
National VET Disability Advisory Taskforce

Final Report and Recommendations

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Executive Summary

Despite some improvements in participation levels of people with disabilities in the national Vocational Education and Training over the past decade, they remain significantly underrepresented in VET. 16.8% of the working age population in Australia have a disability, but only 7.2% of VET students report having a disability¹.

Equal participation of people with disabilities would see an additional 161,000 people with disabilities participating in VET. The majority of those people are currently—and will most likely remain—dependent on Australia's welfare system unless we can improve participation rates of people with disabilities in training that leads to employment.

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 disabilities². Given the significant role that VET plays in achieving employment outcomes for individuals, the significantly lower level of participation of people with disabilities in VET is of very great concern.

The improvements in participation rates that we have seen, while disappointing in magnitude and achieved at a slower rate than we believe is possible, are also somewhat encouraging in that they demonstrate:

- that regardless of the type or severity of a person's disability, it is possible to participate successfully in training and to gain meaningful employment as a result, and
- that when we invest time, effort and resources in removing the obstacles that currently prevent many people with disabilities achieving their aspirations for completing training and gaining work, we can make a significant difference.

In this final report from the National VET Disability Advisory Taskforce (NVDAT) we describe the work NVDAT has undertaken to provide leadership over the past two years to the VET system in the reform process that has been guided since 2000 by Australia's national strategy for disability reform in VET, *Bridging Pathways*. It also describes a new approach to the reform process that we believe will build on the work that has been already done and that will result in the integration of the needs of people with disabilities in all aspects of the VET system. We believe that this new approach will fast track the reform process, significantly increasing participation rates and the speed at which we achieve an increase in successful completions leading to employment.

The report is divided into three main sections:

1. A general background section describing the current status of people with disabilities in Australia and a description of the stages through which disability reform has progressed over the past decades.
2. A summary of the activities and projects undertaken by NVDAT since its establishment, the current status of those projects and a set of recommendations that have emerged from them.
3. A description of a new way forward for disability reform that we believe will be required to address our primary concern: the lack of significant progress in achieving equal participation of people with disabilities in the VET system and in society as a whole.

¹ Annual National Report of the Australian Vocational and Technical Education System 2006

² 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

Background

Based on the 2003 ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, it is estimated that people with disabilities form approximately 20% of the Australian population (16.8% of the working age population)³. The unemployment rate of people with disabilities is higher than the general population (8.5% versus 5.0%) and the workforce participation rate is significantly lower (53.2% versus 80.6%)⁴.

If people with disabilities of working age in Australia were participating in the workforce at the same rate as the average Australian, there would be 683,740 less Australians receiving Disability Support Pensions (DSP). Those people would, instead, be paying taxes and contributing to and enjoying the benefits of a more robust Australian economy.

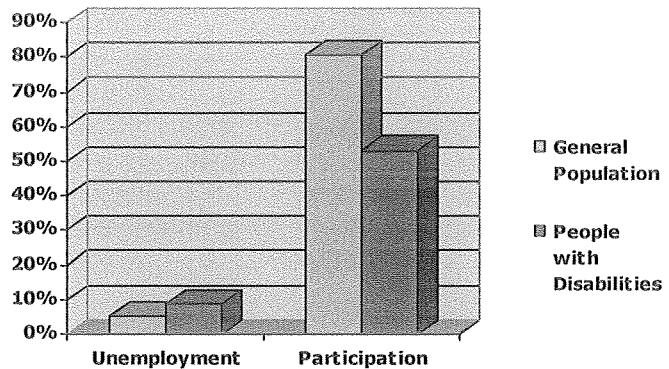


Figure 1: Unemployment and workforce participation of people with disabilities in Australia

Using the most recently published government statistics on people with disabilities in Australia, the innov8 Consulting Group recently estimated that if all working age Australians with disabilities who are currently receiving the DSP were working in jobs that paid the average weekly wage:

- the saving to the Federal Government in DSP payments and other related welfare payments would be \$9.4 billion per annum,
- tax receipts would increase by \$8.6 billion per annum, and
- the increase in GDP through increased economic activity (using US Department of Labor statistics specifically for Australia on the GDP contribution of Australian workers) would be \$54 billion per annum⁵.

Research for the Australian National Training Authority in 2001 by Dockery, Birch, Kenyon,⁶ indicates that increasing participation rates is a sound economic investment. The report provides a range of estimates of the gain to improve VET participation rates across all age groups for people with a disability and concludes that there would be a \$2.8 billion estimated benefit to the Australian economy when including training costs and other discounts⁷. NVDAT is currently seeking an update on the data in this report.

The Dockery, Birch, Kenyon report indicates a return on investment for the Federal and State Governments that warrants significant investment to support the case for improving VET outcomes for people with a disability and potentially for other socially marginalized

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2003

⁴ AIHW "Disability & Disability Services in Australia", Jan 2006

⁵ The innov8 Consulting Group, 2007, using data sourced from the AIHW, the ABS and the US Department of Labor

⁶ Dockery, Birch, Kenyon The Economic and Social Analysis of Increasing Opportunities for People with a Disability in VET The Institute for Research into International Competitiveness (IRIC) Curtin Business School, Curtin University of Technology Australian National Training Authority February 2001

⁷ Dockery, Birch, Kenyon, op. cit.

groups. A proportion of these savings could be transferred back into the VET sector to encourage the State and Territories to support new training places for these groups.

When people with disabilities receive training and become employed, individual lives not only change but welfare costs are reduced, they and their families become more self supporting, earn wages, pay tax, have a greater capacity to make purchases and contribute to society and in some cases their carers can take up other work as well.

An OECD 2007 report⁸ confirms the benefits of shifting people from disability support into employment with a reduction in government costs and improvements in income and opportunities for people with a disability.

The need to increase the participation of people with disabilities in the vocational education and training system in Australia, leading to increased participation of those people in all aspects of society—particularly employment—gained significant focus with the establishment in 1996 of the ANTA Disability Forum. It produced *Bridging Pathways*, Australia's national strategy to increase the successful participation of people with disabilities in VET⁹.

Overseeing the implementation of *Bridging Pathways* and providing strategic advice about the disability reform process within the VET system is the role National VET Disability Advisory Taskforce (NVDAT). The 10 members of NVDAT are drawn from the business sector, private training providers, state training agencies, Disability Employment Network (DEN) providers, the union movement, the Commonwealth government, the disability sector and the student community. NVDAT succeeded the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Disability Forum and the Australian Disability Training Advisory Council and has been in place since February 2007.

(Note: The current equity advisory arrangements come to an end in December 2008. A recommendation is currently being prepared for the Ministerial Council on Vocational and Technical Education (MCVTE) on proposed equity advisory arrangements for 2009 and beyond.)

Bridging Pathways and the *Blueprint for Implementation*¹⁰ have been guiding the reform process to increase the successful participation of people with disabilities in the VET system for the past eight years.

Current Situation

As a result of the combined efforts of many people at the National, State and provider levels, there has been some improvement in some of the measures of participation of people with disabilities over the past 12 years. The percentage of students (aged 15-65) in the VET system who report having a disability increased from 6.4% in 2003 to 7.2% in 2006¹¹.

Although this is encouraging to an extent as it demonstrates that progress can be made, the overall participation of people with disabilities and their progress to successful completion of training leading to meaningful employment remains disappointingly low and far below equity with the general population.

16.8% of the working age population in Australia have a disability, but as already shown, only 7.2% of VET students report having a disability. Equal participation of people with disabilities would see an additional 161,000 people participating in VET. At the current rate

⁸ OECD Sickness, Disability and Work, Breaking the Barriers (VOL2) Australia, Luxembourg, Spain and the United Kingdom OECD Social issues/Migration/Health Vol 2007 No 25

⁹ "Bridging Pathways", Australian National Training Authority, 2000

¹⁰ "Bridging Pathways – Blueprint for Implementation (Revised)", Australian National Training Authority, 2004

¹¹ "Annual National Report of the Australian Vocational and Technical Education System 2006"

of progress it will take 36 years to achieve a participation rate of people with disabilities in the VET system equal to the general population¹².

As Figure 2 and Table 1 in Appendix 1 on page 3 show, participation rates of people with disabilities and their employment outcomes are significantly below the general population are also lower than other major equity groups.

Figure 3 compares VET outcomes on a range of measures for people with a disability against outcomes for all VET students. It indicates that people with a disability are overrepresented in Certificate 1 and 2 levels and underrepresented on all other measures.

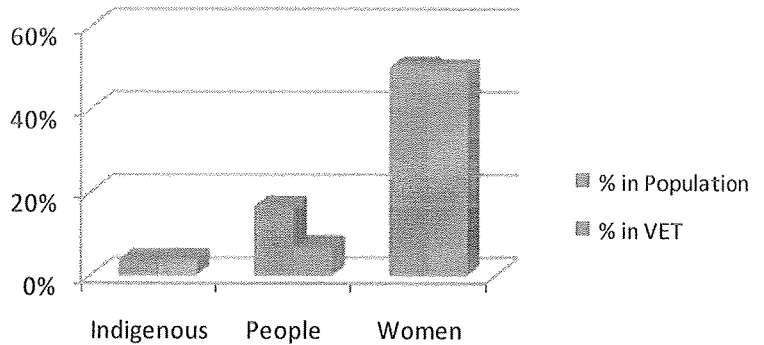


Figure 2: Equity group participation in VET

Figure 7 in Appendix 1: on page 3 and text in

Appendix 3: on page 3 provide a summary of outcomes for people with a disability in the VET system and more broadly including employment.

Successful completion rates of people with disabilities for VET subjects are lower than all other groups apart from Indigenous Australians and employment outcomes are the lowest of all equity groups.

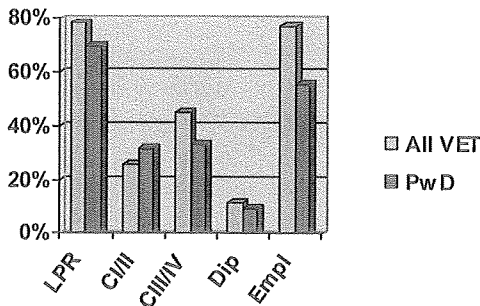


Figure 3: Comparison of Load Pass Rate, Attainment Level and employment outcomes - All students vs. PwD

Every aspect of this data raises serious questions regarding how people with a disability could be left to suffer such inequities when Australia has experienced sustained economic growth for the last decade.

Lifting Expectations

These results for people with a disability are particularly disappointing as firm evidence shows that people with all types and severities of disabilities have undertaken training in the VET system, have completed that training successfully and have gained meaningful employment as a result. The many best practice examples of disability reform that are occurring throughout the country (and in

the rest of the world) indicate that there are solutions to the problems that are preventing so many people with disabilities from participating fully in the VET system. A number of these are described in the *Revised Blueprint for Bridging Pathways*.

The practical challenges faced by many people with disabilities in participating in VET resulting from infrastructure barriers within and outside the VET system¹³ are a major and obvious cause of low participation rates. However, the fact that the community as a whole (including the VET community) expects so little from people with disabilities is at least as

¹² While it is acknowledged that some people's disabilities are so severe that their participation in the VET system is unlikely under any circumstances, we see examples of people with virtually every type and severity of disability successfully completing training, indicating that a participation rate close to that of the general population is possible.

¹³ Physical access to buildings for people with physical disabilities, sign language interpreters for deaf students, readable text for blind students, teacher supports for people with learning disabilities are just some examples of the barriers faced by people with all types of disabilities

great a problem, not least because it reduces the willingness of society to invest in removing the barriers that are making it so difficult for people with disabilities to participate.

This lowered expectation is caused primarily because of a perception that it is the disability itself—rather than the negative effects on people with disabilities of living in a society which has been built without taking their needs into account—that makes participation in all aspects of life so difficult or impossible for people with disabilities. A key challenge, then, is to demonstrate to society as a whole and to the VET system itself the reality that, when a person with a disability is offered an opportunity to participate and can access the supports he/she needs to do so, wonderful outcomes are possible.

Rocket Fuel, not Rocket Science

We believe that, while progress is being made, it is far too slow, given the evidence that people with all types and severities of disabilities can successfully participate in VET and also that investments in removing barriers to participation result in improvements in participation levels.

Far more needs to be done. And the work that needs to be done is not "Rocket Science"—the majority of best-practice successes are not complicated interventions: they are often simple solutions that just required focused people, often with limited resources, to take a new look at what have often been considered intractable problems.

Of particular concern is that, at a time when our nation is facing a skills shortage and the nation is focussing on social inclusion for all Australians, training system participation rates for people with disabilities are improving so slowly and in some cases declining¹⁴. Training is vital for anyone to participate fully in society and the workforce—some would argue that achieving the highest possible level of skills is even more important for people with disabilities. Not to have access to training is almost a life sentence for people with a disability.

Our society is faced with a dilemma. It has invested a significant amount of effort into disability reform over many years and we have proven that people with all types and severities of disabilities CAN successfully make the transition from exclusion to inclusion. We NEED people with disabilities to be successfully participating in education and the workforce more than ever before.

But progress is far too slow. Too slow for those people with disabilities who can and want to participate; too slow for their families, friends and others whose lives are impacted when a person with a disability is unable to participate; too slow for the many dedicated but often frustrated people who work so hard to remove the barriers faced by people with disabilities; and too slow for our nation that can no longer afford to see potentially productive people prevented from contributing their knowledge and skills to the combined wealth of our nation.

***We need a new approach—a new way forward.
And we believe our nation is ready.***

¹⁴ The participation in apprenticeships and traineeships by people with a disability has decreased slightly from 1.5% in 2002 to 1.3% in 2003 - NCVET

The Journey So Far

In understanding what that new way forward might be, we need to understand how we have got to where we are now and what the knowledge tells us about the direction we need to take for the future.

People with Disabilities in Society

There always have been and no doubt always will be people in our communities who live all or part of their lives with some form of disability. As we face an increasingly ageing population it is likely that most people will experience disability first-hand at some stage in their lives.

Over history the perception of people with disabilities of our society has changed—albeit slowly and certainly not universally—from one that regarded “disability” as a welfare issue; then to one that responded to the rights-based disability movement of the late ‘70s and early ‘80s; and more recently to an emerging recognition that disability is an “environmental” issue rather than one related to the disability itself.

This more recent thinking recognizes that the difficulty many people with disabilities have participating fully in society is caused less by the disability itself and more by the physical and attitudinal environment in which we live. It acknowledges that our society—its structures, its systems and its processes—has largely been created without taking the needs of people with disabilities into account. For many people with disabilities society is unwelcoming and difficult to participate in fully—we believe unnecessarily so.

Figure 4 portrays the stages of disability reform and where in the process we have reached in 2008 – and where the future lies.

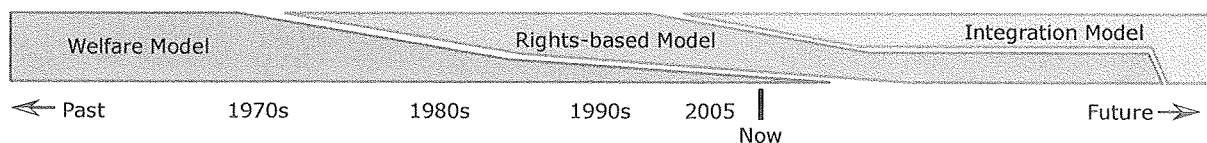


Figure 4: Stages of Disability Reform

The Welfare Model and Dependence

For most of human history people with disabilities have been pitied—even feared—by society and in many cases have been seen and treated as outcasts. Even in our modern society this view lingers, morphed and softened somewhat into a “welfare model” of disability under which people with disabilities are “cared for”. The extent of that caring is dictated largely by the economic capacity of our society to do so.

Under this model little is expected of people with disabilities. They are seen as the passive recipients of other people’s labour and support. Most importantly they are dependent on the goodwill of other individuals and the combined goodwill of our society.

There are two crucial effects of this model that must be recognized in understanding the impact this has on the ability and capacity of people with disabilities to participate fully in society.

First, from society’s perspective “disability” is seen as a cost to society (i.e. welfare payments) rather than an investment that will deliver a significant economic and social benefit. Inevitably any financial/economic system will seek to minimise expenses that are seen as costs rather than investments, in the case of disability reform resulting in a lack of investment in removing infrastructure barriers and providing support.

Second, the emotional impact that being treated as “second-class citizens” by society has on people with disabilities cannot be underestimated. For many people with disabilities the constant, daily grind of dealing with the practical challenges of an environment that is difficult or impossible to navigate quickly and effectively combined with the deflating, often demoralising effect on an individual of being pitied and/or being regarded as less capable than the “average” person, simply destroys self-esteem, hope and motivation.

The Rights-Based Movement

As we well know the human race can display an amazing resilience and a determination to overcome adversity. History has shown us that, provided the level of adversity is not so severe that survival is impossible, individuals and communities will ultimately rise to a challenge, whether that be dealing with a natural disaster or fighting an enemy determined to wield its power and influence.

The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the emergence of a new movement, led by people with disabilities themselves and focused particularly in the United States (the nationwide “sit-in” of government buildings organised by the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities in 1977 is recognized as one of the earliest examples), which saw disability not as a welfare issue but one based on fundamental human rights (with a particular emphasis on independent living in the early stages). Internationally the International Year for People with Disabilities in 1991 became a significant catalyst for disability reform at all levels.

One of the earliest examples of rights-based disability activism in Australia grew out of active protests by residents at the Leumeah Nursing Home in Ryde, Sydney, about the appalling, repressive conditions they faced as young people with disabilities trapped in an aged persons’ nursing home. The compelling book, *“Captives of Care”*¹⁵, and the equally compelling TV documentary that featured many of the original residents had a profound and lasting impact on the process of disability reform in Australia.

Building on the broad-based human rights movement that emerged during the boom period post World War II, the disability rights movement articulated a simple but powerful argument: a decent society is measured not just by its economic development but also by the extent to which all of its citizens can contribute to and benefit from its success.

The most significant practical outcomes of this movement have been twofold.

First, legislation was passed in many countries articulating the rights of people with disabilities and making discrimination against them illegal.

Interestingly, while the “disability movement” was largely credited as the driving force behind the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) and the UK Disability Discrimination Act (1995), the Australian Disability Discrimination Act (1992) was driven as much by the Hawke-Keating Government as it was by an active disability movement. This may partly explain the paradox felt by many people involved with disability reform in Australia that despite representing the largest equity group (apart from women) and facing disadvantage at least as great and sometimes greater than all other equity groups (measured by participation in the workforce and education), disability reform appears to gain less attention than other areas of equity reform.

Second, the community started to see people with disabilities in a different light—as determined, articulate... and capable.

It would be optimistic in the extreme to suggest that there has been a broad, consistent and sustained shift in thinking about the capability of people with disabilities, or that the community has fundamentally lifted its expectations of people with disabilities to any significant degree. However, as improvements are being made that enable more people

¹⁵ Roarty, J., *“Captives of Care”*, 1979

with disabilities to participate in community activities and, as a result, the community sees, understands and becomes more comfortable with people with disabilities, this process will continue at an accelerated rate.

It is likely that the rights-based focus on disability reform will continue to play an important role for some time to come. In March 2008, for example, Australia became a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹⁶, one of the first countries to do so.

We believe, however, that the rights-based approach is inherently limited in its potential (on its own) to achieve the ultimate objective of disability reform—i.e. equal participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of society—as it does not describe the specific changes that need to occur across all aspects of society to fully include people with disabilities, nor does it justify the investment required to do so.

Disability as an Environmental Issue

Disability reform is undeniably a significant challenge for our society. Not only does it represent such large numbers of people for whom change needs to occur, it requires change not just to the way we DO disability reform but also to the way we THINK about disability reform. And we have been doing and thinking about disability reform using the welfare/dependence model for many, many generations.

In recent years the “integration” approach to disability reform has been emerging that questions some of the most basic assumptions that have been made about people with disabilities, the effects of a disability on the individual, and the real causes of the disadvantage that is so often the outcome for people who live with a disability.

Underlying this new approach is a perspective that the disadvantage faced by people with disabilities is not directly caused by the disability itself but by the fact that we have designed and built our society—its structures, systems, processes—around the needs of the “average” person without taking into account the specific needs of people with all types of disability.

A fundamental principle driving this perspective is an acceptance that even the strongest, healthiest, most intelligent person depends on the structures, systems and processes that make up our society to lead a rewarding, productive life: the transport system, the legal system, the education system, the financial system, the political system, the health system, etc. Without those systems we would all be living subsistence lives.

In understanding this new approach and what it means it is useful to ask “How will things be different when we have ‘completed’ the disability reform process?” The end objectives of the disability reform process—the “vision” —can be described in two ways. **First**, the statistics will show participation rates for people with disabilities in all aspects of society, including education and the workforce, equal to those of the general population. And we will simply see far more people with disabilities every day, everywhere. **Second**, every system, process and structure of every business, government agency or any other component of our society would have the needs of people with disabilities built-in.

As this approach has started to develop it has gained momentum by recognizing the parallels that exist between the challenges of disability reform and the challenges faced by any other complex activity or enterprise (business, government, environmental management, running the Olympics, etc, etc). They all involve the complex interaction of “raw materials”, money, human resources and intellectual property (inputs) which, with careful management (structure), can be transformed (using systems and processes) into the products, services, events, etc (outputs) of the enterprise. Input-process-output.

¹⁶ [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), United Nations, 2007

Central to our thinking about how we achieve this integrated approach to disability reform is the application of tried and proven techniques that are so successfully applied particularly in the business sector to manage complex, challenging undertakings. In this sense it sees disability reform as a large, complex "virtual enterprise" that needs the same rigorous approach to structure, process and change that is the hallmark of the world's most successful enterprises.

Business thinking for the "business" of disability reform.

NVDAT Project Reports and Recommendations

This section of the NVDAT Final Report shifts gear from the strategic discussion of the document so far to look specifically at the work that has been undertaken by NVDAT over the past two years and to put forward a number of specific recommendations for "micro" reform.

In the section following this one (Shifting Gear: A New Way Forward on page 3) we resume the strategic perspective and bring together the intellectual property that has been generated by NVDAT and its predecessor groups to articulate a plan to guide the disability reform process in VET from 2009 onwards.

NVDAT's advisory role has been a 2 year component of a 30 year process of VET disability reform (as illustrated in Figure 5 on page 3). Since NVDAT is in the final few months of its operation, this is its final report to NSOC in 2008.

In its May 2008 report to NSOC, NVDAT outlined its work plan and details of its projects and initiatives.

In its August 2008 report, NVDAT provided a review of the VET system as it impacts on people with a disability and outlined its concerns about the lack of real progress for people with a disability in the VET system in participation and pass rates, attainment levels and further study and employment outcomes. NVDAT made the following three recommendations which NSOC decided to refer to the COAG Skills – Productivity and Workforce Development Subcommittee for consideration.

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

In this final report to NSOC in 2008, NVDAT outlines progress of its projects to improve aspects of the whole of life journey for people with a disability to support their successful transition into and beyond the VET system. For many people with a disability, achieving this transition has the potential to shift them from a life of social exclusion to the experience that most people accept as the norm, but few people with a disability encounter, of social inclusion.

NVDAT's projects broadly fall into three categories, aligning with the four goals of *Bridging Pathways*:

- encouraging people with a disability into the VET system (aligning with Goal 1),
- supporting them to complete their studies and in the transition to further study or sustained employment (aligning with Goals 2 and 3),
- supporting the development of the VET system (aligning with Goal 4).

Some NVDAT's projects are now completed and the taskforce has detailed the outcomes and made specific recommendations for reforms. Where projects are still in progress, the anticipated outcomes are noted.

Encouraging people with disabilities into the VET system

PROJECT 1: TAFE Web accessibility project (completed)

Description

This project aimed to assist people with disabilities in accessing information about VET courses and support, through ensuring that TAFE and related websites are compliant with the web design standards of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

Outcomes

Results of a snapshot survey in December 2007 indicated that TAFE websites in most states and many VET related websites failed to meet compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (W3C) as required under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. NVDAT sent the survey results to the TAFE Directors Association with information to assist in improving websites to reach compliance, prior to a second snapshot survey being undertaken.

The second survey took place in August 2008. Results indicated that although overall there were only a small number of errors, only two of seven TAFE websites met Priority 1 of W3C compliance.

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

PROJECT 2: Study Access feasibility study (completed)

Description

This project scoped the feasibility of establishing a national one stop shop website for VET and related study information for people with disabilities

Outcomes

The Study Access project report was completed in June 2008 with eight recommendations linked to the establishment of a national one stop shop website of study information for people with a disability. Recommendation 2 of the report advocated that the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) should develop and host the national website. The report also noted that the National Training Information Service (NTIS) and training.com.au are in the process of being 're-visioned' in order to better meet the needs of VET students, employers, providers and regulators.

NVDAT understands that consideration is being given in the development of the training.com.au website to the possibility of incorporating the recommendations of the Study Access report into the new training website to ensure it meets the needs of students with a disability in accessing study information.

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.

Supporting students with a disability in the VET system and into further study or sustained employment

PROJECT 3: Disability related VET scholarships (completed)

Description

NVDAT's August 2008 report to NSOC highlighted the need to support students with disabilities in the VET sector given that the Australian National report on the VET system indicates that people with disabilities have worse outcomes than other VET students in participation and pass rates, level of attainment and further study and

employment outcomes and significantly worse outcomes on most measures than the general population, including income and employment levels.

Information on DEEWR funded Equity programs indicates a lack of support through scholarships and awards for students with a disability in the VET sector. While recognising that different funding models apply in the higher education and VET sector, there are a range of scholarships and other support in higher education that are not available in the VET system, resulting in inequities in support for students with disabilities in VET that need to be addressed.

Outcome

NVDAT has prepared advice on a three part National VET Disability Scholarships Framework (see Appendix 4: Increasing Participation and Access through a National VET Disability Scholarships Framework on page 3).

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

PROJECT 4: VET to Work Disability Support and Transition Pilot (in progress)

Description

This 12 month pilot is developing, testing and will evaluate a model that provides 50 VET students with disabilities with additional support while undertaking their TAFE studies to assist them in completing their courses and with a guaranteed place in an employment agency at the end of their VET training.

This \$200,000 pilot project is a collaborative federal/state venture, jointly funded by the SA Department of Employment, Further Education, Science and Technology (DFEEST) and funding received from the Australian Government (DEEWR) under the National Disability Coordination Officer Program. The pilot funds Disability Employment Network providers to assist students and staff in a range of TAFESA campuses during the students VET study and in the transition to guaranteed work.

Anticipated outcome

An evaluated model that can be replicated in other states to improve VET participation and completion rates, successful transition to employment and employment outcomes for people with disabilities through providing additional support during their VET study.

PROJECT 5: "Reframing the Future" advice (completed)

Description

Advice to NQC regarding allocation of funding for equity purposes through "Re-Framing the Future" program to improve workforce development and the skills of staff in working with people with a disability. This advice recognises that skilled staff are critical to supporting students with disabilities to complete their VET courses.

Outcome

NVDAT's advice remains pertinent given proposed changes to state – Commonwealth funding arrangements whereby it is expected that funding of workforce development through "Reframing the Future" will be discontinued as a nationally funded program. This potentially creates a risk to the development of workforce skills nationally that have supported students with disabilities and other equity groups.

Recommendation 7:

That NSOC members 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 Re-Framing The Future program would be transferred to the states and territories as general funds

Supporting the development of the VET system

PROJECT 6: Disability research project with NCVET (in progress)

Description

Disability research in VET and related sectors is currently undertaken as one off projects, sponsored by various organisations with outcomes often unknown to others. This occurs because there is no disability research strategy, to map, coordinate, and guide this research. NVDAT has been working closely with NCVET in designing a national VET disability research strategy.

Anticipated outcome

To scope VET and disability research to produce a national VET disability research strategy.

PROJECT 7: Information management improvement (in progress)

Description

Develop strategies to improve the coordination of information, data sources and definitions of disability within and across systems that currently negatively impact on people with a disability.

Outcomes

NVDAT's desktop research of data sources and definitions of disability is completed. Further work to be undertaken with other sectors to seek support for the coordination of data and information on people with a disability.

PROJECT 8: Linkages with Higher Education (in progress)

Description

Explore options to improve linkages with the higher education centre regarding people with a disability

Outcome

Initial contact has been established with the newly formed National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education at UniSA that will require further follow up