

PROJECT 9: Advice to VET system (ongoing)

Description

Provide advice to the National Quality Council, National Industry Skills Council, DEEWR and NSOC on equity and disability projects

Outcome

Ongoing, but included a NVDAT submission to the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy

PROJECT 10: Communicating With Stakeholders (ongoing)

Description

Develop a joint equity Taskforce communiqué for circulation to VET student groups, peak disability bodies, state VET and private providers and other peak bodies to keep abreast of issues of importance at the local level and to inform them of progress of national disability VET reform.

Outcome

The Communiqué circulated to 600 bodies and individuals. A second communiqué to be produced at the end of 2008

PROJECT 11: Update cost/benefit analysis

Description

This project, being undertaken by DEEWR, will update existing cost/benefit analyses, particularly the analysis conducted by ANTA in 2001¹⁷, to demonstrate the investment required and potential benefits of that investment in increasing the participation of people with disabilities in VET using currently available data.

Outcome are

The revised report will be used to help justify the investment required to increase participation of people with disabilities in the VET system.

Funding of Supports for People with Disabilities in VET

Since NVDAT made its recommendation in August 2008 related to funding models to provide support for people with disabilities in the VET system (see Recommendation 3: on page 3), further work has been done to understand the importance of this issue.

One of these challenges in increasing the participation of people with disabilities in VET is the increasing impact of financial pressures on students' participation in post-school education and training. The Victorian *On Track* post-school survey of students is of interest here in that it provides a snapshot of student destination data that is not produced anywhere else in Australia. The survey indicates that:

- the proportion of students deferring the take up of University or TAFE has increased from 8.9 per cent in 2007 to 11.9 per cent in 2008
- There is a strong relationship between low socioeconomic status or disadvantaged background and the deferral rate: nearly 80 per cent of students surveyed stated that the reason for their deferral was due to the lack of financial support while studying.

While the *On Track* survey indicates that financial pressures are impacting on the mainstream student population, it is important to recognise that for students with a disability, these financial issues are further compounded. These students may be

¹⁷ "The Economic and Social Analysis of Increasing Opportunities for People with a Disability in VET", Mike Dockery, Elisa Birch and Peter Kenyon, 2001

contending with additional costs associated with study, the ongoing impact of their disability on the capacity to earn an income to support them as well as on their capacity to learn and study.

Supports for students with a disability

In the school-to-further education continuum, there is considerable variation between sectors in the support/resources that can be provided to those people with disabilities who require assistance.

- In the school sector, students with a disability can receive aided assistance if required.
- In the University sector, the Centre for the Study of Higher Education, (based on updated census data of equity groups in University education) indicates that participation levels for students with a disability have improved (2008 Universities Australia study on Participation and Equity). While it is not known if there is a causal link with improved participation rates and funding of the Commonwealth Equity Programmes the latter has provided substantial funding to support both institutions and students, including students with disabilities
- For Apprenticeships, the Federal Government provides support provisions for employers under the *Disability Australian Apprenticeship Wage Support (DAAWS)* scheme to create incentives for employers of apprentices and trainees. Under DAAWS, employers can receive an incentive to accommodate a student's (only apprentices and trainees) physical learning needs by providing modifications to the workplace.

In comparison, there are limited supports for students with disabilities who participate in other (non-apprenticeship) TAFE courses. Given that more students with disabilities are enrolled in TAFE courses, than apprenticeships/ traineeships, the issue is significant.

Recommendation 8:

That NSOC/MCVTE endorse the development, implementation and monitoring of funding models for the provision of support for students with a disability that are consistent across schooling, further education/training and higher education sectors and employment to ensure smooth transitions and support for these students.

National Benchmarks

Under the Commonwealth Equity Programmes, three specific key areas of funding can be sourced to assist students in higher education. These include:

1. Higher Education Equity Support Programme In 2007, \$11.25 million was allocated to higher education institutions to assist eligible higher education providers that are supporting disadvantaged students through a specialised institutional equity scholarship programme
2. Higher Education Disability Support Program In 2007, \$6.7 million was allocated to fund this initiative on an annual basis for
 - the reimbursement of specialised equipment and educational support costs

- Performance based funding initiatives based on how well institutions attract and retain students with disabilities
3. Commonwealth Scholarships to assist
- General education costs,
 - Accommodation costs for relocation
 - National priority scholarships in chosen disciplines areas.

As an election commitment, (*Scholarships for a Competitive Future*) the Government promised to double the number of Commonwealth Scholarships in Universities from 44,000 to 88,000 by 2012—a proposed budget of \$4,080 per scholarship in 2008.

International benchmarks

Research from OECD data indicates that in Germany, Denmark and France, there have been small improvements in the participation levels of equity groups overall (OECD study Education at a Glance, 2007).

The UK has adopted an ambitious equity agenda to widen participation levels of student equity groups as reported in the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) 2008. The UK model is similar to the framework used in the Australian higher education sector.

Some of the UK initiatives are worth considering in principle. These include;

- Adoption of a national Scholarship Framework
- Removal of up-front fees
- Institutional funding incentives
- And encouragement of part time attendance

Shifting Gear: A New Way Forward

A great deal has been learned over the past 12 years about the reform process to improve participation of people with disabilities in the VET system—about the reasons why so many people with disabilities are not participating in training, about the problems and barriers they face and about the solutions that can be (and in some cases are being) put in place to remove those barriers. Our analysis so far has led to the following major conclusions:

- People with virtually all types and severity of disabilities **CAN** successfully complete vocational education and training leading to meaningful employment. **This is a solvable problem.**
- For people with disabilities to make successful transitions from exclusion to full inclusion in all aspects of society, the reform process needs to take place **across virtually all aspects of society**—the physical environment, transport, personal care, technology, product and service development and delivery, education, law, employment, etc.
- These reforms need to be managed in unison to create a smooth pathway for people with disabilities through every day and throughout their lives. We call this the **"Whole of Life"¹⁸** approach to disability reform. Its implementation requires, in the first instance, the development of a coordinated management system to link the reform process across all levels of government and across the business and community sectors.
- To achieve the full inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of society we need to ensure that all of the business processes and systems that are used to effectively run government enterprises (transport, health, education, etc), business (particularly employment and product development) and the community sector take into account the needs of people with disabilities. This represents a new phase in the overall disability reform process based on **business process transformation** and **systems integration**.
- Disability reform requires a **sustained investment and focus**, representing as it does a long history of development in our society that has often excluded the needs of people with disabilities in its design and implementation.
- The most positive outcomes for students with disabilities emerge in environments that display a **strong positive culture** towards including people with disabilities. In those environments we see the formation of strong partnerships between employers, specialist disability agencies, training providers and people with disabilities.

From "Bolted-On" to "Built-In"

As we look back on the history of the disability reform process, particularly in relation to the ownership and management of the process, it is clear that it has been managed largely

¹⁸ The "Whole of Life" model for disability reform was described by The Ability Australia Foundation in 1996. It represents a dramatic change in thinking about the "business" of disability reform. Its three-pronged approach recognises that for the majority of people with disabilities three things combine—the significant infrastructure barriers they face every day, the low expectations placed on them by the community and their overall sense of disempowerment—to make living a fulfilling, productive life a pipe dream for many people with disabilities. The "Whole of Life" model centres reform on the integration and interconnecting of systems and the removal of barriers to support an individual's smooth transition in their daily life, whatever the life circumstance, to ensure that those who have been socially excluded have access to the same services, opportunities, choices and rights as others to enable them to fully participate in society

separately from mainstream processes. Major decisions about national directions and priorities are made by specially formed committees or by Ministers and others who largely follow the advice of those committees. Plans and strategies are created specifically for disability reform but are often not integrated into the broader plans and strategies of the various organisations to which they apply. Specialist disability management and support roles are created to deliver on those plans and strategies. The design, construction and implementation of programs and processes to support people with disabilities is conducted in a "disability laboratory" environment through a plethora of pilot projects that more often than not achieve outstanding success but rarely become "business as usual".

We believe the time has come to take the combined learnings about what works and what doesn't work in disability reform (in Australia and elsewhere) and, through a systems integration approach, use that knowledge to modify and enhance mainstream processes in the VET system and beyond to fully include the needs of people with disabilities. As part of that process we will transfer the ownership of disability reform from the current "specialist" disability management system and build it into existing mainstream management structures.

A useful analogy can be made to the development of Occupational Health and Safety in modern society. 100 years ago or less, occupational health and safety was virtually unheard of and certainly gained little focus or attention. Workers built skyscrapers in modern cities, walking on narrow girders hundreds of feet in the air without safety harnesses. Radiographers used no protective clothing. Asbestos workers used no breathing apparatus despite evidence of the dangers of asbestos.

Today, stringent OH&S laws are in place, policies are in place in all organisations, safety methods have been developed. And most significantly, OH&S is now EVERYONE'S responsibility in every organisation—it is built into every mainstream business process.

In reaching that point, OH&S reform went through several phases and transitions, from problem recognition, pressure for change, government (legislative) response, organisational reaction, solution development, implementation (process change) and ongoing management.

Overall these phases can be grouped into three major stages of change: the *Incubation Stage*, during which a problem is recognized and pressure builds for it to be addressed; the *Solution Development Stage* during which a trigger is created to start the change process (often legislation) and a structure is formed to lead and manage the development and testing of solutions to the problem; the *Integration Stage*, during which the knowledge that has been created in the "laboratory" of the Solution Development stage is "rolled out" to become "business as usual" and ownership is transferred to mainstream management systems and processes.

It is important to understand that, while ultimately for the OH&S problem to be solved we needed to reach the stage where the reforms became fundamental to the way our society works and were "owned" by every employee, every manager, every department, every division, every organisation; it didn't start out that way. Its earlier stages of development were owned and managed as a separate process ... an "OH&S laboratory" ... in which

The VET Disability Reform Manifesto

Recommendation 9:

That NSOC/MCVTE endorse \$30,000 funding to develop a project plan for a proposed Manifesto for Disability Reform in VET for 2009 and beyond. The Manifesto will build on Bridging Pathways, the current national VET strategy for disability reform and define the next stage of VET system reform to achieve the full inclusion of people with disabilities.

The proposed Manifesto would have two components—the first focused on research and analysis and the second on systems design. They would:

- a) gather, analyse and extract the key learnings from the wealth of knowledge that has been generated about the participation of people with disabilities in the VET system over the life of Bridging Pathways and
- b) describe the next phase of the reform process that NVDAT believes will focus on integrating the needs of people with disabilities into the fundamental business processes of the VET system and will deliver an overarching strategy to achieve that outcome.

While *Bridging Pathways* has been generally considered to have made a major contribution to the disability reform process in VET over the past eight years—providing as it does a clear overall strategy for the reform process, articulating the key priorities and actions that have been required to reach the point where we now believe we understand what works and what doesn't work—NVDAT believes it is now time to bring together that combined knowledge and commence the process of integrating that knowledge into the mainstream VET system.

NVDAT believes the first crucial step in this process will be to create a robust, far-reaching roadmap to guide the disability reform process from now until the grand vision of disability reform in the VET system is achieved: equal participation of people with disabilities at all levels of the VET system leading to successful work and life outcomes. We call this roadmap ***The VET Disability Reform Manifesto***.

Bridging Pathways and The Manifesto

Bridging Pathways is not dead. The direction it articulated over eight years ago is still valid. It described three stages of the pathway that need to be created for people with disabilities to successfully participate in VET, and one major systemic change:

- *opening the door* — to increase access to vocational education and training for people with a disability
- *improving the learning experience* — to support people with a disability to achieve in all areas and levels of vocational education and training
- *achieving employment and lifelong learning outcomes* — to enable people with a disability to make a greater contribution to the economic and social life of the community

- *creating an accountable system* — to provide the tools, supports and pathways to achieve meaningful outcomes for people with a disability.¹⁹

Those objectives were, and still are, relevant in describing what needs to be done to achieve the objectives of the disability reform process in the VET system.

Articulating the specific changes that needed to occur in the “laboratory” stage of the change process was the role of the *Blueprint* that accompanied *Bridging Pathways* and the *Revised Blueprint* that was published after the Mid-term Review of Bridging Pathways. Together those documents guided a great deal of hard work by many people in the VET system that have created an environment in which it is time to move to the final stage of reform that will see the needs of students with disabilities integrated into every structure, system and process of the VET system.

The Project

The next, and we believe final stage of the disability reform process will involve integrating the needs of students with disabilities into every mainstream VET business process—teaching, planning, finance management, enrolment, career guidance, information management, accreditation, policy development, quality management, facilities management, planning, etc, and the management system and structure that brings these processes together. Figure 6 depicts how this new integrated business model will include the needs of people with disabilities in all aspects of the VET system.

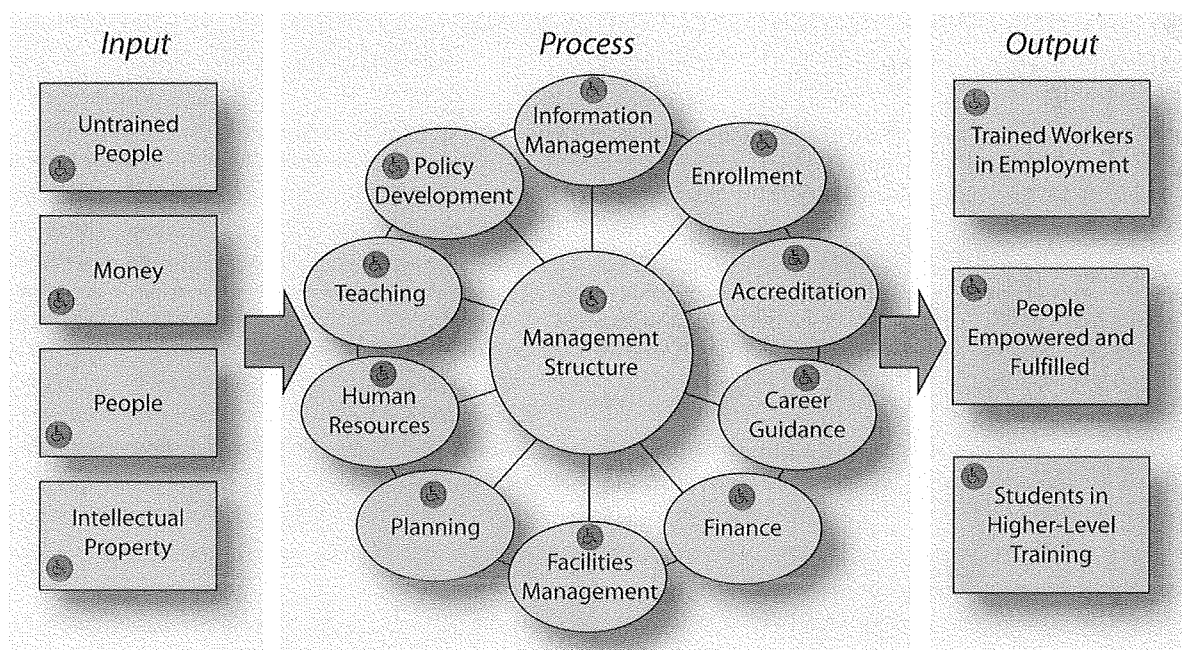


Figure 6: People with Disabilities’ needs integrated into VET management, systems and processes

To commence this process NVDAT believes we need a project that brings together a small group of the most experienced practitioners in disability reform with business systems integration specialists who together would create the *VET Disability Reform Manifesto* that would guide the Integration Stage of disability reform in VET in the same way that *Bridging Pathways* guided the Solution Development Stage. The development of the Manifesto and

¹⁹ “Bridging Pathways”, Australian National Training Authority, 2004.

the leadership and facilitation of its implementation would be the primary activity of the disability reform component of the proposed new VET equity leadership/management structure currently being developed by the National VET Equity Advisory Alliance.

Project Objectives

The objectives of the VET Disability Reform Manifesto Project would be:

1. to bring together the combined knowledge about what works and what doesn't work for people with disabilities in the VET system in Australia and beyond,
2. to undertake a focused analysis of that knowledge to extract the key learnings from our experience with a particular focus on understanding how "best practice" can be transformed into "business as usual",
3. to examine the business structures, processes and systems currently in place in state training agencies of the VET system with a view to identifying which of those structures, processes and systems need to be modified to fully include people with disabilities,
4. to map those priority processes against the key "best practice" learnings of the past 12 years to determine specifically what changes need to be made to existing structures, processes and systems,
5. to identify the key individuals and positions that need to be engaged in this process and to identify the key motivators of success for those individuals to determine how best to foster their engagement in the change process,
6. to articulate specifically the changes that need to be made to existing VET business systems, structures and processes (listed under The Project on page 3) to fully include people with disabilities and to describe what needs to be done to implement those changes and by whom,
7. to determine where and how the VET disability reform process can link with the broader "whole of life" disability reform process, in particular the National Disability Strategy currently being developed by the Australian Government,
8. to create a marketing plan to communicate to all of the relevant participants in the VET system what these changes mean, what their role in implementing those changes is and how their area of responsibility links with other relevant areas.

The end result of this process would be a document that, like Bridging Pathways, would be endorsed by "the system", would be communicated throughout the system and would lead and guide the activities of all those within the VET system who need to be engaged in the Integration Stage of disability reform in VET from 2009 onwards.

In a nutshell, it would define a new integrated business model for disability reform in VET.

Process

To achieve these objectives a small but highly experienced team of specialists in disability reform and strategic business systems integration would be formed to create the Manifesto over a period of six months. It is proposed that the team, probably consisting of a project leader, a strategic disability reform specialist, a strategic business integration specialist, an experienced disability research analyst and an administrator would undertake the following activities:

- Broad-based desktop research in Australia and elsewhere that would bring together the plethora of research that has already been conducted (we believe that further "on the ground" research is not required at this stage) with a view to identifying the key messages and patterns that have emerged from the work already being done over the past 12 years about what works and what doesn't work.

- A series of facilitated workshops involving individuals from the state based VET system who have demonstrated a capacity to understand the complexities of disability reform, the complexities of the VET system itself and/or the political and “intangible” environment in which the VET system operates. These workshops would be conducted in two stages: first, these groups would be brought together with others who have similar roles in the VET system (VET executives; mainstream process managers in the VET system including planners, administrators, workforce development managers etc; disability practitioners; policy makers; front-line trainers; etc) and second, those individuals who demonstrated a capacity and willingness to be engaged in the change process in the first stage would be brought together cross-portfolio to identify the linkages between the business processes and how the needs of people with disabilities could be integrated across those processes.
- The team would then undertake a “strategic systems integration” design exercise that would develop a new business model for disability reform in VET that would overlay the best practice business models we have already identified with the existing VET business model. In the development of this new business model the team would consult with a broad range of experts and strategic thinkers including those in disability reform, senior bureaucrats, successful business executives and academia (the Australian Graduate School of Management, the newly-formed Centre for Social Impact and others).
- The resulting model would be tested in an appropriate “micro environment”, possibly in one State, to refine the model in a practical setting.
- The Manifesto itself would be presented to all of the key participants in the VET system and relevant peak bodies across the country in a national roadshow that would describe the new model and articulate what it meant to those people and to the systems and processes they own.
- Either as part of this project or as a follow-on initiative, an implementation “SWAT team” of business integration specialists could work directly with practitioners in the VET system at all levels to help them modify their business processes in line with the Manifesto (this team could be employed for a defined period with project funds from the proposed new National VET equity advisory leadership structure that is currently being determined).

Resource Requirement

While a detailed estimate of the costs involved in this project and a detailed project plan would be created as the next stage of this process, NVDAT envisages that substantial resources will be required to employ a specialist team working together over a six-month period, with the associated costs of accommodation, travel and meetings.

NVDAT believes this investment will result in the development of a sound business approach to the integration of the needs of people with disabilities in the VET system that will lead to significantly increase levels of participation flowing through to increased workforce participation, reduced welfare dependency and improved economic and social inclusion outcomes overall.

Timeframe

In the next stage, a detailed project plan and budget proposal would be developed, costing approximately \$30,000.

If approved by NSOC and MCVTE, work potentially could be completed by March 2009 with the project itself commencing in April - May 2009 for completion by December 2009. NVDAT would expect that the main project would be conducted under the auspices of the proposed new National VET equity advisory leadership structure for implementation in 2009.

A Note about Information Management

Since the early stages of disability reform in VET in Australia, one of the significant challenges has been gathering accurate, reliable data about the participation of people with disabilities in VET (and elsewhere).

While the extent of the problem of the low participation of people with disabilities is clearly demonstrated in every analysis we have seen, obtaining statistics about people with disabilities generally and their participation in VET specifically that allows consistent, accurate and robust "apples-to-apples" comparisons to be made over time and with other populations, predictions to be made and conclusions to be reached about what needs to be done and what the results are likely to be, is extremely difficult.

The availability of timely, accurate data and information is essential in running any complex enterprise (including the "disability reform enterprise") for the enterprise to understand the current state of the enterprise, key problem areas, trends over time, achievement against targets, future investment requirements, etc. The inadequacy of information about the participation of people with disabilities in VET is a significant problem that needs to be addressed.

An early priority for the reform process under the proposed new National VET equity advisory structure in 2009 should be the development of a data model for people with disabilities in VET and the subsequent development of an integrated information management system for disability reform (linked with or a component of AVETMISS and the data resources maintained by NCVET).

Recommendation 10:

That NSOC/MCVTE note NVDAT's recommendation that an early priority for the reform process under the proposed new National VET Equity Alliance structure in 2009 should be the development of a data model for people with disabilities in VET and the subsequent development of an integrated information management system for disability reform (linked with or a component of AVETMISS and the data resources maintained by NCVET)

This recommendation links directly with the previous discussion about integrating people with disabilities into the core business processes of the VET system.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

That MCVTE note the potential contribution that improved VET outcomes for people with a disability will make to the Federal Government's Social Inclusion goals, particularly the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy and the COAG productivity agenda to address the skills shortage through increased workforce participation

Recommendation 2:

That MCVTE support targets being set to address the gap and increase participation, completion, higher level attainments and transition from VET to employment rates for people with disabilities and that progress towards the achievement of these reforms are monitored at the national level

Recommendation 3:

That MCVTE support the need for a funding model to be developed to encourage the states to increase participation, completion, higher level attainments and transition from VET to employment outcomes for people with a disability through allowing for higher needs students in resource allocation models and accountability measures to meet the additional cost in providing higher support for many of these students

Recommendation 4:

That NSOC note the NVDAT co-chairs will be writing to the Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG) regarding implications of NVDAT's web accessibility project findings and requesting FLAG's advice to NSOC on improving national compliance of TAFE and related websites with relevant legislation

Recommendation 5:

That NSOC note that the NVDAT Study Access report recommends the establishment of a one stop shop of VET and related study information for people with a disability and notes that the report's findings will be considered for inclusion in the redevelopment of the training.com.au website to ensure the needs of people with a disability are addressed on the new national website

Recommendation 6:

That NSOC endorse funding from 2009 of NVDAT's proposal for a three part National VET Disability Scholarships Framework, in recognition of the need to raise the profile of disability in VET, improve support options for students with disabilities, and improve staff skills and capacity in supporting these students

Recommendation 7:

That NSOC consider the need to quarantine funds in their jurisdictions for workforce development including a proportion of funding for equity purposes, should the proposed changes to the national initiatives funding arrangements proceed, whereby funding of the national Reframing The Future program would be transferred to the states and territories as general funds

Recommendation 8:

That NSOC/MCVTE endorse the development, implementation and monitoring of funding models for the provision of support for students with a disability that are consistent across schooling, further education/training and higher education sectors and employment to ensure smooth transitions and support for these students

Recommendation 9:

That NSOC/MCVTE endorse \$30,000 funding to develop a project plan for a proposed Manifesto for Disability Reform in VET for 2009 and beyond. The Manifesto will build on Bridging Pathways, the current national VET strategy for disability reform and define the next stage of VET system reform to achieve the full inclusion of people with disabilities

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Appendix 1: Participation of equity groups in VET

Equity Group	Indigenous		People with a Disability		Women		Language Other Than English	
	2003	2006	2003	2006	2003	2006	2003	2006
Proportion in population	3.6%	3.9%	16.8%	16.8%	49.9%	50.3%	n/a	n/a
Proportion in VET	3.4%	4.0%	6.4%	7.2%	50.6%	49.7%	12.5%	13.5%
Difference	-0.2%	0.1%	-10.4%	-9.6%	0.7%	-0.6%	n/a	n/a

Table 1: Comparison of participation of major equity groups in VET (Sources: ABS 2003 and 2006; Annual National Report of the Australian Vocational and Technical Education System 2006)

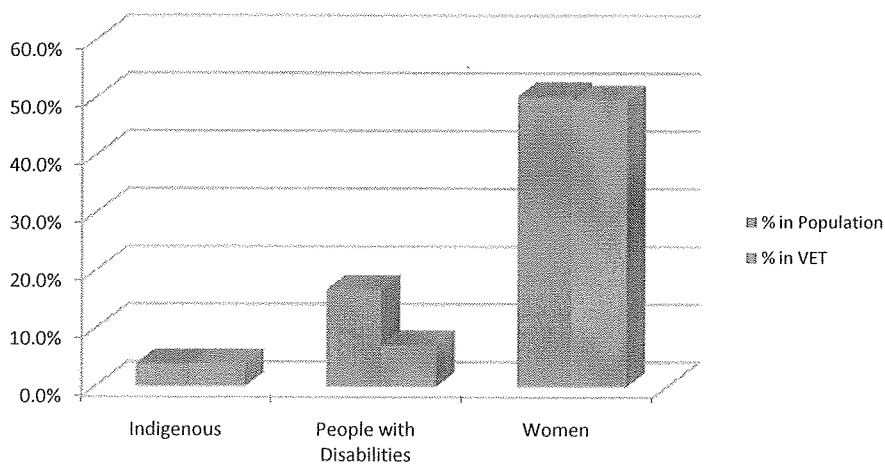


Figure 7: Graphical comparison of equity group participation in VET

Appendix 2: Outcomes from VET for Equity Groups

Performance Outcome/Year	Indigenous		People with a Disability		Women		Language Other Than English		All	
	2003	2006	2003	2006	2003	2006	2003	2006	2003	2006
Load Pass Rate	63.6	66.2	68.9	69.9	77.8	78.1	70.6	72.3	77.1	78.5
Level of Attainment										
Diploma or above	5.5	4.0	10.2	9.4	13.7	12.8	18.4	15.6	13.4	11.7
Certificate III or IV	33.6	32.7	30.4	33.0	38.7	41.1	37.3	38.1	41.5	45.1
Certificate I or II	42.7	43.2	32.0	31.7	22.7	26.0	24.8	26.5	22.9	25.9
Other	17.3	18.2	27.4	25.8	24.9	20.1	19.5	19.9	22.2	17.3
Further Study and Employment Outcomes										
Employed after training	60.2	63.6	49.6	55.8	70.7	78.3	60.8	64.4	73.9	77.4
Employed or in further study after training	89.2	77.1	83.8	69.6	90.6	85.1	88.5	80.3	92.3	86.7
Comparison of Outcomes of Equity Groups vs All Students										
Load Pass Rate	-13.5	-12.3	-8.2	-8.6	0.7	-0.4	-6.5	-6.2		
Level of Attainment										
Diploma or above	-7.9	-7.7	-3.2	-2.3	0.3	1.1	5.0	3.9		
Certificate III or IV	-7.9	-12.4	-11.1	-12.1	-2.8	-4.0	-4.2	-7.0		
Certificate I or II	19.8	17.3	9.1	5.8	-0.2	0.1	1.9	0.6		
Other	-4.9	0.9	5.2	8.5	2.7	2.8	-2.7	2.6		
Further Study and Employment Outcomes										
Employed after training	-13.7	-13.8	-24.3	-21.6	-3.2	0.9	-13.1	-13.0		
Employed or in further study after training	-3.1	-9.6	-8.5	-17.1	-1.7	-1.6	-3.8	-6.4		

Table 2: Attainment levels and outcomes from VET for equity groups, including a comparison vs. general VET student population (Data source: Annual National Report of the Australian Vocational and Technical Education System 2006)

Appendix 3: Analysis of Participation of People with Disabilities in VET

Overview

While the source of the data may differ, the take-home message remains the same: people with disabilities have significantly worse outcomes on most measures than the general population. As a result they are more likely to live at the margins of society and to feel socially excluded from the mainstream.

ABS indicates that 20% of the Australian population²⁰ or 3.96 million people have disabilities, and this proportion is increasing, particularly as the population ages.²¹

The following statistics provide a snapshot of the situation for people with a disability.

VET outcomes

(Data source: 2006 ANR of the Australian VET System)

Participation rates

- Over a five year period from 2002-2006, there has been little increase in the proportion of students reporting a disability, participating in VET: from 5.8% to 7.2%²²

Pass rates

- In 2006, the load pass rate for people with a disability was 69.9%²³ compared to 78.5% for all students in Government funded VET
- There has only been a marginal increase in the load pass rate over 5 years for students with disabilities from 67.8% to 69.9%²⁴

Level of attainment

- In 2006, people with a disability were much less likely than any other student group to be studying at Certificate III and above²⁵ with 31.7% at Certificate I or II or lower levels compared to 25.9% of all students
- AQF Certificate level III and above awards are the benchmark since they are more likely to lead to direct employment outcomes than do Certificates I and II and non AQF education²⁶.

Further study and employment rates

- Despite strategies to improve further study and employment outcomes for people with a disability, trends are going backwards over a five year period 2002-2006.
- Of all government funded TAFE graduates in 2006, 86.7%, were in further study or employment after training, compared to 69.6% of people with a disability (ie 17

²⁰ 2003 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

²¹ p 3-4. ABS, 2003, Another 20% of Australians (4.15 million) have a long-term health condition that does not restrict their everyday activities.

²² p175 2006 ANR of the Australian VET System

²³ p 40 2006 ANR of the Australian VET System

²⁴ p 40 2006 ANR of the Australian VET System

²⁵ p 35 2006 ANR of the Australian VET System

²⁶ p10 Cavallaro T, Foley P, Saunders J, Bowman K NCVER 2005 Report People with a Disability in Vocational Education And Training: A Statistical Compendium NCVER Report May 2005

percentage points below other students) and this figure has fallen from 71.3% in 2002²⁷.

Other data sources

Income levels

- In 2003, the median gross personal income per week of people of working age with a disability was \$255, compared to \$501 for those without a disability²⁸
- The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) research found that Australia has the lowest average personal income for people with disabilities, at 44% of the income of people without a disability²⁹.

Employment levels

- In 2003, 53.2% of people with disabilities participated in the labour force as compared to 80.6% of those without a disability³⁰.
- Australia has the seventh lowest employment rate for people with disabilities in the OECD. In 2003, nearly two thirds of the OECD countries measured had better employment rates than Australia for people with disabilities³¹

In 2003-2004, people with disabilities made up 3.8% of ongoing Australian Public Service (APS) employees, down from 5.8% ten years ago³²

²⁷ p 53 2006 ANR of the Australian VET System

²⁸ ABS 2003, p3. Persons aged 15-64 years living in households as referred to in HREOC National Inquiry into Employment and Disability Issues Paper 1: Employment and Disability – The Statistics March 2005

²⁹ p29 OECD, Transforming Disability into Ability, Policies to Promote Work and Income Security for Disabled People, 2003, as referred to in HREOC National Inquiry into Employment and Disability Issues Paper 1: Employment and Disability – The Statistics March 2005

³⁰ HREOC National Inquiry into Employment and Disability Issues Paper 1: Employment and Disability – The Statistics March 2005

³¹ OECD, Employment Outlook: Towards more and better jobs, 2003, p141, as referred to in HREOC National Inquiry into Employment and Disability Issues Paper 1: Employment and Disability – The Statistics March 2005

³² Australian Public Service Commission, State of the Service Report 2003-04 as referred to in HREOC National Inquiry into Employment and Disability Issues Paper 1: Employment and Disability – The Statistics March 2005

Appendix 4: Increasing Participation and Access through a National VET Disability Scholarships Framework

Summary

This paper outlines the National VET Disability Advisory Taskforce (NVDAT) proposal to NSOC for consideration of a three part National VET Disability Scholarships Framework (the Framework) to improve overall education and training outcomes for people with disabilities (PWD).

Proposal and Recommendations for a National VET Disability Scholarships Framework

NVDAT recommends the Federal Government establish a National VET Disability Scholarship Framework, similar to the Commonwealth Equity Scholarship Program in higher education sector to improve VET participation and completion outcomes for students with disabilities and to support the Federal Government's Social Inclusion and Productivity reforms.

NVDAT recommends that under the proposed National VET Disability Scholarship Framework, the following three scholarship programs be funded from 2009:

1. A Disability VET Professional Scholarships Program to assist VET institutions to award general grants to staff to build capacity in disability specialisation
2. An Institutional VET Disability Support Program to provide reimbursement for specialised equipment and extra support costs to a maximum value, including professional training and specialisation.
3. A VET Student Disability Scholarships Program to provide support for students to meet the associated costs of studying including mobility, specialised equipment, supports and relocation expenses.

Key Issues for consideration

Disability VET Professional Scholarships Program

Teacher/ trainer skills and confidence are known to be crucial in improving student participation and retention outcomes, particularly for students who require additional support and/or assistance.

In 2008, the Business Council of Australia commissioned the Australian Centre Education Research to analyse teacher professional training. The research indicates that teachers felt inadequately trained to deal with the demands of the training room. It is reasonable to assume that this concern would be amplified for teachers faced with the additional challenges of assisting students with high support needs.

A 2007 survey of the VET sector commissioned by the Australian Council of Private Education and Training, also found a similar finding. VET and TAFE professionals self identified their need for greater disability training in order to build their 'disability confidence', hence workforce development is an essential feature in raising participation and retention levels for students with a disability.

The proposed Disability VET Professional Scholarship Program would build capacity in the VET sector to improve professional knowledge and culture in support of students with a disability. This scholarship would assist in addressing barriers to entry into the VET system for people with a disability that can result from professional inexperience, lack of awareness of access supports and cultural issues that can limit expectations of the potential capability of students with a disability.

VET Student Disability Scholarships Program

This would address barriers to income support for students faced with financial difficulties. This scholarship would need to be aligned with current Centrelink income requirements and asset eligibility criteria that currently preclude students from having additional income. NVDAT could assist in proposing reasonable criteria for income support that assists students with a disability.

The eligibility criteria for the VET Student Disability Scholarships should be matched according to relative need identified by the applicant with supporting evidence. In order to ensure the success and take up of this Scholarship, eligibility criteria should not be too stringent so that, depending on the individual student's needs, the Scholarship could be used to meet living or study expenses and/or the cost associated with supports/aids. This Scholarship aims to find solutions to these whole of life issues to enable students with a disability to undertake further training and increased participation in the VET sector nationally.