

Victoria would be of even greater benefit to them if it were expanded to enable people with disabilities to become more aware of the range of job choices available and the skills that they have to offer:

Work experience should be structured to allow for several years of work experience and on-the-job supervision during that work experience.⁷²

4.80 This concept could also have great value if applied to the work experience programs offered in other States.

4.81 Work experience programs in the Northern Territory facilitate the integration of students from special schools into the community, by involving severely disabled senior secondary age students in daily, part-time, work-training programs with on-site support from a teacher or teacher's aide.

4.82 In South Australia special schools have successfully developed several mini-enterprises and specialist work experience programs. Schools in Mount Gambier and Port Lincoln have innovative programs but there is some concern that many appear to be targeted at boys. While this issue has not often been raised specifically, it is one which all programs need to be aware of to ensure that equal opportunities are available for women.

Recommendations

The Committee notes the importance of effective transition programs and the role of carefully chosen work-experience placements.

The Committee RECOMMENDS:

6. That funding priority be given to transition and work-experience programs by States and Territories.
7. That all State and Territory Education Departments, and private school associations, ensure that there is no 'gap' for young people with disabilities between school and work (or other activities such as study at a TAFE). Work experience, and contact with another environment away from the school, must begin while the student is still attending secondary school. This is a high priority recommendation. These young people must not be allowed to 'disappear' from school and never make support services records.
8. That transition programs, similar to that operating at Daws Road Centre in South Australia, be implemented in all States to ensure continuity from school to work (or to other activities as appropriate). All schools operating innovative transition programs should be asked to provide information to all

72. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5247 (West Australian Special Schools Parent Action Group), p. 5628 (Westwork Industries (Wesley Central Mission)).

State and Territory Governments, and to relevant private school organisations, on the service they offer.

9. That all young people with disabilities be actively involved in counselling on career opportunities at least 12 months before they reach the minimum school leaving age. That their parents be involved in the consultative process. That those who will benefit from an early move from school be encouraged to accept placement in a school-to-work program, and that this program begin (on a part-time basis) at least six months before the planned move from school is due to occur. That the physical location of such programs be off school grounds to maximise the opportunity for smooth movement into the community.
10. That the Commonwealth government fund a short-term research project on transition programs. The results of this research are to be made available to as wide an audience as possible to demonstrate the achievements of established programs and help identify areas of particular problems.

Participation in post-compulsory secondary education

4.83 The ABS Survey of Disability in 1988 found that only 4,800 (21 per cent) of the 23,200 persons aged 17 to 18 and defined as handicapped were attending school.⁷³ Almost none of the students (fewer than one per cent) with intellectual or psychiatric disabilities were attending mainstream schools.

4.84 While participation in post-compulsory education by those with intellectual disabilities appears to have been minimal in the past, it appears to the Committee that in most States students with an intellectual disability are able to complete their secondary education, if they choose to, in an integrated setting.

4.85 From 1991, students in Western Australia with an intellectual disability were able to continue onto grades 11 and 12 for the first time. This will provide a longer term of transition for these students. Previously students with intellectual disabilities who had been maintained in the school system until they turned 18 had been placed in segregated settings.⁷⁴

4.86 In contrast, students with intellectual disabilities in the ACT, have participated in post-compulsory education for several years and several students from the Woden School (a special school) are currently attending Phillip College.⁷⁵ In 1991 five teaching positions from special education facilities were transferred to

73. Tables extracted by the ABS from 1988 *Survey of Disability and Ageing* for the Committee. Note that 'handicapped' and 'mental disorders' were definitions used by the ABS in the survey. Note also that the definitions used by the ABS are not always useful in helping to determine the extent of need.

74. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5293 (Mr B. Blakeman).

75. Phillip College is a mainstream government high school providing Year 11 and 12 programs.

Phillip College to assist these students. Also in 1991 the ACT Ministry of Education agreed to the continuation of the pilot project set up to relocate senior students from the special school to the mainstream.⁷⁶ A Design/Craft program has been developed at Dickson College to provide a transition from special learning classes to a work environment for students who have academic difficulties. As part of this program tapestries were designed and completed for the new Parliament House.⁷⁷ However physical accessibility remains a problem in most colleges in the ACT.

Post-school – TAFE courses for people with intellectual disabilities

4.87 There was general consensus amongst those giving evidence to the Committee that the TAFE system had an important role to play in the provision of training and further education for people with disabilities. These roles were primarily perceived as being part of the ordinary or mainstream education of people with other than intellectual disabilities, where needs in relation to the course related primarily to access (either physical access or support with course material); or as a course targetted to people with an intellectual disability for instance; or as a mix of the two delivery types.

4.88 In its submission the Queensland government acknowledged that:

Most post-school students with disabilities could reasonably be expected to be served by TAFE because:

- most students with intellectual disabilities would be unlikely to be eligible for courses at a higher tertiary level – for example, universities; and
- students with other disabilities have often been educationally disadvantaged and will come to TAFE for their first post-school studies.⁷⁸

4.89 However, it was noted that a number of students with disabilities might not be able to access TAFE for a number of reasons, including: short duration of programs, the fact that programs are segregated, not integrated; TAFE staff were not necessarily skilled in required areas, and the individual efforts of the course co-ordinator would be the most crucial factor. Given that the majority of students with disabilities leaving secondary education were people with intellectual disabilities, it is most likely that people with intellectual disabilities may be those with the least access to TAFE.

76. *Phillip College News* (17 February 1992), p. 2.

77. *The House Magazine*, 20 February 1991, p. 13.

78. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4328 (Queensland Government).

4.90 The dilemma for TAFE colleges, whose statutory responsibilities require them to focus on employment objectives, was well summed up in a submission by an employee of NSW TAFE:

For students with physical and sensory disabilities this [emphasis on employment objectives] has meant facilitating access to existing mainstream courses in whatever way possible and necessary, using TAFE's open access provisions. For students with intellectual disabilities the service response has been more complex.

Students who might be described as higher functioning and in need of less support may benefit from the traditional preparatory courses offered by TAFE, although program content and class size may be modified to provide for slower learning rates and more intensive instructional needs. Students whose support needs are greater and who might be described as moderately/severe or profoundly disabled have either been discouraged from enrolment, on the grounds of being less likely to benefit from the resources available or they have been enrolled with less specifically defined employment goals.⁷⁹

4.91 In 1988 a report on the use of TAFE colleges by people with disabilities (the 'Sach Report')⁸⁰ concluded that, while most States had comprehensive policies on the role of TAFE in training people with disabilities, and many TAFE colleges were providing a range of programs, 'disability is an ad-hoc, poorly resourced, low priority issue, in which performance is unable to match the rhetoric of the TAFE policy documents'.⁸¹

The fact is that resources are very thinly spread, programs are overly dependent on the individual efforts of some teachers, most special courses do not have vocational outcomes, linkages between schools at one end of the spectrum and job placement and support at the other end are poorly developed, funding is unreliable, inadequate and poorly focussed, initial teacher training is minimal and in-service staff development generally absent and evaluation of college performance in the disability field generally non-existent (including an absence of data on fundamental factors, such as the number of students with disabilities).⁸²

79. Submission No. 123, p. 4 (Mr M. Clear).

80. *TAFE and People with Disabilities*, AGPS, Canberra, 1988. This report was referred to in a number of submissions. In the study the author sought information on the following disabilities: verbal, hearing (major), visual (major), intellectual, manual dexterity, mobility and 'other' disabilities, p. 93.

81. *ibid.*, p. ix.

82. *ibid.*

4.92 The report estimated that in 1986 there were about 12,000 students with disabilities enrolled in TAFE courses which represented 1.4 per cent of the total TAFE population. Of these just over half were enrolled in special courses while the balance were in mainstream courses.

4.93 The issue of integrated as opposed to segregated courses/classes does not cease with secondary schooling, with a number of people indicating that special and separate classes were essential for persons with intellectual disabilities. Most of the students enrolled in special courses had an intellectual disability and almost one third had multiple disabilities. Most were involved in life skills courses and the report on TAFE's found that even the courses which were described as bridging courses to further education or to vocational courses were, in fact, 'not a bridge to further education but are ends in themselves'.

... for most people with intellectual disabilities, TAFE is providing programs which are separate from the mainstream and tailored to their needs. Some of those programs are delivered from separate facilities on or off campus, whilst others are held in campus classrooms in a more normalised setting.⁸³

4.94 Intellectual disabilities were also the most frequent type of disability amongst students in mainstream courses - 38 per cent had an intellectual disability followed by 22 per cent with sensory disabilities. Over half of these students were enrolled in courses providing preparation for employment or education with a further 37 per cent enrolled in purely vocationally oriented courses.

4.95 The report concluded that TAFE should be supported to develop further an appropriate training role for people with disabilities 'which it has been struggling valiantly to maintain since its inception'. Among the recommendations made were:

That TAFE clearly determine its role in the provision of services to people with disabilities and develop strategies for their implementation. (Rec 1)⁸⁴

That while TAFE is not yet ready to accept a direct role in the training of people with severe or profound intellectual disabilities, such services should be considered in the future. In the interim TAFE should consider providing support to organisations which have the primary responsibility for the development of people with severe or profound intellectual disabilities. (Rec 7)⁸⁵

83. *ibid.*, p. x.

84. *ibid.*, p. xiii.

85. *ibid.*, p. xiv.

That every TAFE college . . . with a potentially significant population of students with disabilities have a Disabled Persons Officer and where colleges are relatively large, a Disabled Students Aide. (Rec 9)⁸⁶

4.96 Evidence presented during Committee hearings suggests that the situation has not changed much and may even have deteriorated with the introduction of the user pays principle and other cost cutting measures putting the provision of these courses in doubt, supporting the Office of Disability submission statement that:

Currently most TAFE courses designed specifically for people with disabilities are reliant on the goodwill of the individual TAFE staff and are subject to annual reviews of funding. The 1986/87 Budget brought major changes . . . There is no guarantee that either of these new arrangements will include specific provisions for people with disabilities. In fact, officers of TAFE in some states have suggested to members of the Office of Disability (and media reports also suggest) that some courses previously provided will no longer occur because of changed funding arrangements. It can not be assumed that changed Commonwealth funding is totally responsible for the decreased provision by the TAFE system. Most courses for people with disabilities have never been guaranteed ongoing funding and may therefore have been cancelled anyway. It is disappointing, nonetheless, if what little provision there was, no longer occurs.⁸⁷

4.97 An example of the problems in TAFE funding was provided by JobMatch, a CETP service, which expressed concern that a Life Skills course which had assisted a number of their clients into employment was to be abolished as a result of cuts in State government funding. The course was similar to those provided by TAFE colleges in other states and was designed to prepare people with intellectual disabilities to 'gain independence, self reliance and vocational preparation'.⁸⁸ JobMatch believed transitional education of this type was often the 'vital catalyst for the successful move between special education and the competitive world of full award wage work'. The Life Skills course was subsequently saved as a result of community pressure and was running in 1991. However JobMatch noted that, despite a successful outcome, it was essential to protect such courses 'against the same possibility occurring next year, the year after and the year after that' to ensure the continuation of courses which provided educational opportunities for people with disabilities.⁸⁹ In most other States it appeared that TAFE courses had concentrated on independent living skills, accessing community resources and recreation options.

86. *ibid.*, p. xv.

87. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4534 (Office of Disability).

88. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 5349-50 (Jobmatch).

89. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5334 (Australian Association of Social Workers Ltd (Tasmanian Branch)).

Current provision for people with disabilities by TAFE

4.98 The Queensland government acknowledged the impossibility of either prescriptive or comprehensive provision by TAFE for people with disabilities:

Students who are exiting special schools, for instance, have a lot of similarities with students exiting secondary schools. In some instances that have not decided what it is they are wanting to do: it is a matter of making a choice as to where they are going to go. It might be that some people tap into the services offered through DCSH – the employment placement services – and then decide at a later stage to come back. That is a frequent occurrence: a lot of people come back, perhaps to develop literacy skills. So there are a lot of options that people can exercise as to whether they will actually come straight from school to TAFE.⁹⁰

4.99 Evidence was given that TAFE colleges in New South Wales had met many of the challenges posed by their commitment to the provision of courses for people with intellectual disabilities.

It is also worth noting that DEET has responsibility for education and training, and an area of very great importance for people with intellectual disability is in this area of skills training and vocational preparation. In this State of New South Wales we have seen some very welcome developments in TAFE in the provision of courses of training at the pre-vocation and vocational level for students with disabilities, including students with intellectual disabilities. When one understands the nature of intellectual disability and the need for further education that these people have, we see an ongoing involvement of TAFE as being very important and, obviously, that falls under the jurisdiction of DEET as well as services such as are provided by the Commonwealth Employment Service.⁹¹

4.100 The New South Wales Council of Intellectual Disability, in making this observation, wholly endorsed the provision of employment and education services for people with disabilities by DEET, which as a generic department had a responsibility to provide these services to the general population, because 'we see no reason why people with disabilities should necessarily be treated separately from other members of the population'. Innovative responses by the NSW TAFE system to the training challenges posed by supported employment are discussed in Chapter 5.

4.101 In some other States, it appeared that TAFE courses had concentrated on independent living skills, accessing community resources and recreation options.

90. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4351 (Queensland Government).

91. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 3709 (The New South Wales Council for Intellectual Disability).

However, COMEPASS, a CETP service in Queensland, had perceived the need for more pro-active TAFE courses in Queensland and advocated the development of training courses which would provide marketable vocational skills:

Courses will need to be practically based, without a large academic or theoretical component. They should also target aspects of the employment market in which people with intellectual disabilities are likely to be employed eg commercial cleaning, gardening/grounds maintenance, kitchen hand, packaging . . . teach good work habits . . . incorporation of periods of work experience in a real work setting.⁹²

4.102 At the end of 1991 Comepass had 124 people with disabilities on its books for whom it was seeking employment. The service was providing support to 68 people who required different levels of support, ranging from 8 hours per week to occasional visits. It was actively seeking jobs for 72 people, including 15 who were at that time in sheltered workshops. It had previously placed 10 people from a Uniting Church workshop. The limits to the service available were imposed by lack of staff – consequently, 36 people were on the ‘inactive’ list – but the organisation hoped to obtain further funding which would enable it to provide additional services.

4.103 In Victoria courses for people with disabilities had generally focussed on life skills or leisure and/or recreation skills rather than on vocational skills development. Such programs are not formally accredited and are usually funded on an annual basis; as a result they often lacked ongoing support. Non-accredited courses are developed within TAFE colleges and thus the development of courses for people with disabilities has depended on the special interests and incentive of teachers and administration of individual colleges.⁹³

4.104 These programs were accessible to only the most ‘high functioning’ of special school students. All evidence from the consultations of the Working Party indicated that at that time generic services were not equipped to deal with the majority of people with intellectual disabilities in the post-school population.

4.105 In evidence to the Committee in November 1990 the Victorian government indicated a number of recent, wide-ranging initiatives which had addressed barriers to mainstream training for people with disabilities:

- Policies to increase the participation of disadvantaged and under-represented groups (including the establishment of a Participation Incentives Branch);

92. Submission No. 158, p. 1 (Uniting Church in Australia Special Caring Services Division). The Queensland Government also advised in mid-1991 that ‘a number of TAFE colleges have taken specific initiatives to mainstream young people with intellectual disability in vocational education’.

93. Report of the Working Party on Students with an Intellectual Disability Aged over 18, February 1989, p. 29.

- Development of a pre-employment program policy to permit broader access to training – including the introduction of a Certificate of Occupational Studies which will be available to people with mild intellectual disabilities and will replace previous ad-hoc, non-accredited preparatory programs;
- Negotiated Target Policy (being phased in 1989-1993) which requires all training providers to reserve a number of places in each course for under represented or disadvantaged groups;
- In 1991 an integration support project was piloted in TAFE colleges, whereby groups of TAFE colleges share integration programs. The number of integration support positions in colleges increased over 1990/1991.⁹⁴

4.106 However, staff from the Disability Employment Action Centre (DEAC) were concerned that while the use of negotiated targets would ensure the participation of all disadvantaged groups in the TAFE system it was not a guarantee of *effective* participation. Access to courses in itself would be meaningless if not accompanied by a real commitment to positive outcomes:

Targetting may result in participation for the sake of meeting a performance agreement rather than as an enactment of a commitment to providing services for people with disabilities.⁹⁵

4.107 Westwork, a CETP agency, supported the idea of integrated as opposed to segregated classes, but believed that these could only work properly if sufficient resources were provided.

4.108 Inadequate literacy and numeracy skills often present a barrier to participation in mainstream TAFE courses for people with disabilities:

There are almost no opportunities for people with “learning” disabilities to gain access to integrated TAFE courses. Where opportunities are available, they are reserved for people with “approved” literacy skills.

TAFE should provide the resources to assist people with an intellectual disability to gain access to appropriate training courses in integrated classes. This could include non-written instruction/study aides[sic], non-written examinations, a support worker, or allowing longer time to complete course requirements.⁹⁶

94. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 5420, 5432 (Victorian Government).

95. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5592 (DEAC – Disability Employment Action Centre).

96. Supplementary Submission September 1990 and *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5628 (Westwork Industries (Wesley Central Mission)).

4.109 On the other hand the question must also be raised as to the real benefit to students with intellectual disabilities of working under such conditions, and it may be preferable to develop appropriately accredited courses which students felt they would comfortably cope with. 'Integration' which emphasises the problems of some students may not achieve any positive results in terms of socialisation and development of independence.

4.110 The so-called Sach report had praised the response of the ACT TAFE system to the needs of people with disabilities; however, it appears that the system has since been subject to funding cutbacks across all courses. Individual schools within the ACT TAFE structure are able to set up their own courses to meet the needs of students with intellectual disabilities.

4.111 The Queensland government in its evidence acknowledged that:

Most provision that is made in the TAFE colleges for people with intellectual disabilities tends to be in short specialised programs to meet a need which is specifically articulated to the college at the time.⁹⁷

4.112 TAFE in Queensland develops programs for specific job outcomes (for example, CETP placements) such as a course offered by the College of Tourism and Hospitality in Brisbane where students completed fairly short vocational programs and were placed in areas of the catering industry, for example, as kitchen hands and in fast food areas. However, there are no programs that facilitate transition or access for people with disabilities 'who may come from a segregated setting in a special school or from an institution to make the transition into mainstream programs . . . we have shorter programs which are developed on a local college basis to meet needs there . . . there is considerable community demand for a transitional style program which allows people access into mainstream vocational training'.⁹⁸ The Queensland Department of Employment, Vocational Education, Training and Industrial Relations (DEVETIR) also made limited provision for post-school and vocational options for students with intellectual disabilities; and there was ongoing discussion between DEVETIR and Education Department officers on such matters.

4.113 While the Northern Territory Department of Education believed that TAFE would be an important education resource for people with disabilities, TAFE was not yet meeting all needs.

97. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4345 (Queensland Government).

98. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4350 (Queensland Government).

Needs of people with physical and other disabilities

4.114 The particular educational needs of people with long-standing physical and sensory disabilities, appear to relate primarily to access issues⁹⁹, including both physical access to buildings and access to services such as interpreters, scribes, taping, etc.

... tertiary institutions provide a varying range of opportunities and barriers to people with disabilities. I have attended both the University of New South Wales and Sydney University. The latter's physical access around the campus is poor, mainly due to its age; however all Universities, CAE's, TAFE's etc. require funding and regulation to ensure access for students with disabilities. This too has bearing on the capacity of undergraduates to succeed and thereby put their qualifications to use in the workforce.¹⁰⁰

4.115 A number of people with physical and sensory disabilities may have received segregated education and this isolation, in conjunction with possibly limited expectations as to higher education, may have affected access in the past. As was pointed out by one witness, the educational achievements for people in their fifties¹⁰¹ were not high relative to the percentage of people now achieving higher formal qualification, and this is supported by other research. In the 1990 Department of Social Security survey of persons with a disability (including acquired rather than life-long disability)¹⁰² those persons over 45 were the most severely disadvantaged educationally, with over 75 per cent of them having left school by age 15, and a further three per cent never having attended school.

4.116 For those in older age groups, social trends of the 1950s and 1960s will have influenced expectations, although specific factors relating to disability will also play a role. Other persons, regardless of age, will experience difficulty in obtaining an education (including post-secondary education) because of their particular disability – for example, some people with learning problems.¹⁰³

These may be people whose specific learning difficulties were diagnosed in childhood. In some cases the programs designed to help the children with their basic skills were given by the parents; in others the parents were fortunate to find a remedial teacher who was able to take the child as a private student and work with the child. These may have

99. See above Paragraphs 4.4-4.6.

100. Submission No. 28, p. 2 (Mr I. Dalwood).

101. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4440 (Disabled Peoples' International, Queensland Branch).

102. *Crossing the Barriers*: A survey of the barriers to employment for DSS clients with disabilities, Policy Research Paper No. 58, December 1990, p. 137.

103. Submission No. 46, p. 4 (Specific Learning Difficulties Association of the A.C.T.).

been parents who could afford to pay for the extra tuition needed. The parents of children with specific learning difficulties who could *not* afford that extra demand, may have been able to help the child themselves or they, in their turn, may have also had a specific learning difficulty which would preclude their being able to give appropriate academic help. Their support may have been of the loving kind, accepting the child as he was.

It may also have been negative – “I was not any good at school but I made out. You will have to do the same!”, or “I was stupid and you are just like me”.

The group first referred to are those most likely to have completed Year 10 then gone to a trade or completed year 12 and, in some cases, gone to University, College of Advanced Education or TAFE to do tertiary study, which they generally completed, gaining a degree or diploma.

The second group yield achievers of a different kind. The man who was running his own carrying business but could not read efficiently and who wrote his letters with a dictionary in his hand: his auditory memory was excellent. The very good workmen who refuse promotion – because they would have to write reports.¹⁰⁴

4.117 For those people able to obtain access to higher education the same problems as experienced in earlier education may continue to operate, primarily because there are insufficient resources available to meet quite intensive needs. In particular, submissions and evidence given by witnesses suggested that computers and other technological aids¹⁰⁵, provision of books and other materials in appropriate forms (for example, braille)¹⁰⁶, availability of tapes or transcripts of lectures, etc. and use of interpreters or note takers¹⁰⁷ were required for further education to be effective. Where individual resources and informal assistance cannot meet such needs, and the educational institution cannot provide enough of them to meet student demand, the issue of access remains a major barrier.

4.118 Additional problems can also arise in the area of staff of educational institutions not wishing to accommodate students' needs.

Sometimes deaf people are being refused point blank entrance into [vocational courses at TAFE or SkillShare] because they just cannot communicate with them . . . I have had cases where I have had two

104. *ibid.*

105. Submission No. 209, p. 2 (Mr P. Beatty).

106. Submission No. 73, pp.6-7 (Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind).

107. Submission No. 163 Attachment (Australian Deafness Council).

deaf people wanting to do a panel beating course with SkillShare and they have been told, "No, I am sorry, we have not got enough interpreting", and in one case they just said "I am sorry, our lecturer does not feel comfortable with interpreting", and refused point blank to take people on.¹⁰⁸

4.119 An additional factor relating to the success or otherwise of attempts at higher education for people with physical and sensory disabilities is that of cost. Witnesses and submissions stated that the daily/annual cost of having a disability was extremely high, particularly in terms of being employed, and this factor is considered below in Chapter 7. Relative to the need to examine the factors which may limit individual development, however, the limited access to services such as education caused by low income or by income being fully committed to other expenses is a matter which needs to be addressed.

it is probably cheaper to provide access to education . . . and thus provide equal avenues of access to the workforce than to relegate people with disabilities to unemployment . . .¹⁰⁹

Late onset disabilities (including psychiatric)

4.120 To a degree, people with certain types of late onset disabilities have experienced difficulties similar to those persons with long-term physical or sensory disabilities. However, the needs of many people with more recently acquired disabilities can also vary quite markedly and the education needs of this group will depend on a range of factors, including their age (they may be older having left school some years earlier); their educational and labour force background; and the impact of their disability on their employment capacity and consequent need for re-training.

4.121 Educational levels (including literacy) and the lack of skill levels are perceived by many clients as a potential barrier to their labour force re-entry. Almost 50 per cent of people in one survey thought that their educational or skill levels meant that they would have difficulties obtaining a job while 23 per cent thought that their problems with reading and writing would be also be a barrier.¹¹⁰

4.122 Given the restructuring of disability income support that occurred in 1991, with the increased emphasis on capacity for training¹¹¹, the level of previous educational attainment and/or any literacy problems will be a major factor

108. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 5084 (Royal South Australian Deaf Society).

109. Submission No. 28, pp. 2-3 (Mr I. Dalwood); see also Submission No. 209, pp 2-3 (Mr P. Beatty).

110. *Crossing the Barriers: A survey of the barriers to employment for DSS clients with disabilities*, DSS Policy Research Paper No. 58, December 1990, p. 54.

111. The changes to income security for people with disabilities are discussed in Chapter 7.

determining the success of training attempts by former invalid pensioners, sickness beneficiaries and other people with disabilities.

4.123 Advocates representing people with a range of acquired (or late onset) disabilities which interrupt employment highlighted the needs of their clients. The range of acquired disabilities canvassed included:

- psychiatric disabilities;
- effects of traumatic head injury;
- degenerative disorders such as arthritis;
- multiple sclerosis; and
- RSI or occupational overuse syndrome.

4.124 The major difficulties which many people in these categories experienced were the unpredictability of their illness or injury, varying rather than steady levels of health/well being and the need to accept that the disability could mean that previous education or skills could no longer be utilised. These factors suggest that both education and training requirements would be difficult to meet within standard programs, although they perhaps could be met if the relevant service providers were prepared to be flexible.¹¹²

4.125 People suffering head injury (from a number of causes) may not have completed their education prior to injury or may have been operating well in employment and other areas. Nonetheless, the injury will probably require a new approach to their capacities, with much of their former education and experience being of limited value.

... lots of our clients have little insight into the nature of their disabilities and the impact these have on their lives. They are actually trying to get jobs that are way beyond their new level of performance ability.¹¹³

4.126 Persons representing those with multiple sclerosis however, did not refer specifically to education, or retraining needs, but primarily to the need for employers to be more accommodating¹¹⁴, and this was the case also for persons with occupational overuse syndrome (RSI) as presented in another submission.¹¹⁵

112. Submission No. 80, p. 2 (The New South Wales Council for Intellectual Disability).

113. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4109 (Headway (NSW) Inc.).

114. Submission No. 15, p. 3 (People with Multiple Sclerosis Queensland).

115. Submission No. 84, p. 8 (Ms B. Saxby).

The need, in both cases, was to assist people who could work to remain in the workforce or to return to it gradually, depending on an individual's needs, as an alternative to retraining in new areas or further education.

4.127 Whatever the disability, the major need as expressed by witnesses was for services, including education and training, to accept the relatively slow or unpredictable nature of the individual's participation and outcome, and to accept that this may characterise their participation in other programs, including employment. People with psychiatric disabilities may experience difficulties with acceptance in the classroom by teachers and peers, similar to the reactions by employers to workers with psychiatric disabilities. A submission by a woman in her forties spoke eloquently of these problems:

In the class, I found I was a disruption to the others there not as much verbally, as through sheer inability to relate physically well with my environment or to talk with my fellow students which made me stiffly alone and inclined to stare instead of just look. This filled those around me with discomfort and particularly the teacher who was put off his/her work program because of me I thought. . . . I continued to do two subjects that term and I passed both. I am doing a third subject this semester. Only three subject when four is the norm but I am sticking at it and that is what counts.¹¹⁶

4.128 The ACT Mental Health Resource also outlined the difficulties faced by those with psychiatric disabilities attempting vocational or tertiary studies:

many of the severely impaired suffer from concentration problems and mainstream courses may prove to be of limited value. . . . there may need to be rehabilitation or social workers available. They could assist the student by providing encouragement and feedback. They could also work with the teachers and employers to outline the special needs of the student and to facilitate entry into work.¹¹⁷

4.129 People who have survived a traumatic head injury (THI) may also experience difficulties in educational settings because of their disability, such as problems with memory, concentration, planning and organisation skills as well as behaviour problems.¹¹⁸ The special needs of people with THI and the impact on their employment potential need to be taken into account when developing and delivering education programs.¹¹⁹

116. Submission No. 2, p. 2 (Miss L. Roberts).

117. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1698 (A.C.T. Mental Health Resource).

118. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 4098 (Headway (NSW) Inc.).

119. *ibid.*

4.130 For a number of people with disabilities affected by additional disadvantaging factors, the need for special attention by education services may be particularly important. In discussing the needs of women with disabilities, the National Women's Consultative Council pointed out that women in general were 'concentrated in "caring/nurturing" roles in the workplace' and believed that women and girls with disabilities 'face considerable difficulties in obtaining information about alternative options and putting such options into practice'.¹²⁰

4.131 The Council identified three areas on which effort could be concentrated in order to improve the educational outlook for (and hence, the employment prospects of) women:

Information about options to girls with disabilities and their families should be provided from an early stage. It is vital to recognise the influence of the family, particularly where the young woman has an intellectual disability. It is equally important to understand the family's reaction to disability – feelings of protection, etc. – and in providing education, there is an educative role to play for the family. However the right for all young women to receive adequate information about their life choices must be given precedence.

Attitude change within the wider community must occur. Women with disabilities must not be seen as dependent and helpless but as individuals who may need support to carry out their life choices.

Workers within the education system must develop skills to give support to young women whose knowledge of options is not enhanced by the education system. So-called low achievers are those most likely to be placed in traditional areas of employment or assimilated into the home never having been aware of their options. In bringing forward this point, NWCC sees a very fine line between defining a learning difficulty and a disability. The former may go unrecognised in the education system and become a disabling feature of one's life.¹²¹

4.132 Little specific information on the educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disabilities was presented to the Committee; however, evidence referred to in the submission of the New South Wales Office of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment¹²² noted established data on the generally poor levels of formal education and training for Aboriginals and also noted that, for Aboriginals with physical disabilities, access to existing education and training opportunities were few. 'Many programs aimed at Aboriginal training and

120. Submission No. 210, p. 4 (National Women's Consultative Council).

121. Submission No. 210, p. 4 (National Women's Consultative Council).

122. *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 3838-39 (Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment).

employment do not specifically address the needs of those Aboriginals with disabilities'.¹²³

4.133 The difficulties which many Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders experience in obtaining access to suitable education is no doubt compounded by distance or isolation, as well as by health, housing and income factors. The issue of location in respect of other people with disabilities is also important in access to education, although this was not often mentioned specifically in submissions or oral evidence. Yet, apart from persons who might benefit from correspondence courses, people with disabilities who live in more isolated or remote areas may experience considerable difficulty in obtaining access to appropriate education services, including post-secondary education.

4.134 In order to optimise beneficial client outcomes in non-urban areas it should be a primary consideration to establish how the clients are to access services available or to be provided. The design of some programs has resulted in the services being established in a location which, because of a lack of transport, precludes many persons from availing themselves of the service. In other cases the degree of difficulty in utilising the transport service also places restriction on service accessibility.¹²⁴

4.135 The Ethnic Child Care Development Unit noted that people with disabilities 'want the same things as everyone else', including education¹²⁵, and that the children of people of non-English speaking background (NESB), who might be at risk of isolation from the broader community 'have their future prospects restricted'.¹²⁶ Limited expectations and restricted education, plus language difficulties and other disadvantaging factors may result in limited opportunities for NESB people with disabilities, and mean that access to appropriate education is difficult. For those persons acquiring a disability later in life, an inadequate education and problems with language may make retraining extremely difficult.¹²⁷ The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils' (FECCA) 1988 policy statement (forwarded to the Committee as part of FECCA's submission) made a number of recommendations as to the specific employment, education and training needs of

123. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 3839 (Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment). The source utilised by the ODEOPE submission is the so-called Miller Report (report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs, AGPS, 1985). See also *Barriers to Employment Survey of DSS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clients with Disabilities*, pp. 2, 4-5.

124. Submission No. 114, p. 3 (Vocational Training Service).

125. Submission No. 79, p. 5 (Ethnic Child Care Development Unit).

126. Submission No. 79, p. 6-8 (Ethnic Child Care Development Unit).

127. Submission No. 79, p. 8 (Ethnic Child Care Development Unit).

people of NESB in general¹²⁸ and referred to the need for interpreting and translating services, bilingual and bicultural staff for training programs.¹²⁹

4.136 Overall, the issues of education, including post-secondary and transition education for people with disabilities, are ones which appear to demand both considerable resources and a flexible and adaptive approach to provide satisfactory outcomes. This in itself does not mean that generic or mainstream services may not be the most suitable approach for a number of students of all ages, but such services can only help the individual if they are adequately resourced and well-administered, allowing both the academic and the social/independence results expected to be achieved. The evidence given by witnesses indicates that the problems referred to in Chapter 2 – the importance of identifying individual needs as well as seeking integration – have been apparent in the field of education, and that some of the efforts to address them have resulted in services which have not adequately met needs.

Recommendations

The Committee RECOMMENDS:

11. That adequate resources be provided to TAFE and other tertiary level education institutions to increase access to courses for people with disabilities. Such access should include physical access, interpreters and aides, and courses which meet the specific needs of people with disabilities.
12. That staff at tertiary institutions, including TAFE colleges, receive training in the problems of access experienced by people with disabilities and in the ways in which such problems can be overcome.
13. That all tertiary education institutions provide annual reports on access issues for people with disabilities and on the manner in which these have been addressed by the institution.
14. That the special needs of people with disabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) background, and of people with disabilities from non-English speaking background (NESB), are identified to enable increased access to appropriate education.
15. That the Commonwealth fund a short-term research project to develop a strategy for increasing access to tertiary education (including TAFE's) for people with disabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background and for people with disabilities of non-English speaking background.

128. Submission No. 186, pp. 19-22 (Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia Inc.).

129. Submission No. 186, pp. 1-2 (Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia Inc.).