Selth

Attached is a submission from the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia to the Standing Committee on Education and Training.

Should you require any further information please contact John Nelson on 08 9212 9366.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Therese Temby'.

Therese Temby

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Context of Vocational Education in Catholic Schools in Western Australia

Catholic schools educate students for the whole person. They recognise the value of a broad general education and note the Adelaide Goals for Schooling which acknowledge the importance of this. Catholic schools recognise the rapidly changing economic and social landscape which defines the post-school needs of students. Therefore Catholic schools have embraced vocational education and training and see it as an important part of the curriculum in preparing students for the school to training and work transition.

Activity in vocational education and training has increased in Catholic schools over the past five years. Delivery models vary from school-delivered programs to outsourced training and all Catholic schools have formed partnerships with Registered Training Organisations for recognition and accreditation purposes. Catholic schools have also formed strategic partnerships with industries and with other schools. This is evidenced by the establishment of six school clusters which embrace 48 Catholic and Independent schools for the coordination and delivery of the off and on-the-job training. A further feature of vocational education has been an emphasis on quality training and across a range of industry areas beyond those traditionally delivered by schools.

Catholic schools have embraced the Vocational Education and Training Framework for Schools and have commenced planning for implementation of the key components, many of which are already embedded in current school practice.

The four Terms of Reference will be discussed in the remainder of this submission.

Term of Reference One - Discussion of the range, structure, resourcing and delivery of vocational education programs in schools, including teacher training and the impact of vocational education on other programs.

In terms of the **range, structure and delivery** of programs Catholic schools have adopted a number of innovative approaches. The main issues for consideration by the Standing Committee are;

- Difficulties experienced by schools in negotiating partnership arrangements with some Registered Training Organisations (RTO) in terms of variable cost structures and quality assurance requirements; and the reluctance of some RTOs to accept the delivery of VET by schools. A more uniform and sustainable approach by RTOs partnering schools is required and may be appropriately brokered by State Training Departments.

- Problems experienced by schools in some non-metropolitan and remote areas where RTOs are limited and often have restricted scopes of delivery.
- Difficulties of schools moving into Pre-apprenticeship training in Western Australia because of what is perceived to be 'territoriality' issues. Schools are well placed to provide some of this training in some industry areas but are currently prevented from doing so.
- Particular issues associated with schools becoming Training Providers in WA; the subsequent strong encouragement of schools to partner with RTOs; but the lack of cost effective and uniform procedures, particularly by some TAFE Colleges in developing agreements for partnerships.
- The unwillingness of many State Training Authorities to accredit training beyond Certificate Level II training when many students are capable of such training, particularly in the Information Technology areas. This has particular implications for encouraging VET for higher ability year 12 students, including university bound students.
- Issues associated with VET studies being inadequately recognised for the purpose of university entrance and therefore disadvantaging university bound students in terms of keeping options open – such students are often discouraged from undertaking vocational training because it is not seen to count directly nor indirectly for university selection.
- The issues associated with schools being able to move into delivery of 'new' industry areas such as aspects of Information Technology, trades type areas, medical related areas – resourcing and accreditation issues (this is also discussed under the third Term of Reference).

In terms of **resourcing** of VET, many issues have emerged. Resource issues have become one of the more significant issues for schools. Current Commonwealth structures and arrangements as well as arrangements emerging in Western Australia impact on all schools and some in particular have an adverse impact on the capacity of Catholic schools to resource VET. Some of the issues which are recommended for consideration by the Standing Committee are;

- The procedures for allocating Commonwealth General Recurrent Grant (GRG) Funding – this is determined by student enrolments in a census held in the first week of August. Many students who are successful in VET programs elect to leave school for the mid year TAFE enrolment period which commences in mid July. Recently TAFE colleges in Western Australia have commenced a July enrolment for Pre-apprenticeship courses, further exacerbating the problem. This places significant financial burden on Catholic schools involved in VET programs in that they do not access Commonwealth (GRG) funding, but have nevertheless outlaid significant funds for vocational training and school resources. The irony is that successful VET programs can be exceptionally costly to Catholic schools in terms of lost income.
- VET training is more costly than mainstream education for a variety of reasons and current funding levels do not reflect these differences. ANTA VET in Schools funding to systems/sectors provides some assistance. Studies conducted by MCEETYA Taskforces indicate the cost of VET being around 25% or so more than

mainstream education. This provides a strong argument for the continuation of targeted VET in Schools funding beyond 2004.

- Moves to attach such funding to an activity or per capita participation base model are considered to be ill founded. The Framework for VET in Schools emphasizes a number of components other than VET and these include Enterprise Education, Career and Transition services; Community Partnerships; Students at Risk; and Monitoring of transitions. The implementation of these initiatives will be seriously threatened by a funding model which focuses on only one of the components. It would be preferable that any move to an activity or performance based model be suspended pending the further consideration of how the Framework for Vocational Education and Training in Schools can and should be implemented.
- The funding provided by the Career and Enterprise Education Foundation is supported and it is recommended that current funding initiatives be continued.
- The DEST funding to Career and Transition Services programs (CATS) is supported and consideration should be given to broadening this funding base.
- Charges made by TAFE colleges in receipt of State Training Department funds are high and variable. Consideration should be given to including as part of their funded profile, places and support for VET in schools students from all schools, government and independent.
- Resourcing of VET in non-metropolitan and remote areas is a particular resourcing problem. This is related to issues such as non-viable student numbers, a lack of suitable RTOs for partnership, smaller range of potential industry placements and additional costs of partnering with metropolitan RTOs

In respect to **teacher training** there are many related issues. Some of the issues which are recommended for consideration by the Standing Committee are;

- Provision of ongoing support for assisting school teachers to gain essential credentials needed to deliver and assess units of competence from Training Packages; this relates to Certificate IV Workplace Assessor Training and necessary Training Package credentials. Continuation of the Quality Teacher Program funding may assist.
- Encouragement of universities to include VET training and awareness in pre-service education programs.

In terms of the **impact of VET on other educational programs**, Catholic schools value holistic education and seek the most appropriate juxta position of VET and a broad general education. Some of the issues which are recommended for consideration by the Standing Committee are;

- Policies developed by the Commonwealth government and State government agencies need to value the role of a broad general education. Feedback from employers and industry groups cautions schools from placing too much emphasis on skill development at the expense of a well rounded education with a breadth of educational, social and spiritual enrichment.

- The Standing Committee needs to recognize that in balancing resources, any greater involvement in VET comes at the expense of other programs. Schools have been called upon to implement numerous educational and related programs and often with no additional resources. Any further expansion in VET, without adequate additional funds will lead to the abandonment of other programs.

Key Points for Consideration - Term of Reference One

1. Resourcing remains as a serious issue for schools. Existing Commonwealth funding initiatives should continue and be expanded beyond 2004. There is no support for a substantively performance-based ANTA VET in Schools funding model when so many initiatives are being commenced. Such funds will need to be directed to all elements of the Framework and not just VET activity. There is support for continuation of funding through initiatives such as ECEF, CATS programs and the Quality Teacher Program.
2. There is support for ongoing dialogue and recognition by the Commonwealth government of the value of a wider education within schools and a more careful consideration of the position of VET within this context. The Framework for VET in Schools partially recognises this wider educational context.

Term of Reference Two - The differences between school-based and other vocational education programs and the resulting qualifications and the pattern of industry acceptance of school-based programs.

In terms of broad differences between school-based and other vocational education programs there should be no real difference if the quality assurance processes of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) are understood, applied and accepted by all stakeholders. Recent concerns by industry bodies about the quality of VET in schools is mixed, irregular and often misdirected. Some of the issues which are recommended for consideration by the Standing Committee are;

- As schools move from Australian Recognition Framework (ARF) to AQTF compliance the standards of registration are increased and quality assurance processes should increase status of school qualifications. A significant education program need to be directed towards industry to provide confidence that quality assurance processes have been enhanced.
- Criticism of current standards of VET in schools training needs to consider the fact that over 80% of all credentials are issued by RTOs in partnership (mainly TAFE Colleges) so that any concern with quality should be more properly directed towards those providers and not necessarily schools.
- A report written by Ian Fyfe – “The AQTF and VET in Schools A Report to the National Training Quality Council” - identifies variable feedback from industry regarding industry perceptions of the recognition and quality of VET in schools. It is suggested that further action on the recommendations of this report be undertaken.

- There is a need for further education of industry in terms of their understanding of VET in schools. In particular the highest degree of mixed understanding appears to lie with the various Industry Training Councils (ITCs) and in most elements of the building and construction industries. These industries should be an important focus for many VET in Schools programs and it is suggested that further dialogue occur with industry groups to further identify the issues and to demonstrate that AQTF compliance guarantees quality training in schools.
- Perceptions of quality are also sometimes related to which organisation issues the credential. Where this is a school, compared with an RTO such as a TAFE college, there is often diminished recognition by industry. For this reason, the partnership model with schools using the RTO to issue the Statement of Attainment or the full credential is preferred. There appears to be a need for further investigation as to how school-issued credentials can be properly recognised.
- In terms of skills recognition processes, many RTOs are reluctant to provide this service for VET in schools students. Under the AQTF such RTOs are obliged to provide this arrangement but often refuse or place unsustainable charges on the service. All RTOs acting in partnership with schools need to be reminded of their obligations in this regard.
- School-based Traineeships have been strongly encouraged by the Commonwealth government as a means of creating more industry specific training and connection to the needs of the workforce. The Catholic Education Office of WA broadly supports traineeships as one useful means of achieving this. However, this Office submits that there are particular issues which need to be addressed and encourages the Commonwealth government to value alternate forms of training especially in funding models. Some issues of School-based Traineeships relate to; the requirement of students in year 10 (age 15) to make choices; absence from schools for an average of 2 days per week; high drop out rates; restriction to more traditional areas such as Office and Administration and Retail; and occasionally difficulty in articulating to further training such as Apprenticeships. Catholic schools note the statements by employers supporting the need for students with wider enterprise and broader educational attributes as opposed to specific skills. Many students in Catholic schools prefer to begin training by accessing elements of Certificate II and III studies. This Office therefore supports a widening of funding models to value such training equally to Traineeships.

Key Points for Consideration - Term of Reference Two

1. There is a need for ongoing education of all stakeholders regarding the quality assurance processes contained under AQTF compliance. This is especially so for industry where there is a residual suspicion of the quality of school-based training.
2. There is an ongoing need for school-industry liaison to discuss matters of concern regarding perceived quality and recognition of school-based training and credentials.
3. There is a need for ongoing negotiation with specific sectors of industry such as building and construction where there is opposition to VET in schools by most employers and especially trades unions.
4. While there is in-principle support for School-based Traineeships in schools, funding models need to provide greater recognition for alternate methods of training, especially that which encourages students to pursue credentials beyond Certificate level II.

Term of Reference Three - Vocational Education in New and Emerging Industries

One of the challenges facing schools is to move beyond the 'traditional' industry areas they have historically been involved with – Metals and Engineering; Hospitality; Information Technology and Office and Administration. This focus occurs because of staff expertise and available equipment. A particular challenge is for schools to move into 'new' areas. Some of the issues which are recommended for consideration by the Standing Committee are;

- For schools to move into 'new' industry areas, staff training is a major issue. Under the AQTF staff need to possess at least the level of credential they are teaching as well as the specified industry experience. Training of staff to these levels is a significant resourcing issue. The requirement for these credentials applies whether the school is operating as an RTO or in partnership. An expansion of professional development programs would be required.
- A further issue is the extent to which schools possess the required equipment. This is an issue in areas such as Mechatronics; Automotive; Hydraulics; Advanced Materials Manufacturing; some aspects of Information Technology and higher levels of Hospitality. There is an advantage in schools forming partnerships with other RTOs in being able to access the equipment. As discussed before, this will require ongoing cooperation and application of more reasonable arrangements by the RTOs. It is recommended that State Training Departments convene forums to discuss such issues. In Western Australia, a current inquiry into the interface between training and education may help to address these issues.
- The additional resources referred to above provides further reason for not applying an activity based funding model to VET in Schools funding. To properly plan and access new industry areas, schools require ongoing seed capital and support. A funding model that values activity of the same type of training is not the most appropriate.

- There is a particular issue for non-metropolitan schools in accessing new and emerging industry areas. On many occasions local RTOs are limited in their scope and while they are often aligned to the industry base of that centre or region, they do not always possess scope to deliver in new areas. This can disadvantage students who may seek to relocate from that centre on leaving school. A partial solution to this problem is to provide targeted funding to regional and remote centres to develop training expertise and facilities. Such training and facilities often do not exist for the broader community, let alone schools.
- A particular problem of accessing training in new and emerging industries is that often such training requires a significant on-the-job component. This requires an expansion of industry placement opportunities. This Office therefore supports ongoing negotiation with industry to expand provision of on-the-job training opportunities.

Key Points for Consideration - Term of Reference Three

1. Additional resourcing is required if VET in schools is to maintain additional relevance by expanding into new and emerging industry areas. This is a major issue for non-metropolitan locations. Special support for such locations is required to enable these students to access new and emerging industries.
2. Funding models such as VET in Schools funding needs to recognize the additional costs of entering into training in new and emerging industry areas; a performance based model of funding will produce 'more of the same' rather than encouraging expansion into new areas.
3. Schools need to be supported to enable access to new and emerging industries, especially beyond Certificate Level II – this is required to attract higher ability students and those who may typically be university bound.

Term of Reference Four - the accessibility and effectiveness of vocational education for indigenous students.

The Catholic Education Office of WA devotes considerable resources to rural and remote education as part of a strong commitment to the education of Indigenous students. In Western Australia, similar to Queensland, this involves significant additional resources, especially given the geographic isolation in these jurisdictions. Some of the issues which are recommended for consideration by the Standing Committee are;

- Providing training to remote areas is difficult and resource intensive for a variety of reasons. Commonwealth funding through the Career and Enterprise Education Foundation (ECEEF) should target funds specifically for this purpose. Among other things, such funding needs to adopt a partnership approach, supporting community, school and other regional initiatives.
- It is further recommended that close consultation with educational systems/sectors occur to ensure that any initiatives supported by organizations such as ECEEF are applied in the most strategic manner and avoid duplication of resources.

- Providing on-the-job training for students in rural and remote communities is particularly difficult. Additional resources beyond those currently available, are required to ensure quality training for such students. The current allocation of ANTA VET in Schools funding needs to increase in recognition of remote education issues in Western Australia; Queensland and the Northern Territory.
- In metropolitan locations, there are also additional costs associated with providing VET for Indigenous students. For example, it is the experience of colleges such as Clontarf Aboriginal College in Perth that additional mentoring is required for these students. Additionally, in Hospitality and Automotive programs run by this college it has been found that many students require far more time to complete training than the nominal hours attached to units of competency. This places additional resource requirements on training.
- Indigenous students often prefer homogeneous training groups and do not respond as well in heterogeneous groups such as a mainstream class at a TAFE College. This places further resource requirements on such training.
- Indigenous traineeships such as those currently organized by ATSIC have been reasonably successful and their continuance is recommended.

Key Points for Consideration -Term of Reference Four

1. Additional resourcing is required if training is to be provided effectively to Indigenous students. Costs for Indigenous students, particularly in remote areas, are often more than those for non-Indigenous students.
2. Funding for Indigenous students or programs needs to be specifically targeted and educational systems/sectors need to be closely involved in such negotiations.
3. Effective programs for Indigenous students need to be based on partnerships between industry, communities, education and other government agencies.

Further Information

For further information relating to this submission, the contact person is;

John Nelson
 Post-compulsory Consultant
 Secondary Curriculum and Teaching Team
 Curriculum Support Section
 Phone (08) 9212 9366
 Email j.nelson@ceowa.perth.catholic.edu.au