

## **Inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools**

### **Submission Presenters:**

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### **Background**

This submission is the result of observations made by David and Lorna Hawkey who have conducted the Jobs Pathway Programme in East Gippsland for a number of years.

They work with up to 300 clients each year in the seven colleges assisting their clients to move into a productive job or training program after they leave school.

This involves a range of activities including the provision of information about college and other educational courses, training programs, job opportunities, jobsearch techniques and assistance with resumes, job applications and interview techniques.

### **General Observations**

**1. Vocational Education programs have been the means of keeping young people at school.**

Potential early school leavers have remained at school for longer periods of time because they have access to VET programs such as Automotive. In some colleges students have been allowed to complete VET programs after they have left school and are not attending any other programs. Obviously the students both value and enjoy vocational education even though they may have been unable to successfully complete any other subjects.

**2. Small secondary colleges in rural locations have difficulty in providing a range of vocational education programs.**

Students living in rural locations, although being able to gain meaningful experiences in some vocations are generally disadvantaged because the small colleges and the local communities do not have the resources to provide a range of vocational education.

An example of this is the provision of Automotive for students at Swifts Creek. Some students who lived out of town needed to be up at 5.00 am in order to travel to the school to catch the bus that took them to Bairnsdale, a one hour trip, to attend the East Gippsland TAFE. Few students are able to complete programs under these circumstances.

**3. Many JPP clients have difficulty with the theory part of vocational education programs.**

Students who want to leave school before the end of Year 12 are generally those who have not performed well in academic subjects. Vocational education should provide the means for these students to learn in practical

situations but many VET programs have become theory oriented (e.g. child-care) and are thus too difficult for many students for which the program is designed.

**4. Many students select VET subjects at VCE level as a means of improving their V.C.E. score.**

Because of the bonus points available for VET programs some students select vocational education training only as a means of improving their university entrance scores and have no interest in the subject as a future occupation.

**5. Some students select VET subjects as a means of gaining qualifications for part-time employment while at college or university.**

Although this may be a desirable outcome it uses resources that could be put to better use with students who are intending to use the qualification for a future career.

**6. Due to the saturation in some communities of VET opportunities and often the high cost of TAFE and other private providers, schools are forced to provide school based vocational education.**

Many school-based programs do not give students a view of the real world with real experiences and become just another school subject.

**7. Some employers/employment agencies do not consider that schools prepare young people with the skills to apply for employment i.e. they are not job ready when they leave school.**

Common comments are that young people are not prepared for the responsibility and pressure of real life work situations.

**8. Many employers, including group training companies, do not consider VET programs conducted at school adequately prepare students to begin employment at a higher level.**

Employers ask where the training took place because they do not consider that schools are able to train young people in the skills in the same way that real-life work situations can. e.g. hospitality

**9. All businesses in rural communities are under great pressure to provide enough work placements for the number of students in their local schools who require these as part of work experience or vocational education.**

**10. The behaviour of some students is not of a standard that they can be placed with an employer.**

This causes concerns for schools in that they are not able to provide vocational education for all of their students. The school also has the problem of not wanting to jeopardize the program for future students because of the bad behaviour of some.

**11. It is becoming increasingly evident that schools will have to become more involved in skill centres where workplaces can be simulated. Enterprise learning must also become a real option for vocational and other forms of education.**

This will necessitate large-scale teacher training as more teachers than ever before have been trained in academic rather than practical institutions. Alternatively teachers will need to be drawn from practical vocations and trained in teaching. Significant change will not take place until this happens.

**12. Careers and/or work education teachers are currently under extreme pressure to provide work placements for an ever-increasing number of students.**

The inclusion of work placement as a necessary part of the Victorian VCAL program may tip the balance and make it impossible to cater for all work placement demands.

**13. It is becoming evident that schools are providing vocational education on a basis of what students would like and what is available and possible.**

This does not necessarily co-incide with what is really available in real employment opportunities. There is no evidence that any research is conducted by school systems into what should be provided for either the local community, the region or further afield.

**14. The best vocational education is done through paid part-time work.**

Currently there is no way for students to be accredited for vocational skills they have learnt through doing part-time employment. In some cases school-based apprenticeships will assist with this but many young people will not be able to show their skills on their resume as a qualification.