



NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION

GPO Box 3046, CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601
Favier House, 1 Ballumbir Street, BRADDON ACT 2612
Phone: (02) 6201 9830 Fax: (02) 6257 7395 ISD 61 2 6201 9830
Email: ncec@ncec.catholic.edu.au
Web Site: <http://www.ncec.catholic.edu.au>

27 September 2002

Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Education and Training
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

Inquiry into Vocational Education and Training in Schools

I write on behalf of the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) in relation to the Committee's inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools. In making this submission, the NCEC has focussed on the issue of resourcing, which is part of the first term of reference.

For the purpose of this submission, a VET in Schools program is a program that meets the *Principles and Guidelines* established by the Commonwealth through ANTA. Therefore, a VET in schools program is one that:

- is based on national industry/enterprise competency standards based on Training Packages where endorsed, or involve modules based on available industry/enterprise competency standards;
- relates to, or provides, VET certificates within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and senior secondary certificates endorsed by State and Territory Boards of Studies.

The NCEC represents over 1700 Catholic schools, educating over 650,000 students, approximately 20% of the total school age population. In 2001 Catholic secondary schools enrolled 87,874 students in Years 11 and 12, approximately 21.3% of the cohort.

In 1997, the first year that ANTA agreed to fund VET in Schools through the Commonwealth, there were 336 Catholic schools enrolling 12,138 students in VET in Schools programs. In 2001 there were 356 schools enrolling 29,390 students in such programs. That represents enrolment growth of 142% in four years (see Appendix, which is Table 2 from the July 2002 Report of the MCEETYA Transition from School Taskforce). The ANTA funding has underpinned this rapid expansion of choices available to students in Catholic schools. The non-government school sector gets only minor financial assistance from State/Territory governments to assist meeting the cost of VET in schools.

NCEC is concerned about the prospect that the ANTA funding will not be made available after 2004, with the Catholic sector expected to sustain these costly programs from general recurrent grants. If targeted funding is withdrawn, schools will struggle to offer the programs, with very negative consequences for students and the economy generally.

While the NCEC understands and appreciates arguments for sustainability based on the principle that vocational education should be integrated into the mainstream curriculum, the practical reality is that schools need funding from ANTA because they are instrumental in helping ANTA to fulfil its mandate "to ensure that the skills of the Australian labour force are sufficient to support internationally competitive commerce and industry and to provide individuals with opportunities to optimise their potential" (from the ANTA Mission Statement). NCEC's view is that continued funding, preferably at an increased level, is required to consolidate the reforms and allow for expansion in the future.

Assuming ANTA funding was to continue, the way that funding is distributed between the three school sectors (Government, Catholic, and Independent) needs to be carefully considered. Funding is currently allocated to states/territories on the basis of each jurisdiction's share of the 15-19 year-old cohort, and to sectors within states/territories on the basis of relative share of senior secondary enrolments. NCEC believes that this method of allocation should continue, as it has allowed the non-government sector to grow their level of participation in VET in Schools substantially from a historically low base.

Currently ANTA holds the view that funding should be allocated not on relative share of senior secondary enrolments, but on the basis of participation, that is, a number of factors and measures including the number of students enrolled in VET, the average number of curriculum hours spent doing VET courses; number of students in New Apprenticeships. However, ANTA is not confident that the data collected currently is fully compliant with the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS), therefore is not willing to change the current allocations to jurisdictions. Nevertheless it holds the view that within jurisdictions, allocations should be made on this (presumably sub-standard) participation data. This is inconsistent. If the data is not good enough for ANTA to change its inter-state allocations, then it cannot be good enough to justify changes to intra-state allocations either.

Any change in the funding formula at this stage would create winners and losers with no clear positive outcome. A move to participation-based funding would direct funds away from the non-government sector which has a higher rate of growth than in the government sector (163% enrolment growth compared to 106% over four years). However, if there was a reasonable level of base funding, variations according to participation could be considered.

Other factors that impact on resource needs are as follows:

- the New Framework for Vocational Education and Training in Schools assumes that schools will be able to take a number of new initiatives in the areas of student support services, community and business partnerships, which have resource implications.
- under the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF), many schools enter partnerships for delivery of VET with TAFE, but the cost of purchasing services from TAFE has risen considerably in recent years.
- Professional development for teachers already represents considerable cost to schools, but if schools are to offer VET in a range of new industries, professional development costs will increase, as will infrastructure costs.
- The costs associated with gaining and maintaining RTO status are becoming prohibitive.

The NCEC recommends that funding for Vocational Education and Training in Schools be continued at a substantially increased level.

With every best wish,

Yours sincerely,



(Rev Mgr T M Doyle)
CHAIRMAN

APPENDIX

NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN VET IN SCHOOLS PROGRAMS IN AUSTRALIA 1996-2001

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Government	NA	53,258	66,366	83,367	97,982	109,900
Catholic	NA	12,165	17,825	22,202	25,778	28,925
Independent	NA	5,043	8,300	11,035	14,252	15,721
TAFE	NA	23,600	24,500	22,803	15,604	15,263
TOTAL	60,000	94,066	116,991	139,407	153,616	169,809