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Pathways to apprenticeships

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Executive summary

The concept of pre-apprenticeships is neither recent nor purely an Australian creation. Their use in Australia was advocated by an industry group in 1959, and they were clearly in use by the 1970s. Their precise date of introduction has not been established, despite the research team undertaking both literature searches and personal discussions with individuals long involved in training and apprenticeships. Pre-apprenticeships were probably operating in Australia by the late 1960s.

The introduction of traineeships, following the Kirby Report in 1984, apparently diminished interest in pre-apprenticeships, given that one aim of traineeships was to provide articulation into apprenticeships. Pre-apprenticeships however, differ from traineeships in that they are not workplace-based or require expensive off-the-job training, usually accompanied by simulated workplaces. In distinct contrast to other pre-vocational courses, pre-apprenticeships provide training targeted to either a specific area of apprenticeship or a group of apprenticeships, such as construction industry apprenticeships.

Another factor contributing to the decline of pre-apprenticeships in recent years is the growth of VET-in-schools programs. Participation in school vocational education and training (VET) programs has increased strongly in recent years. Between 1996 and 1999 enrolments in school VET programs more than doubled from about 60 000 to about 130 000 (ACER 2002).

Nevertheless, Malley et al. (2001, vol.2, p.45) point out that: 'In annual growth terms, the take-up of VET-in-schools enrolments is diminishing'.

Employers and training providers alike have shown concern over the ability of school-based vocational education and training provision to prepare students adequately for employment. This report does not include a detailed examination of the growth of VET-in-schools, although some data are presented on numbers involved in the program.

Studies by government agencies found that some employers are dissatisfied with the quality and suitability of applicants for apprenticeship positions, largely based on attitude, presentation and aptitude. Up to 75% of applicants for such positions were judged as unsuitable by employers. A number of organisations share the opinion that pre-apprenticeship programs can assist effectively with recruiting and retaining young people in traditional apprenticeships.

Initially the authors of this report aimed, in part at least, to map the establishment and development of pre-apprenticeships in Australia. They discovered, however, a paucity of existing literature on this topic and have been unable to meet this aim in full. This report has achieved, nonetheless, a descriptive analysis of recent pre-apprenticeship provision across Australia. It contains the findings from interviews with participants in, and providers of, pre-apprenticeship programs and identifies the role that such programs might usefully play as a component of overall VET provision.

The report findings are based on an analysis of National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) VET statistical data, supplemented by information obtained through focus groups with students and interviews with trainers and training experts and representatives from industry. The VET data were derived from a special series developed by NCVER from national VET statistical data for the period 1994 to 2000. The data were further refined by the researchers by discarding courses that were clearly not pre-apprenticeship. An important finding from this activity is that, at

present, there is no fail-safe method for accurate determination of the total number of enrolments in pre-apprenticeship courses; they are one of many pathways into apprenticeships. For this reason the data presented here should be treated with caution.

Another significant observation can be made from these data, and that is that there is a wide variation in pre-apprenticeship courses across the nation. There was no consistency across states, with Queensland standing out as the highest per capita provider of pre-apprenticeship courses, especially in schools. Outside Queensland most pre-apprenticeship courses were delivered through technical and further education (TAFE) colleges. The field of study of these courses also varied markedly across the states, suggesting that there is no nationally consistent approach to pre-apprenticeship programs, although, in the period examined, engineering and construction courses predominated.

The 47 students interviewed in the study were generally positive about their courses. While some had learnt of the courses through their school, others had received no advice from schools on their availability. The latter students often found out about pre-apprenticeship courses from friends or relatives, or from newspaper advertisements. Pre-apprenticeships do not seem to be widely known in the community or among school careers advisers. Students interviewed in New South Wales and Victoria, all of whom were in courses delivered by private registered training organisations, were critical of the lack of school-based careers advice on pre-apprenticeships. Students interviewed in Western Australia who were undertaking TAFE-delivered pre-apprenticeship courses had, to some extent, been directed into their courses on the basis of advice received at school.

One problem regularly raised by students was the lack of financial support, with most ineligible for Austudy. Students gaining VET qualifications, such as certificate II, at school should be made more aware that they will be ineligible for funding support for courses of a similar level after leaving school.

Training providers and a range of other training experts contacted in the course of this study expressed a variety of views on pre-apprenticeships. There was a widespread view that pre-apprenticeships were not for everyone, and were not appropriate as an introduction to shorter new apprenticeships of one to two years' duration. Some also felt that the aim of pre-apprenticeship courses should be to prepare students for entry into a traditional field of apprenticeship, such as construction or engineering trades, rather than for entry to a specific apprenticeship. Criticism of school-based VET as a substitute for such courses was also widespread, as was criticism of the quality of careers advice provided in schools. On the other hand, one contact believed that schools could deliver replacement courses for pre-apprenticeships at the certificate I level. VET-in-schools courses delivered by schools are not included as pre-apprenticeship courses; however, in some states school students can undertake pre-apprenticeship courses delivered by external providers while still at school.

Many industry and training contacts held the view that changing lifestyles were having a negative impact on the capacity of young people to enter apprenticeships. They claimed that many young people no longer had access at home to hand tools or to family members who could show them how to use simple tools. Unfamiliarity with tools and the terminology of tools deterred young people from entering apprenticeships and slowed their progress in the early stages of the course. Many felt that involvement in pre-apprenticeships could remedy this deficit.

The researchers concluded that pre-apprenticeships can be an important component in a range of policies designed to encourage greater participation in traditional trade training. Improved national-level co-ordination, including consistent national definitions, data collection and promotion as part of the overall new apprenticeships strategy, could improve course and career selection by young people. Improvements in these areas will need to be accompanied by more timely and appropriate information on pre-apprenticeships for schools and others influencing career decisions.

Pre-apprenticeships have the potential to act as quasi-labour market programs for young people who lack educational direction in the academic environment and who are in danger of leaving education and training at too early a stage. Such an approach could be especially effective if applied on a regional basis, targeting areas identified as having persistent youth unemployment problems.

Background

Introduction

The concept of pre-apprenticeships is neither recent nor purely an Australian creation. Their use in Australia was advocated by an industry group in 1959, and they were clearly in use by the 1970s. Their precise date of introduction has not been established, despite the research team undertaking both literature searches and personal discussions with individuals long involved in training and apprenticeships. Pre-apprenticeships were probably operating in Australia by the late 1960s.

The introduction of traineeships, following the Kirby Report in 1984, apparently diminished interest in pre-apprenticeships, given that one aim of traineeships was to provide articulation into apprenticeships. Pre-apprenticeships however, differ from traineeships in that they are not workplace-based and require expensive off-the-job training, usually accompanied by simulated workplaces. In distinct contrast to other pre-vocational courses, pre-apprenticeships provide training targeted to either a specific area of apprenticeship or a group of apprenticeships, such as construction industry apprenticeships.

Initially the authors of this report aimed, in part at least, to map the establishment and development of pre-apprenticeships in Australia. They discovered, however, a paucity of existing literature on this topic and have been unable to meet this aim in full. This report has achieved, nonetheless, a descriptive analysis of recent pre-apprenticeship provision across Australia. It contains the findings from interviews with participants in, and providers of, pre-apprenticeship programs and identifies the role that such programs might usefully play as a component of overall VET provision.

Methodology

The findings of this report are based on analysis of data provided by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). These data were derived from a special series developed by NCVER from national VET statistical data for the period 1994 to 2000. They were further refined by the researchers by discarding courses that were clearly not pre-apprenticeship. One most important finding from this activity is that at present there is no fail-safe method for an accurate determination of the total number of enrolments in pre-apprenticeship courses. For this reason the data presented here should be treated with caution.

Focus groups consisted of 47 students undertaking pre-apprenticeship courses in both public and private registered training organisations. Students were undertaking pre-apprenticeship courses in electrical/electronics, automotive and baking disciplines. Electrical and electronics students were taking their courses through private registered training organisations that were associated with group training companies, while those in automotive and baking were in the technical and further education (TAFE) sector.

The last component of the methodology comprised interviews with approximately 30 training providers and training experts, drawn predominantly from TAFE, group training companies involved in delivering pre-apprenticeship programs, representatives of state and national industry

training advisory bodies and current or former senior public servants who had been involved in apprenticeship policy development or administration.

Historical overview

Apprenticeship is truly an ancient and enduring form of vocational education and training. As early as the twelfth century craftsmen throughout Europe had formed guilds as a means of self-protection. To quote the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

> The guild, which was a form of the medieval corporation or universitas, consisted of masters and apprentices, the masters being those who were skilled in an art, a science or a craft, and the apprentices those who were learning its mysteries. Thus barristers were apprenticed to the law, *apprenticii ad legem*, just as the sons of freemen might be apprenticed to a slater, a carpenter or an armourer. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*)

From the earliest times until at least the nineteenth century, the normal period of an apprenticeship was seven years. During the first half of the twentieth century the usual apprenticeship period had been reduced to five years and in 1962 consent variations to the Federal Metal Trades Award brought the term down to four years.

Another important historical feature of apprenticeship was the imposition of supply-side constraints, such as guilds imposing limits on apprentice numbers using apprentice-to-craftsman ratios or other restrictions. In sixteenth-century Britain, legislation was enacted to limit employment in the crafts only to those who had completed an apprenticeship. This arrangement endured for nearly three centuries, with compulsory apprenticeship only being abolished in Britain in 1814. Some features of these early constraints still remain in some Australian apprenticeship jurisdictions. With the industrial changes which produced the growth of trade unions in the late nineteenth century came a renewed interest in protecting the working conditions of apprentices and with this came renewed regulation.

Apprenticeship in Australia

From the early days of colonisation Australia inherited the British system of apprenticeship, both through the formal legal system and through the initial influx to Australia of British-trained tradesmen. Appendix 1 includes a copy of the indentures, signed in England in the 1820s, of a carpenter who arrived as a tradesman to Australia in the 1840s and was great-great grandfather to one of the authors.

The development of the compulsory arbitration system in Australia, and the growth of trade unions accompanying this, appears to have supported the continued existence of apprenticeships (see Ray 2001, quoting Gospel). Ray also points out the importance to the apprenticeship system of state institutions, such as the railways and utilities, as employers of apprentices, together with the growth of a strong technical college system.

Between 1945 and 1974 Australia experienced strong employment growth, low levels of unemployment and chronic shortages of tradespersons. To some degree trade skills were supplied by the immigration program but this became an increasingly uncertain source of skills as patterns of migration changed. Immigration in fact was virtually the only major 'manpower' program in place in Australia during the 1950s and 1960s. Quoting a paper delivered by Peter Kirby in 1981, Ray reports Kirby as saying:

> Surprisingly, however, given the persistent labour shortages in some sectors, little seemed to be made of the Department's industrial relations expertise to alleviate manpower problems. Although a great deal was spoken and written about the inadequacies of the apprenticeship

> training system, practically no reform of the system was attempted or policy analysis of wages issues related to labour market imbalances undertaken. (Ray 2001, p.12)

A report in 1959 by the Australian Industries Development Association, quoted by Ray (2001, p.14), seems to be the first call for the introduction of pre-apprenticeships. This same report recommended the replacement of time-served apprenticeships with competency-based assessment.

Twenty years later, in 1979, the Williams report recommended an increase in pre-employment programs for the trades (Ray 2001). This is followed in 1982 by a working paper by the Department of Labour Advisory Council (DOLAC) incorporating a recommendation from the Metal Trades Industry Association recommending 'credit provisions for completion of pre-apprenticeship courses' and 'an increase in enrolments in pre-apprenticeship courses to 5416 in 1981' (Ray 2001).

In 1984 a Commonwealth/State Apprenticeship Committee (COSAC) report comments on pre-apprenticeship courses:

> There is already a well-established trend towards increasing the institutional component of trade training through pre-apprenticeship and pre-vocational courses. Based on the experience with such courses, it is clear that institutional training can achieve many of the benefits claimed for it, provided close attention is given to course design and implementation.
> (COSAC cited in Ray 2001, p.21)

Ray goes on to note that:

> Although trade-based pre-employment and pre-vocational courses had become common in many states and were actively promoted by the Commonwealth, they met strong resistance in Victoria. The major stakeholders in apprenticeship in Victoria opposed such courses mainly because they considered that:
>
> - ✧ apprentice training should only take place within employment (and thus involve the payment of wages)
> - ✧ if graduates from such courses were unable to secure an apprenticeship, they may seek work as 'half-trained' tradespersons or 'dilutees'. (Ray 2001, p.21)

In late 1984 the landmark Kirby Report (Kirby 1984) was presented to the Commonwealth Government, recommending *inter alia* that a traineeship system be established to operate in parallel with the existing apprenticeship system. While the Australian Traineeship System did not attract the numbers initially hoped, it was probably seen by policy-makers as partly obviating the need for pre-apprenticeship programs. It was originally intended for traineeships to articulate with apprenticeships, using a work-based approach, rather than the institution-based approach of pre-apprenticeship courses. From another perspective traineeships were labour market programs, designed in part to absorb the growing numbers of young unemployed that resulted from the recession of the early 1980s. In 1983 teenage unemployment rates had exceeded 23% and were still above 22% during 1984.

Pre-apprenticeship courses are not limited to Australia. They are now widely available in a range of countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, New Zealand and Portugal. Their use in Australia has declined in recent years although NCVER data indicate that up to 141 pre-apprenticeship courses were available in 1999. The main distinguishing feature of pre-apprenticeship courses as opposed to other pre-employment courses is that pre-apprenticeships are specifically targeted to prepare students for either one trade course or for entry to one of a group of related trades, such as the building trades.

What are pre-apprenticeships?

In the course of research for this paper a number of retired senior public servants and others, who had each spent many years involved with the apprenticeship systems across Australia, were interviewed. None was able either to identify the point of time when pre-apprenticeship courses began, or to give an authoritative definition of pre-apprenticeships. Most agreed that pre-apprenticeships had initially been designed to articulate with a specific trade training course and, in some jurisdictions, enrolment was not permitted unless evidence was available that the aspiring apprentice had an offer of indentures on completion of the pre-apprenticeship course.

Pre-vocational courses on the other hand were not trade-specific. Earlier pre-apprenticeship courses had usually led into an apprenticeship—a condition no longer relevant with new apprenticeships, since a new apprenticeship can now exist in almost all occupations. The best current definition of a pre-apprenticeship would appear to cover a course offered as a specific preparation for entry to one of the traditional apprenticeship courses.

Unlike the following overseas example, work placement is not necessarily part of Australian pre-apprenticeships, although simulated work environments seem common. Courses are always for less than 12 months' duration and generally between three to six months. Under normal conditions the pre-apprenticeship course aims to both provide remedial basic education, especially in areas such as mathematics, to allow the student to undertake the level of study required in the related trade course as well as offering the student an appreciation of the specific industry. Several contacts noted that pre-apprenticeship courses gave the student an opportunity to decide whether he/she wanted to enter the related trade course without committing an employer to an undecided student.

The following description of pre-apprenticeship courses in Portugal shows the continuing dilemma in training policy worldwide between a focus on meeting industry skill needs and addressing the problems of youth transition into the labour market.

> … system introduced in Portugal under Decree–Law No. 383 of October 9, 1991 for young people who leave the education system without completing compulsory schooling, intended to confer compulsory schooling level and eligibility for access to apprenticeship in a skilled occupation. The target group consists of young people aged between 15 and 21 who have not completed compulsory schooling and are not attending any Ministry of Education institution or course. Like apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship may be described as a system of initial vocational training for young people, combining formal instruction with employment ('regime de alternância'), which functions as a bridge between education and training. The curricular structure of the courses covers both general education and employment training which includes a practical component involving on-the-job training. A special pre-apprenticeship contract is concluded, similar in content to an apprenticeship contract.
>
> (www.eurofound.ie/emire/PORTUGAL/PREAPPRENTICESHIP-PT.htm, accessed 24 September 2001)

In Victoria the following description is applied in relation to pre-apprenticeship training in the furniture industry:

> These are full-time courses conducted over approximately 5 months plus a three-week work placement. One of the great features is that a person undertaking the pre-apprenticeship is NOT required to be employed during the training. When the pre-apprenticeship is completed, it accounts for two-thirds of the off-the-job component of the full apprenticeship. Quite regularly, the person undertaking the pre-apprenticeship will gain employment with the business where they do their on-the-job work placement. Certainly, completion of the Certificate II (Pre-apprenticeship) is highly regarded by employers.
>
> (www.vfitb.org.au/careers/preapp.html, accessed 24 September 2001)

Despite the central position of new apprenticeships in policy debate in VET since 1996, pre-apprenticeships have been generally ignored. Moreover, the review of literature undertaken as part of this study has found little historical information on the origins and early policy motives behind their introduction. This is despite the importance of debate around related issues, including vocational education and training (VET) and apprenticeships in schools, transition from school to work and the suitability of potential new apprentices for work. Research has indicated that pre-apprenticeship courses were reduced or eliminated during the 1980s and 1990s because they were perceived as being expensive to provide. In New South Wales for example, pre-vocational trade courses were discontinued in the Sydney metropolitan area in 1990, when there were 2307 enrolments in the state. After an initial decline in enrolments statewide, pre-apprenticeship enrolments in New South Wales, however, grew strongly up to 1994, recording 10 733 enrolments in that year.

The paucity of published research on pre-apprenticeships and related courses in Australia is most surprising considering the explosion in VET research that has occurred over the last decade. It seems that this area has been almost completely ignored. A search of the VOCED (vocational education and training database, hosted by NCVER) database, for example, produces just one reference to a 1987 South Australian report on pre-vocational courses.

Although there has been rapid and continuing growth in numbers of apprentices and trainees in Australia over the last five years, it appears that some young people still fail to gain access to new apprenticeships or other education/training, or to full-time employment. In part this study aims to determine whether this access could be improved by a refocussing of pre-apprenticeship/ pre-vocational programs.

In an internal paper prepared by one of the authors of this study, Dumbrell, in 1996 for the Inter-governmental Committee on Development and Implementation of the Modern Apprenticeship and Traineeship System (now new apprenticeships) the value of pre-vocational programs was noted. A major equity program which appears to have provided a pathway into apprenticeships and traineeships for some groups of disadvantaged young people is the Commonwealth Pre-vocational Program. A recent evaluation of this program in New South Wales revealed almost 20% of graduates from these courses entered apprenticeships or traineeships. The aim of such courses is to remedy any specific social or educational deficits which would otherwise prevent entry to vocational training.

Recent research into new apprenticeships has revealed several important issues relevant to consideration in reviewing the role of 'pre-apprenticeships'. These findings are briefly discussed below.

Current context

Youth labour market

Australian Bureau of Statistics data (ABS 2000) show that in May 2000 there were 140 000 persons aged 15–24 who were unemployed and not attending school. While this group represents just over 5% of the population aged 15–24, there is evidence that this group might represent an enduring sub-group of marginalised young people. Of this 140 000 more than 90 000 had not been attending education 12 months previously, indicating a chronic problem. The overall unemployment rate for 15–19-year-olds at that time was 16.9% and for 20–24-year-olds it was 9.7%. The comparable rate for all persons was 6.8%.

Looking at the whole 15–24-year age group Curtain (1999a) develops a performance indicator to compare the labour market situation of this age group with other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. The indicator he uses is the ratio of the

unemployment rate of 15-24-year-olds to the unemployment rate for the 25–54-age group. On this basis he finds Australia to rank equal seventh out of 19 OECD countries with a ratio of 2.4:1, the same as Japan and New Zealand. The countries providing the best chances of employment for young people on the basis of this indicator (with ratios of less than 2.0:1) are Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark and The Netherlands—'all countries with well-structured and comprehensive arrangements to ensure that the education to work transition is smooth' (Curtain 1999a).

In a paper prepared for the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, Curtain found that at May 1999, 14.5% of Australian teenagers were either not in full-time work or were working part time, but not studying, or had dropped out of the labour market altogether, and were consequently at risk of not securing stable employment in the longer term (Curtain 1999b).

Apprenticeships

Research conducted by several Commonwealth Government agencies (DEETYA 1998; DEWRSB 1998), shows that employers in New South Wales and Victoria found many applicants for apprenticeships and traineeships to be unsuitable for an apprenticeship. In the case of the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs study in Victoria, employers reported that 80% of applicants were unsuitable. The main reasons for this unsuitability were 'attitude, presentation, followed by aptitude/type of work and literacy/numeracy/communication skills' (DEETYA 1998, p.1). The New South Wales study by the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business produced similar findings, with 75% of apprenticeship applicants judged unsuitable by employers. Reasons for unsuitability were similar to those in the Victorian study. These findings indicate that there could be four to five times as many young people seeking apprenticeships as gain them. At the same time there are continuing complaints from some employers of shortages of suitable applicants and fears of chronic skill shortages in occupational areas addressed by apprenticeship training.

The analysis of attrition in apprenticeships (DETYA 2000) found that attrition was most likely to occur in the early months of the apprenticeship, and that there were 'strong occupational effects on the probability of attrition'(DETYA 2000, p.37). This study unfortunately did not present data on prior work experience or the prior involvement of these apprentices in pre-employment courses. The Victorian Office of the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs study of the apprentices labour market in 1998 (DEETYA 1998) similarly found most attrition to occur in the early stage of the apprenticeship and also found occupational differences.

The 1998 study in New South Wales also found differing attrition rates among different occupations. This study also found that those occupations with the highest attrition rates also experienced the greatest difficulty in initial apprentice recruitment. Importantly in the Victorian study, employers identified that they would be encouraged to increase their level of apprentice recruitment if, *inter alia*, '… applicants were well presented and possessed the basic entry level skills and work ethics'(DEETYA 1998, p.4). The New South Wales study noted (p.6) that numerous employers commented that 'applicants did not know about the job or show any interest in it'.

Saunders, in his review of Australian apprenticeship and traineeship literature, also points out that:

> Wastage from the trades is a common concern … in the [entry-level training] literature since the Kirby report. Often, the suggestion is that the underlying supply rates to the trades, although moderate, would readily suffice were it not for early wastage. This in turn leads to remarks about the long-term career and financial attractiveness of the trades to young people.
>
> (Saunders 2001, p.14)

In its 1999 study of apprenticeship attrition rates, the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs found attrition rates of two cohorts of apprentices, who began their apprenticeships in 1994–95 and 1995–96, to be at least 20% after the first two years, with separation most likely in

the first six months. This level was found to be comparable with attrition rates from university courses. The same study estimated attrition rates from apprenticeships over the entire length of the apprenticeship to be in the range of 23–30%.

This study examined a number of factors likely to contribute to attrition but it did not include an examination of whether or not the apprentices had undertaken a pre-apprenticeship or similar pre-employment course. The study found higher attrition rates among older apprentices, suggesting that prior exposure to the labour market might not be an advantage in reducing attrition rates. However, apprentices with below Year 12 educational attainment were found to be more likely to leave their apprenticeship.

Several contacts (experienced in the design and delivery of labour market programs at the national and state level) with whom this problem of wastage was discussed considered that the use of pre-apprenticeships has proved to be an effective way of reducing the number of apprentices unsuitable for their trade course. If this is true, the value of pre-apprenticeships might have been discounted in the past. In their study of retention in apprenticeships Harris et al. (2001) found that 'prior skill development' and 'work experience' were among the most important factors contributing to retention within apprenticeships and traineeships. Harris et al. also found that one of the factors contributing to poor retention was apprentices and trainees 'finding out they do not like or are not suited to the type of work associated with the occupational area they are in' (Harris et al. 2001, p.32).

Skill shortages

A recent paper by the Australian Industry Group has questioned the methodology used by the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business for measuring skill shortages. The Australian Industry Group points out that one employer reporting five suitable applicants for a position takes no account of double counting and the number of available applicants might be far fewer than the department estimates. The Australian Industry Group paper reports its survey as finding that almost half the respondents were concerned over the lack of quality among applicants for apprenticeships. Their consultations with employers 'consistently raised concerns over vocational preparation in schools …'. The paper also reports that these consultations revealed that, while employers acknowledged that vocational training in schools was one way of promoting careers in the engineering trades, they did not believe that this was translating to an increase in interest in such trade apprenticeships.

Another paper prepared for the Industry Skills Forum (VACC 2000) looking at skills shortages in the retail motor industry found similar criticisms of VET-in-schools programs. Participants in this study expressed concern that 'in general, the graduates of VET-in-schools programs did not generally possess the skills and competencies which were consistent with the level of training credits that schools claimed to have completed' (p.15).

In a study of skill shortages in a range of rural industries (Rural Industry Working Group 2001) VET-in-schools was seen as a valuable way to encourage young people into rural industry careers. However, the report was also critical of the VET-in-schools program, noting that:

> … progress is being impeded in some cases by a poor image of the industry, poor industry–school linkages, inadequate health and safety or indemnity arrangements, lack of qualified teachers, and inconsistent assessment procedures. In some rural towns, courses relevant to the local rural industry are not offered but hospitality and other courses are offered that do not match to realistic local labour market opportunities.
>
> (Rural Industry Working Group 2001, p.35)

This report also found that the new apprenticeships program was not attracting sufficient numbers to address skill shortages in shearing and shed hand occupations.

Among the strategies favoured by employers in the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs Victorian study (DEETYA 1998) to attract better quality applicants to apprenticeship vacancies were work experience and pre-apprenticeship courses. Group training companies in the Victorian study were, however, critical of the consistency of standards in pre-apprenticeship training provided through technical and further education institutes. To quote the report:

> Employers particularly stressed the importance of work experience and pre-apprenticeship courses which they considered gave potential apprentices exposure to the work environment and an understanding of what is involved in trade work. GTCs (group training companies) supported having trade training within the education system to improve students' preparedness for the trades. (DEETYA 1998, p.8)

The Australian Industry Group found that one-third of firms with skills shortages responding to their survey regarded the lack of 'quality applicants for apprenticeships was a major barrier to training'. A lack of basic skills, poor numeracy and literacy skills were often cited by these respondents as shortcomings among applicants.

The Australian Industry Group paper provides a detailed list of strategies favoured by employers to overcome skill shortages in the trades. Again one of the strategies advanced is to 'provide and promote pre-vocational training to provide a pathway into apprenticeships' (AIG 2001, p.32). Respondents' understanding of the term 'pre-vocational' was 'more training provided prior to taking on an apprentice/trainee' (AIG 2001, p.viii, appendix 1).

A study into skill shortages in the electrotechnology sector found evidence of both skill shortages in the sector and 'an inadequate uptake of new apprenticeships in electrotechnology as employer investment in structured training remains low and there is a high rate of attrition among apprentices' (Electrotechnology Working Group 2000, p.27). In order to increase the number of commencements in the sector, the report proposes the need to 'develop and pilot alternative pathways aimed at increasing levels of commencements, retention and completions of new apprenticeships' (Electrotechnology Working Group 2000, p.32).

Other important themes to have emerged from recent apprenticeship research (AIG 2001; Electrotechnology Working Group 2000; Demediuk et al. 2001; Marshman 1998; Dumbrell, de Montfort & Finnegan 2001), have included the negative image of apprenticeships among young people and the level of confusion among both employers and young people about changes to apprenticeships and traineeships. A number of studies (Marshman 1998; Schofield 1999a, 1999b) into the quality of apprenticeships and traineeships have also highlighted concerns over the administration and on-job delivery of these programs.

Marshman also highlights another issue of direct relevance to the role of pre-apprenticeship programs: 'There is no subject on which employers are more virulent or consistent in their criticism than the lack and quality of vocational preparation in schools' (Marshman 1998, p.7).

Despite the findings of Marshman and the New South Wales and Victorian studies there have been few initiatives to provide an increased level of pre-apprenticeship training in most states.

Dumbrell, de Montfort and Finnegan (2001) also found in their study that, despite the rapid growth in new apprenticeship commencements, there was a very uneven geographical distribution of these commencements, both between and within states/territories. One conclusion that study draws is that commencements could be increased by policies aimed at encouraging entry to new apprenticeships in specific regions and within certain industry sectors.

Casualised youth labour market

> … the faster growth of informal work-and-study options compared to formal ELT (entry level training) and TAFE courses may be partly a matter of preference rather than a necessity for young people due to failures of government or the labour market. (Saunders 2001, p.11)

Saunders is drawing attention to the enormous growth in part-time work for young people in recent years, which has nearly offset the loss in full-time jobs for 15–19-year-olds. This trend has allowed young people to combine university or VET studies with often unrelated employment in areas such as retail and accommodation, cafés and restaurants. Still it is apparent that some young people are neither working nor studying.

The shift from full-time to part-time work for young people over the last 20 or so years has been quite dramatic. In 1980 39.5% of full-time employment to population for the 15–19-age group in Australia was 39.5%, while the part-time ratio was 11.2%. By 1997 that had turned around such that the full-time ratio was 16.6%, while the part-time ratio was 29.1%. Over this period the overall unemployment rate for this age group had risen only marginally from 16.6% to 19.5% (Lewis & Koshy 1998).

Such a change is not simply a change in the hours worked by young people. Full-time employment generally represents a more permanent connection to the labour market than part-time employment, which often provides low-skilled work unrelated to the young person's longer-term aspirations. In effect then, the change from predominantly full-time to predominantly part-time work for young people could be seen as placing a larger number of young people at risk in the labour market. As Sweet has pointed out:

> The issue is whether low paid, part-time or temporary employment is a stepping stone to other better paid work or a trap that it is hard to escape from. Longitudinal data from the Australian Council for Educational Research indicate that around one-fifth of 18 and 19 year olds spent at least 12 months of the two-year period 1993 and 1994 in neither full-time employment nor full-time education (Sweet 1996, p.3). This proportion was even higher (about one in three) for those who had low levels of academic performance in school, or who were from low socio-economic backgrounds. The data also show that the longer that teenagers were outside full-time education or full-time employment, the greater the likelihood that their mobility within this two-year period was from one marginal activity to another such as from part-time work to unemployment or to another part-time job. (Sweet 1996, p.3)

VET-in-schools program

The rise of VET-in-schools programs has, to some extent, Sweet (1998, p.3) coincided with the decline of pre-apprenticeships. Malley et al. (2001) trace the growth of VET-in-schools, attributing renewed interest in this area to the Finn Review of 1990–91. Malley points out that there are two types of VET provision in schools—the approved VET-in-schools model and school-based new apprenticeships. He shows that VET-in-schools enrolments have risen from about 26 000 in 1995, in a range of state-based and unco-ordinated programs to 129 000 enrolments under a nationally recognised framework in 1999. The rate of growth of enrolments in VET-in-schools programs is, however, falling as the number of schools not offering VET programs diminishes. Malley predicts that the proportion of Year 11 and 12 students enrolled in VET courses will stabilise at around 40%.

One difficulty with the existing VET-in-schools programs is its dominance by two industry sectors, tourism/hospitality and business/clerical. Malley contends that these two sectors account for 44% of enrolments in government school-delivered VET. While these are two areas that have enjoyed substantial employment growth over the last decade or so, it is apparent that this is not a balanced provision on the basis of the needs of the Australian labour market.

Data analysis

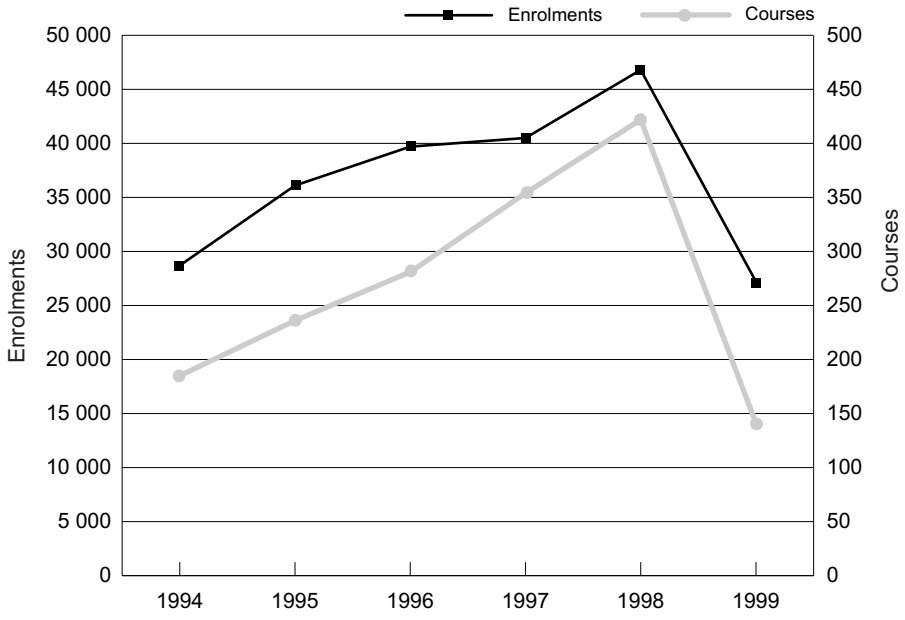
The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) has undertaken detailed examination of the VET enrolment database covering the period 1994 to 1999 with a special emphasis on identifying pre-apprenticeship courses. This examination has produced a listing of courses possibly classifiable as pre-apprenticeships. Although there is no way to identify such courses with certainty, and identification is complicated by changes in the names of courses over time, the list of courses identified would appear to represent a substantial number. The researchers in this project have scrutinised the NCVER list to identify those courses most likely to be pre-apprenticeship courses—those with the words 'pre-apprenticeship', 'pre-trade' or similar in their title—and have consequently obtained data on enrolments in those courses from the NCVER.

The following analysis is based on enrolments in courses from the NCVER list. There is no claim made that the list is exhaustive; however, every effort has been made to achieve as comprehensive a coverage as possible. Given the significant difficulties in gathering reliable information on pre-apprenticeships, the following analysis is presented as the best available using existing data at the national level.

Enrolments and courses

The pattern of pre-apprenticeship enrolments and courses Australia-wide (for the period 1994–1999) shows that both peaked in 1998 with almost 47 000 enrolments in 422 courses. Enrolments have not been distributed geographically in line with overall population.

Figure 1: Pre-apprenticeship enrolments and courses – Australia, 1994–99



Source: NCVER unpublished data

Over the period examined, New South Wales and Queensland have dominated pre-apprenticeship course enrolments, typically contributing around two-thirds of enrolments, although in 1999 those two states only accounted for 55% of all VET enrolments. The Australian Capital Territory ceased and New South Wales and Tasmania virtually ceased providing pre-apprenticeship courses in 1999. Enrolments in Queensland increased in 1999 and remained almost stable in Victoria. Average enrolments per course were consistent across the period. Much of the activity in Queensland relates to the state-based Youth Access Program that was introduced to provide pre-apprenticeship training to young people at risk of unemployment.

At its peak in 1998 enrolments in pre-apprenticeship courses represented almost 2.4% of total VET enrolments in Australia.

Enrolments by state/territory

The following table provides a detailed breakdown of enrolments by state/territory over the period 1994 to 1999 together with each state and territory's share of enrolments.

Table 1: Enrolments in pre-apprenticeship courses by state/territory and Australia, 1994–99

	Enrolments								
	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
1994	10 730	2 422	10 820	1 702	1 783	1 050	100	50	28 657
1995	13 881	3 542	10 429	2 071	4 870	1 093	74	163	36 123
1996	13 952	5 015	12 171	1 896	4 136	1 201	1 209	163	39 743
1997	14 039	6 405	12 782	2 070	3 806	778	485	154	40 519
1998	15 704	7 400	15 691	2 251	3 520	1 478	712	91	46 847
1999	562	7 324	15 963	1 964	730	30	640	0	27 213

	Enrolments as a per cent of Australian total								
	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
1994	37.4	8.5	37.8	5.9	6.2	3.7	0.3	0.2	100.0
1995	38.4	9.8	28.9	5.7	13.5	3.0	0.2	0.5	100.0
1996	35.1	12.6	30.6	4.8	10.4	3.0	3.0	0.4	100.0
1997	34.6	15.8	31.5	5.1	9.4	1.9	1.2	0.4	100.0
1998	33.5	15.8	33.5	4.8	7.5	3.2	1.5	0.2	100.0
1999	2.1	26.9	58.7	7.2	2.7	0.1	2.4	0.0	100.0

Source: NCVER unpublished data

Data obtained independently from the New South Wales Department of Education and Training shows New South Wales TAFE recording a total of 10 733 persons enrolled in pre-apprenticeship courses in 1994, almost identical with the 1995 figure for New South Wales derived from the NCVER data of 10 730, a congruence providing the researchers with some confidence in the methods used in estimating national pre-apprenticeship numbers using the NCVER data.

Over the period 1994 to 1998 the number of pre-apprenticeship courses in Australia more than doubled from 185 courses to 422. Due to a break in the series, 1999 figures declined to 141. Growth accelerated in the second half of this period, where it occurred largely in the non-TAFE sector. Figure 2 demonstrates that, while TAFE provision of courses accounted for more than 90% of pre-apprenticeship courses 1994 to 1996, the non-TAFE sector dominated the growth over 1996 to 1998, seeing the TAFE share of course provision decreasing to 64% in 1998.

From figure 3 we can see that Queensland was by far (in terms of number of courses) the largest provider of pre-apprenticeship courses in 1998, New South Wales offering some 30% fewer

courses. Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia offered similar numbers of courses, at around ±30% of the Queensland number.

Looking at a state level, however, no consistency was apparent in the growth in the number of courses being offered. The growth appears largely to have been driven by a three-fold expansion of courses taking place in Queensland between 1996 and 1998. This occurred mainly in the non-TAFE sector, reportedly through the Youth Access Program and through schools.

The growth and decline in pre-apprenticeship courses in New South Wales closely mirrored the national pattern, as did Queensland, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. Conversely, the numbers of pre-apprenticeship courses offered in Tasmania, Western Australia behaved differently from the national case. Both states showed a gradual and consistent decline in the number of pre-apprenticeship courses being offered. Victoria and the Northern Territory showed a gradual increase followed by a moderate decline. Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania differed from other states over this period, in that provision of pre-apprenticeship courses was confined to the TAFE sector (with the exception of non-TAFE programs in WA in 1994 and one in Tasmania in 1998).

Locations

Across the four major states, especially in Queensland, pre-apprenticeship courses were provided in a large number of locations. Generally the number of locations at which courses were offered increased over the period studied.

Table 2: Number of locations where pre-apprenticeship courses were offered

	Training locations							
	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	NT	ACT
1994	85	49	32	27	35	4	1	1
1995	97	57	16	28	10	4	2	1
1996	111	72	147	31	10	4	15	4
1997	110	77	173	45	10	6	18	6
1998	135	86	259	39	9	10	20	6
1999	21	93	298	38	19	5	26	0

Source: NCVER unpublished data

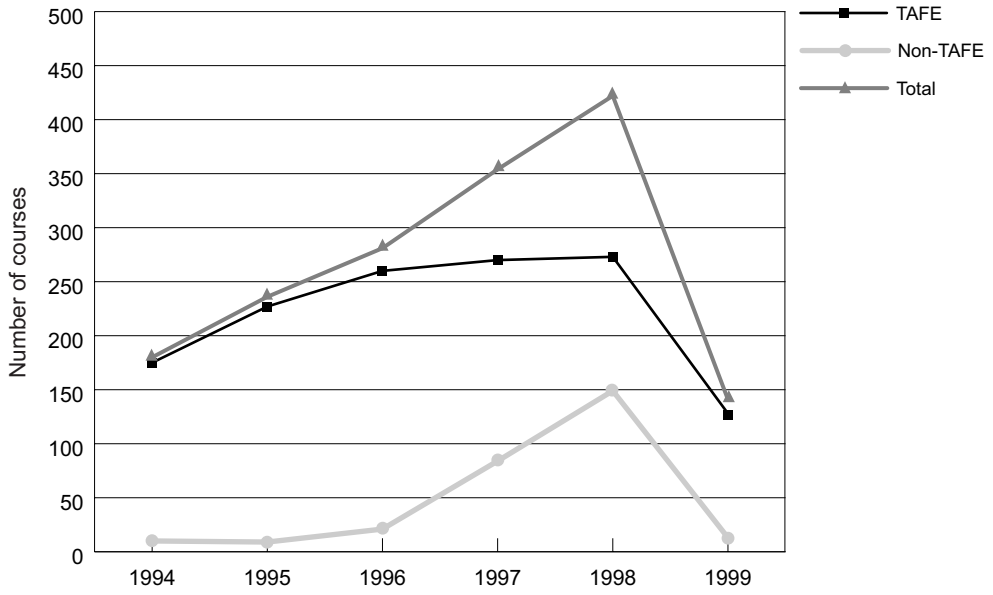
In some cases in table 2 enrolments were recorded at the institute level rather than at the level of the individual college. In the Northern Territory, for example, in 1994 and 1995 locations were recorded as Northern Territory University and Centralian College, whereas in 1998 for example, enrolments at the individual campuses of Northern Territory University were recorded.

Provider type

As would be expected, most of the pre-apprenticeship courses over the period studied were offered by TAFE colleges. A notable exception is the high number of enrolments occurring in Queensland schools, both public and private, from 1996 onwards. By 1998 about two-thirds of enrolments in Queensland were in schools.

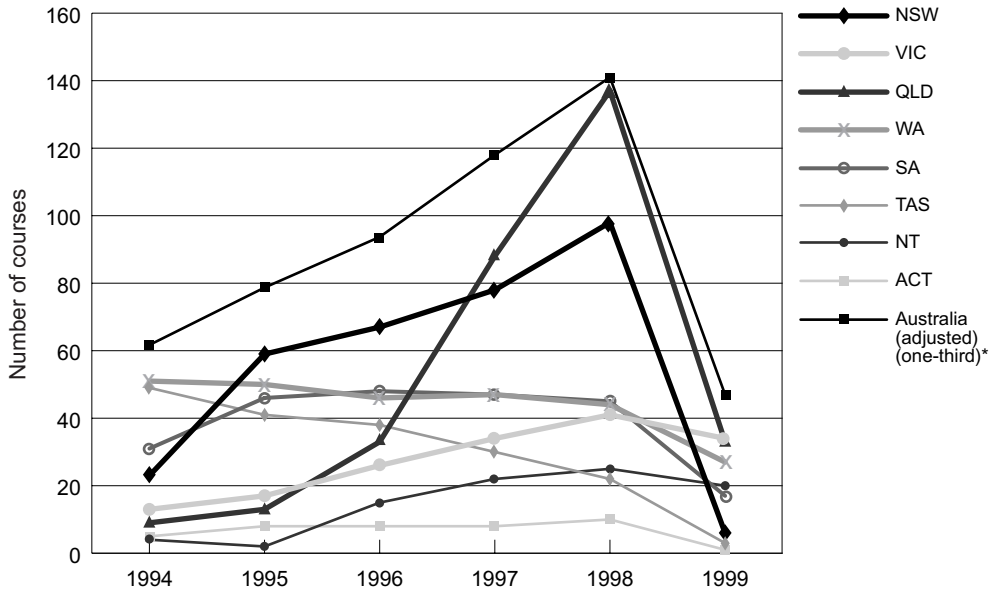
In Victoria and Western Australia in particular, non-TAFE providers emerged as significant providers in the latter half of the period studied. These included community colleges, corrective services, private providers, group training companies and industry/union-based providers.

Figure 2: Pre-apprenticeship courses by sector, 1994–99



Source: NCVER unpublished data

Figure 3: Pre-apprenticeship courses by state/territory, 1994–99



Note: * In order to fit the national data on the chart, the Australian figure has been divided by 3.
Source: NCVER unpublished data

Nature of pre-apprenticeship courses

Pre-apprenticeship enrolments over the period studied were characterised by a large number of enrolments in a relatively small range of courses. Moreover, there is little consistency between states and territories in the nature of the pre-apprenticeship courses offered.

One marked similarity, however, is the predominance of large engineering and construction pre-apprenticeship programs provided by New South Wales and Queensland throughout most of the period under review. In the other states and territories programs were significantly smaller and more varied in nature. This variation occurred both over time and in terms of the field of study.

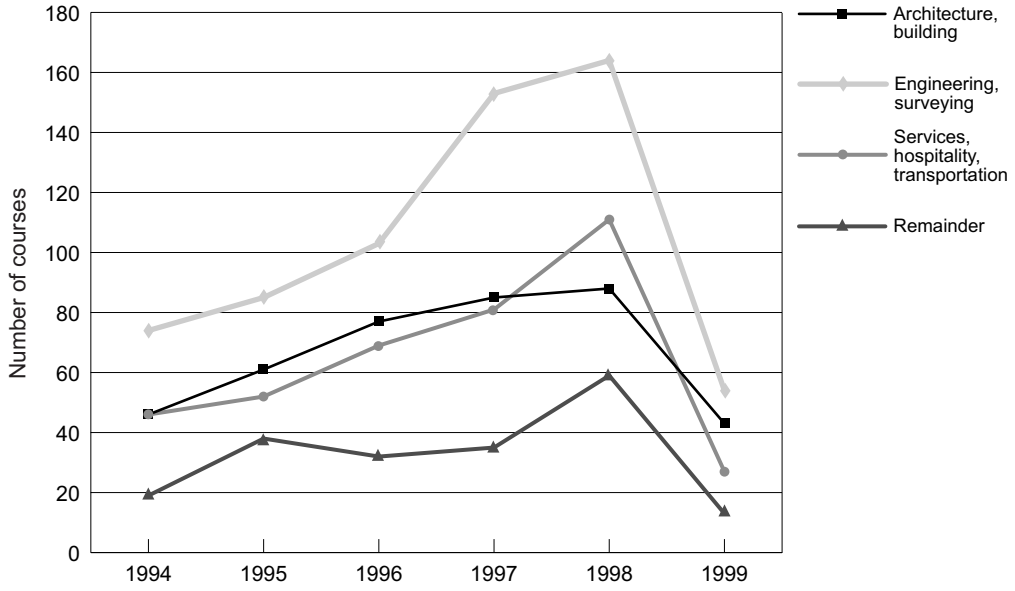
Victoria for example, was the only state to offer large programs in automotive technology during this time. Western Australia recorded large numbers of enrolments in commercial cookery, children's services, electrical trades and automotive in some years, while in South Australia, large enrolments in food processing (wine), horticulture and in women's education were recorded. In Tasmania pre-apprenticeship courses in hospitality dominated enrolments, including courses in commercial cookery, gaming and food and beverage service. There was a wide diversity of programs offered in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory.

Field of study

Three fields of study dominated the delivery of pre-apprenticeship courses nationally. These were Architecture, building; Engineering, surveying; and Services, hospitality, transportation. From 1994 to 1999 they accounted for 84 to 90% of all pre-apprenticeship courses nationally.

A predominance of male students in Engineering, surveying and in Architecture, building courses would indicate a gender imbalance of pre-apprenticeship places. Some 60 to 70% of pre-apprenticeship courses are in these fields, compared to 20 to 26% in the Services, hospitality, transportation field. There is no consistent picture of courses offered at a state level by field of study, indicating no common policy approaches. Appendix 2 provides details of field of study by state.

Figure 4: Number of courses by field of study, 1994–99



Source: NCVER unpublished data

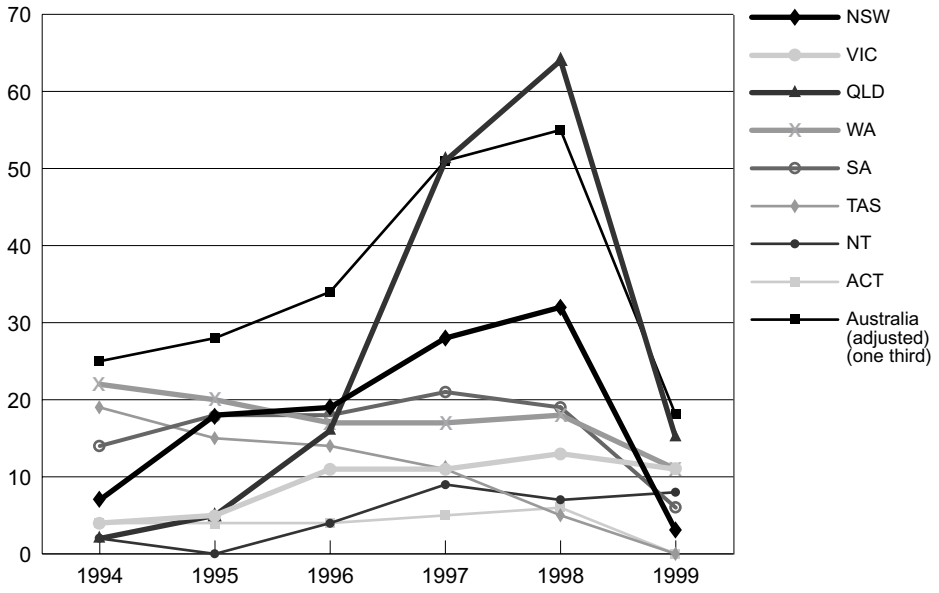
Engineering, surveying

Engineering, surveying was the predominant field of study over this period, accounting for between 36 and 40% of pre-apprenticeship courses nationally, and was prominent in all states over this period. It grew in strength from 74 courses offered in 1994 to 164 in 1998. It had a broad range of courses coded to it, including certificates in engineering, 'generic' courses including fabrication, mechanical, and refrigeration as well as more specific courses such as Marine technical alignment – electrical, electronics (computer assembly) and Aircraft engineering.

In most states Engineering, surveying dominate pre-apprenticeship courses. In both New South Wales and Queensland, this field showed a steep increase over 1996–97 peaking in 1998, before a steep decline in 1999. This pattern, especially the increase in courses in Queensland propelled the

national pattern. By contrast, the growth of Engineering, surveying courses in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory was far more subdued, showing only marginal declines in 1999. Western Australia and Tasmania, starting form a relatively high base, showed a gradual decline in Engineering, surveying courses throughout the period. South Australia also started with a relatively high number of courses in this field, which grew slowly peaking in 1997. The Northern Territory declined to zero courses in 1995 before increasing over the 1996–99 period, being the only region to increase in 1999.

Figure 5: Engineering, surveying field of study by state, 1994–99



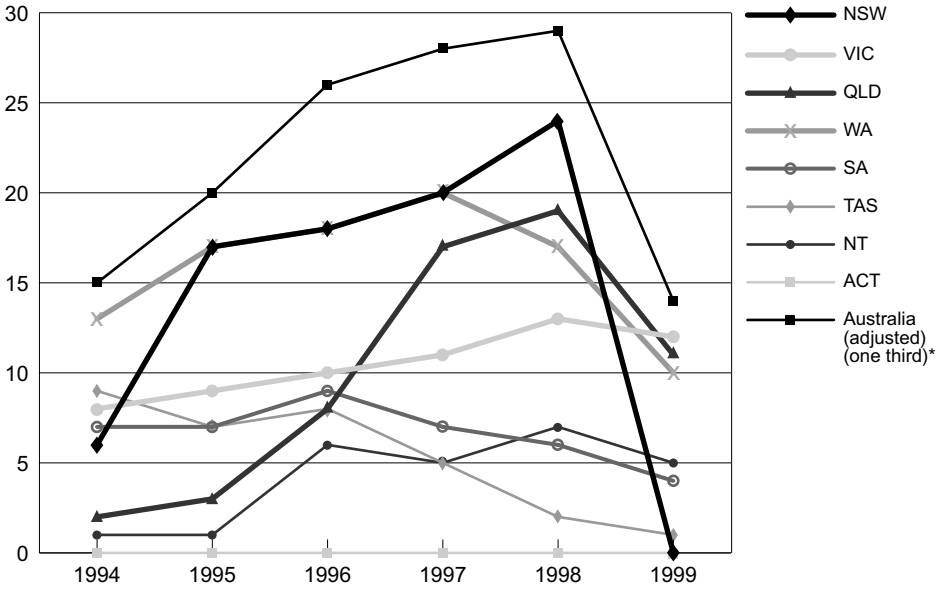
Note: * In order to fit the national data on the chart, the Australian figure has been divided by 3.
Source: NCVER unpublished data

Architecture, building

Architecture, building was also an important field of study, representing between 21 and 31% of pre-apprenticeship courses nationally. While these courses were broadly spread among the building fields, they were most prevalent in carpentry, joinery, building construction, and cabinet-making.

Architecture, building was another prominent field of study for pre-apprenticeship courses over the period 1994 to 1999. Only in the Australian Capital Territory were no courses run in this field. New South Wales and Western Australia offered most courses in this field of study. New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland dominated the provision of Architecture, building pre-apprenticeships, the latter two states especially in 1998 when figures peaked. The number of courses offered in New South Wales peaked in 1997, leaving Western Australia offering the most courses in 1998. Queensland showed the greatest rate of increase in 1997 and also offered more courses in 1998 than New South Wales. Victoria again showed a more subdued increase over the 1994–98 period. South Australia and Tasmania showed a different pattern, both declining after 1996. The Northern Territory, starting at a low base, increased to a steady number of courses being offered from 1996 to 1999.

Figure 6: Architecture, building field of study by state, 1994–99

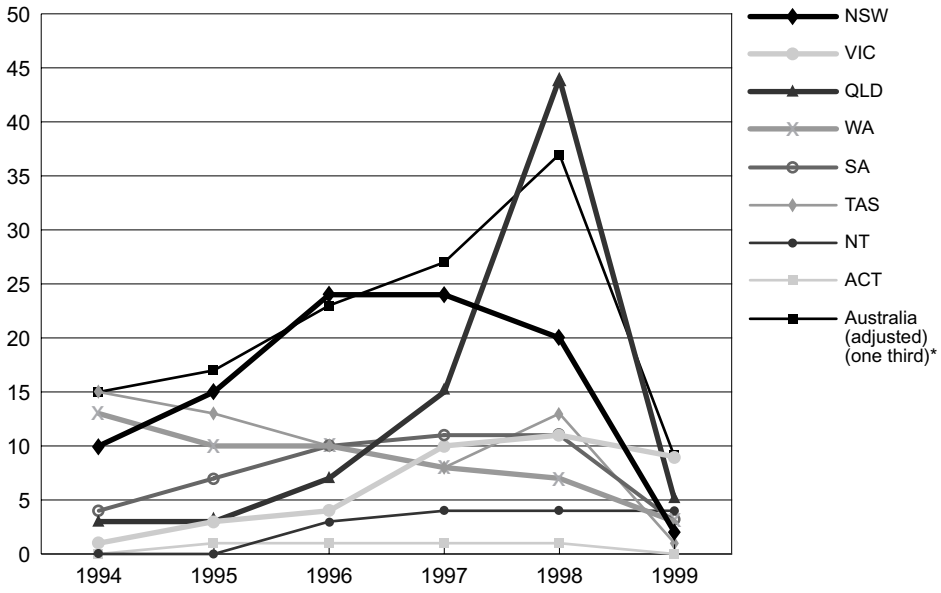


Note: * In order to fit the national data on the chart, the Australian figure has been divided by 3.
Source: NCVER unpublished data

Services, hospitality, transport

The other major field of study for pre-apprenticeship courses is Services, hospitality, transport, covering a further 20 to 25% of pre-apprenticeship courses. In the main they were in the food/ beverage, hospitality, tourism field (55 to 75%). A significant proportion were in the Other services field which includes hairdressing. New South Wales and Queensland again offered the largest number of courses, New South Wales in the earlier period (1994–97) and Queensland in 1998. Victoria provided a relatively modest number of courses over the period despite doubling their effort in 1997. Western Australia, again starting at a high base, gradually reduced the number of Services, hospitality, transport pre-apprenticeships over the whole period. South Australia showed a gradual increase, levelling out in 1997 and 1998. Tasmania also started from a high base, declining through to 1997 before a second peak in 1998. The Northern Territory offered no Services, hospitality, transport courses until 1996, then maintained a consistent number from 1997 to 1999. The Australian Capital Territory ran one Services, hospitality, transport pre-apprenticeship course from 1995 to 1998.

Figure 7: Services, hospitality, transport field of study by state, 1994–99

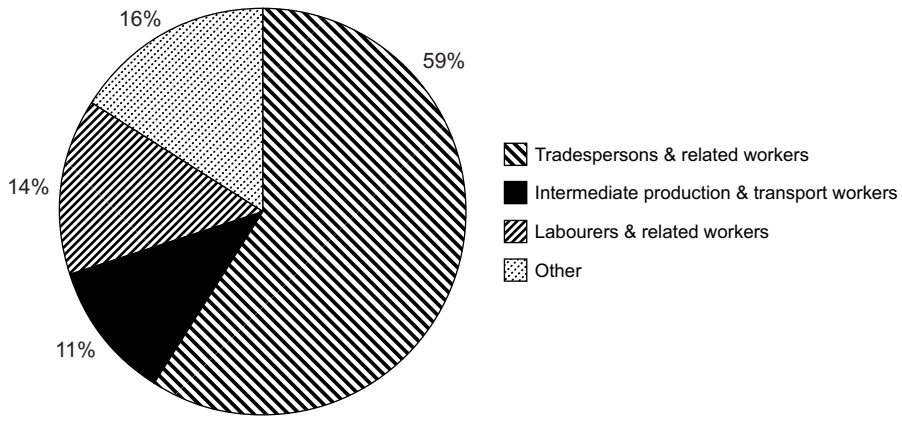


Note: * In order to fit the national data on the chart, the Australian figure has been divided by 3.
Source: NCVER unpublished data

Occupational classification

Analysis of 1999 figures indicated that only 59% of pre-apprenticeship courses were classified to the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) Tradespersons and related workers. Other significant categories were Labourers and related workers and Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers. Labouring occupations included: engineering production process workers, earthmoving labourers, construction and plumbers assistants, kitchen hands, food trades assistants and mechanics assistants. Clerical, sales and service workers courses included the specific occupations of sales representatives, motor vehicle salespersons, children's care workers and special care workers, hospitality trainees, beauty therapists and tourist information officers.

Figure 8: Occupation of pre-apprenticeship courses, 1999

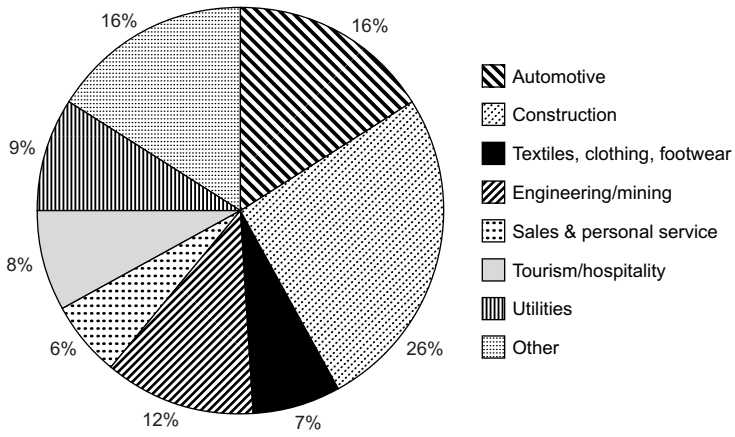


Source: NCVER unpublished data

Industry

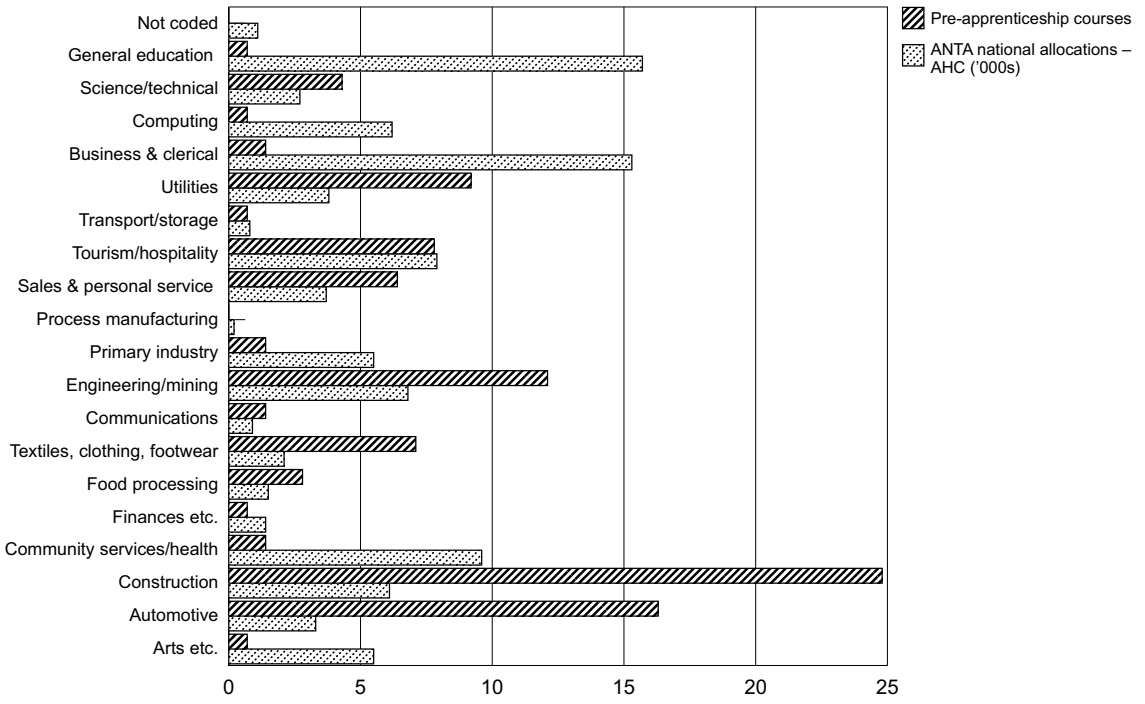
In the context of the industries in which pre-apprenticeships were located, analysis of 1999 data indicates that nearly two-thirds of pre-apprenticeship courses were coded to the Construction, automotive, engineering/mining and utilities industries. Construction accounted for nearly a quarter of pre-apprenticeships (24.8%). Figure 10 reveals that pre-apprenticeship courses are distributed very differently from the overall allocation of VET funds.

Figure 9: Pre-apprenticeship courses by industry, 1999



Source: NCVER unpublished data

Figure 10: Pre-apprenticeship courses versus ANTA national allocations, 1999



The industry distribution of pre-apprenticeship courses in 1999 bears little resemblance to the Australian National Training Authority national allocations by training area as measured by 'annual hours curriculum' (AHC—an estimate of the number of hours of teaching in a subject multiplied

by the number of students). Industries that fell short of Australian National Training Authority allocations included Community services/health and Business and clerical, both industries with a higher proportion of female employees. This seems to indicate that pre-apprenticeships are not equitably available on an industry and gender basis.

Findings from focus groups

Overview

Pre-apprenticeship students were generally very positive about their courses, liking the shortness of the courses and the immediacy of results. They were positive about most aspects of the course, despite travelling problems (the lack of choice of locations to undertake their specific course, lengthy travel times and expenses). Many noted that they would like some financial assistance, at least to offset fares incurred.

Students attending both TAFE and private registered training organisations were also enthusiastic about their employment prospects on completion of the course, and many saw it as a good way to test the field they had chosen before making the greater commitment to an apprenticeship course.

Focus groups of electrical/electronics, automotive and baking pre-apprentices were interviewed. The electrical/electronics and automotive trades students displayed more career-focussed ambitions. Those in baking were more casual in their attitude, selecting the course unsure of what career they wanted on leaving school.

All students felt that a pre-apprenticeship qualification would help secure either an apprenticeship or a job. They felt that with some skills and a better understanding of work and work conditions, they would be more attractive to employers. Furthermore, they would have proved themselves as interested in their chosen field of work.

The favourite aspect of their course was the practical sessions, and they enjoyed being treated as an adult in the workplace. They enjoyed handling tools, getting up on ladders and computer-simulated work problems. They were dismissive about the tech classes they had done at school.

Students undertaking courses at TAFE had heard about their courses through the education system, through their mechanics teachers at school, and TAFE handbooks. There was no such help for students training through group training companies.

Description of focus groups

Five meetings were held with pre-apprenticeship students, two in Sydney, one in Melbourne and two in Perth. A second meeting planned for Melbourne could not be realised. Students were undertaking pre-apprenticeship courses in electrical/electronics, automotive and baking disciplines. Students in electrical/electronics were undertaking their courses through private registered training organisations associated with group training companies, while those in automotive and baking were in the TAFE sector.

The students were consulted in a group, where the researcher asked a series of questions and sought responses from the group. The students were also asked to fill out a short questionnaire from which their demographic and other details were obtained. Students signed consent forms (using the standard forms used by the Research Centre for VET, University of Technology Sydney) advising them of the reasons for the research and their capacity to withdraw from the project if they wished. Copies of the questionnaire and the consent forms are appended.

The majority of students were male, with most of the females in baking. The age spread of the students was broad. Most of the group had moved straight from school to their pre-apprenticeship course, having done Year 12 and were in early stages of the course.

The following points offer a summary of the characteristics of the 47 students interviewed:

- 37 males, 10 females
- 9 in Sydney, 10 in Melbourne and 28 in Perth
- 19 in group training companies and 28 in TAFE
- 20 were 15–17-years old, 17 were 18 or 19, and 9 were 20–24 years (one age was not stated)
- 19 were in electrical/electronics, 15 in automotive and 13 in baking
- 35 had completed Year 12 schooling
- 31 were school leavers when they started their course, 13 worked and 5 were unemployed
- 43 were in early stages of their pre-apprenticeships while 4 had completed them and were in subsequent apprenticeships.

Electrical/electronics students

Three groups were in electrical/electronics, located in Sydney and Melbourne. The Australian Electrotechnology Industry Training Centre Limited in Sydney facilitated two groups and VicTec Ltd (VicTec) in Melbourne the third. Both companies are registered training organisations and group training companies and carefully select students for their programs, offering most successful graduates employment after their initial training program for placement with host employers on their books. Nineteen electrical/electronics students were interviewed.

One of the focus groups in Sydney targeted new students in week three of their pre-apprenticeship course. The other focus group included graduates of the program who were working as apprentices with the Australian Electrotechnology Industry Training Centre. The group in Melbourne also comprised new students going into the second week of their course.

> One older student felt that undertaking the pre-apprenticeship course—a 'shorter course'—would mean a 'completion' at the end of the day. He had previously attended longer courses at TAFE and had dropped out after completing only a few modules. In his words he 'didn't get anything'. He felt let down in that he had enrolled for a certificate III electrical course at a TAFE college. The course had subsequently been partially closed down with some modules no longer available there. He had therefore enrolled at another TAFE college to pick up all the modules. This was obviously too complicated as he said, 'I couldn't be bothered' and discontinued.

The Sydney group of new students was given only one week's notice of the course—immediately after the school certificate examination. They felt it was a good time to start, believing that returning to school for the end of year was of no benefit. While they did not know what to expect, they felt comfortable with the course.

The majority of the electrical/electronics students interviewed in Sydney and in Melbourne were at school immediately prior to taking up the pre-apprenticeship (58%). Two of these also stated they were working while at school. All of them were taking up their first career path choice. All had wanted an apprenticeship, a few took up the course because of lack of other jobs (4) or because their family had recommended it to them (6). They either heard of the course through word of

mouth (family, friends, or peers) or through the newspaper or internet. None, despite moving straight from school to a pre-apprenticeship, had been advised of the course by school careers advisers. This 'school leaver' group included three 15–17-year-olds, five 18–19-year-olds and three 20–24-year-olds. All were male and seven had completed Year 12 schooling.

Again the electrical/electronics students who were not school leavers heard of the course through word of mouth or newspapers. Half of the eight students were unemployed and half were working. All except one had wanted an apprenticeship; however, only half wanted this path via a pre-apprenticeship course. One was female. The non-school-leavers were an older age cohort with only one in the 15–17-year-age bracket; there were three 18–19-year-olds and four 20–24-year-olds. Five had completed Year 12.

The Electrical/electronics students interviewed were generally happy with the courses they were undertaking. Negative aspects included location of the course and associated travel considerations, long hours, theory sessions and lack of financial assistance while undertaking the course. However, all except two students expected to be placed after the course, and felt comfortable with the courses and what they were achieving.

The Sydney pre-apprenticeship group expected to take up offers of work at the completion of their courses. Some of them were not well informed about the employment and hiring system of the group training company with which they were studying. They felt that the pre-apprenticeship was a good means of testing out the job before making a full commitment to a specific employer.

Students felt that the courses offered a lot of support.

> One student who had been to TAFE felt it was a lot better than his TAFE experience, where most teachers were 'angry and dismissive of problems'.

They all agreed that they were 'treated as adults'. All thought computer simulation teaching was really good and transferable to real-life situations. They liked the practical sessions, getting up on scaffolding, working in roof cavities etc.

> 'We've done two days practical, it's pretty good, a really good way to see if you're suitable.'

However, they were cautious of group training companies being both the provider and employer.

> 'We have got to be on best behaviour all the time—they are studying us.'

Nevertheless, apprentices who had taken up employment with the group training companies had mainly undertaken the course to see if they liked electrical work. They all felt that a good course had been delivered which had been supportive of its apprentices. They had a mix of work experiences with the group training companies, being employed in commercial, industrial and domestic sectors. Most had had five or six host employers. They felt that the pre-apprenticeship had prepared them well for their apprenticeships, providing the basics in terms of terminology and knowledge.

Sydney students were sceptical about high school delivery of 'technics'. They reported problems with teachers, changing availability year to year, an electro-metal course offered was described as

'too basic'. They also said that the maths offered by the centre and school was 'totally different' in that school maths was not applicable to work situations. Apprentices however, felt that their school maths had been useful and none of them had experienced any problems with its application in the pre-apprenticeship course.

Students also commented about their financial problems while studying. This was most problematical for students living independently. Most were ineligible for Austudy and, working long hours at the training centres, had no time to apply for Austudy assistance or to work part time while doing their pre-apprenticeships. One problem related to travel costs—the lack of any assistance such as travel allowance or concession card.

> 'I think that there should be some pay—such as costs of transport, tickets, fuel—Austudy is not available for everyone.'

A profile of the average pre-apprentice in Sydney is as follows:

- ✧ He is male, completed Year 10, and is around 17 years. He came straight from school, liking the timing of the course as he felt returning to school after the school certificate was useless if not going on to Years 11 and 12.
- ✧ He wanted an apprenticeship and felt the course would lead him there, expecting a job placement on completion of the pre-apprenticeship. He liked the course, feeling that he was treated as an adult. He liked both the theory and practical sessions, the former because he knew the dangers inherent in using electricity, and the latter because it gave a good understanding of what is involved helping him make up his mind on this career choice.
- ✧ He thought that the teachers were good; however, that it was a hassle that they were always evaluating him in terms of testing his suitability for a job.
- ✧ He found the location difficult, and the travelling times long. This was exacerbated by the long hours of the course. He accepted this as good training for work. Some assistance in fare concessions would help his finances.

In Melbourne a similar profile for a pre-apprentice was drawn:

- ✧ Again he is male, and is aged 17; however, he has completed Year 12.
- ✧ He has chosen the course because he wanted an apprenticeship after leaving school and was pointed in this direction by his family. It was his first choice of course, and he had made the move directly from school to the pre-apprenticeship in the new calendar year.
- ✧ He expected he would get a job at the completion of the course. He liked the course, and teachers. He enjoyed the practical work, as it was a really good way to determine suitability for the job. He had some reservations about the long hours.

In contrast, the profile of the Sydney apprentices is as follows:

- ✧ He is male, is over 20 years old and has completed Year 12.
- ✧ He was in the workforce before commencing the pre-apprenticeship. He heard about the course through word of mouth. He enjoyed the course.
- ✧ He would have appreciated financial assistance, especially concession fares or allowances, as he was not working during the duration of the course.

Automotive students

Fifteen Western Australian TAFE automotive (mechanical) pre-apprenticeship students were interviewed. Twelve pre-apprentices were school-leavers when they started the course, one had

spent five years working and two had commenced other TAFE courses. Most of them had chosen the course as a first choice, with only two preferring a job or a different apprenticeship. All had wanted to do the course because they had wanted an apprenticeship.

Ten of the students were between 15 and 17 years of age, three were 18 or 19 years old and one was in the 20–24-age group. Only one was female. Four had not completed Year 12 schooling.

The school-to-TAFE link for this program was strong, with nine of the group having undertaken some type of mechanics training at school. Ten of the students heard about the course through either school (mechanics teachers), careers nights, or through the TAFE handbook. Others had heard through either family friends or employers, or through television or newspapers. Four had been advised by career advisers to consider the course.

The desire to be a mechanic was the driving motivation for participation in the course.

> 'I always wanted to be a mechanic because I like cars.'

In general students were pleased with the course, with some minor dissatisfaction noted on the location of the course, and the theory sessions.

> 'It is pretty good, at the moment I am enjoying it.'
> 'It's good, I like what I am doing.'
> 'It's OK now, but it's just the start so can't tell.'

Students were happy about their job prospects, with all answering the question saying that they expected a placement on the completion of their course. Underpinning this confidence was an understanding that 80% or more of recent pre-apprentices successfully made this transition. They felt that the course gave them the edge over school leavers and other job seekers in the eyes of employers.

> 'Successful completion of the course sends a signal to the employer that: "we are work-oriented, motivated and self-confident".'
> 'I've already been offered an apprenticeship by work, but must do my pre-app first.'

Pre-apprentices were pleased with the course's three-day a week profile. It meant that they could work part time and earn an income to support themselves. Some had to travel large distances across Perth as only one college offers the course. Travel time and costs were an issue.

The group generally found the theory boring and preferred the practical work. Some, but not all, found theory difficult. They felt the subject matter was more interesting and relevant to their goals than the maths and science they had learnt at school and they felt more motivated.

A profile of the average pre-apprentice in this group is as follows:

- ✧ The pre-apprentice is male who has completed Year 12 and is 17 years old, turning 18 this year.
- ✧ He came straight from school.
- ✧ He loves cars and has a long-held ambition to be a mechanic.

- ✧ He took subjects in mechanics at school.
- ✧ The pre-apprenticeship course was his first preference for he believed it would give him a foot in the door to a mechanics apprenticeship.
- ✧ He thinks being at TAFE is much better than school but he finds the theory boring and can't wait to start working on the Holden.

> '… we want to work more on the Holden.'

Baking students

A group of 13 TAFE baking students was interviewed in Perth. The majority had moved directly from school to TAFE. One of the students had also been working. Four had been in the workforce prior to their pre-apprenticeship, one of whom was unemployed. All except two had got into their first TAFE course choice. However, only half the group had taken the course because they had wanted to do an apprenticeship.

Half of the group was 15 to 17 years old and the other half was 18 or 19 years of age, one was in the 20 to 24 age group. Nearly two-thirds of the group were female. Only one had not completed Year 12.

Reasons given for doing the course were diverse, including wanting an apprenticeship (6); recommended by career advisers (4) or family (3). One saw no other available jobs. Only two were certain they wanted it to lead to a trade qualification and a job in the industry, both had work experience either through school or part-time work. A popular reason for choosing this course was that it gave them a taste of the trade—they could explore without having committed themselves.

> 'I don't want to jump in the deep-end, head first, and realise it's not for me.'

Seven expected they would get an apprenticeship upon course completion. The others were either certain they did not want trade training, or had not yet made up their minds regarding a career in baking.

Again the school-to-TAFE links were strong, with 11 of the group learning about the course either from school or the TAFE handbook.

The group generally liked the course, the practical sessions, teachers and assistance in getting work; some did not like the hours or the theory sessions.

> 'Been great, just keep practising and learning.'

Two-thirds of the group disliked the theory, but everyone thought the practical fun. They thought the hours too long; they felt they lost concentration. Many however, thought it was good preparation for working life.

> 'We get to use our hands and we get to eat the food.'

The group felt that the course would improve their employment prospects, as having undertaken a pre-apprenticeship made them more attractive to employers. It shows employers that the applicant is genuinely interested in that type of work.

> 'It means you like it and won't pull out and waste everyone's time.'

It is difficult to construct a profile of the average pre-apprentice in baking given the diversity of motivations for choosing the course. In general however, the baking pre-apprentice:

- ✧ is either male or female
- ✧ has completed Year 12
- ✧ has come straight from school
- ✧ is 17 years of age turning 18 this year
- ✧ thinks TAFE is much better than school
- ✧ loves the practical but sometimes thinks the theory boring
- ✧ believes they will secure an apprenticeship if she/he wants one, but are leaving their options open with regard to future training and career choices.

Issues facing students

A sample of 47 students was interviewed to obtain information on their motivations for choosing a pre-apprenticeship and on the issues facing them in their pathways to trade employment. To provide a national focus and to gain different state perspectives, these students were selected from three states, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. These states provided over half (54%) of pre-apprenticeship training in 1998, representing 43% of courses and provided almost half (48%) of pre-apprenticeship training in 1999. While some differences emerged, they appeared to be based more on the area of study and to some degree, the type of provider (TAFE and group training companies) rather than relating to state of origin.

The decline of public sector training by utilities such as Telstra and the limited access of students to financial assistance such as Austudy, were policy issues at the national level. Similar issues exist at the state and territory level, the decline of apprenticeship training through state utilities, such as electricity suppliers affected by privatisation, amalgamation and competition policies offering one such example. These factors have reduced the number of apprenticeship opportunities. Utilities have traditionally provided training not only for their own use but have acted as a feeder for smaller employers and have provided training for tradespeople who have subsequently become self-employed contractors. Availability of fare assistance for pre-apprentices, is another example. Other issues affecting students, identified as specific to state-level provision, included different state approaches to VET provision in schools and pathways from school to further education, training and work.

The sample covered students in electrical/electronics, automotive and baking disciplines. These courses made up over half (56%) of industry sectors with pre-apprenticeships. In 1999 25% of courses offered were in construction, 9% in utilities, 16% in automotive and 6% in sales and personal services. Pre-apprenticeships seemed to suit the needs of the electrical/electronics fields particularly well, providing students with basic hand tool skills and more importantly, an awareness of health and safety issues. The pre-apprenticeship was successful in terms of these graduates being taken on as apprentices by group training companies and obtaining work placements with host employers. Success rates in the order of 95% are reported. However, in reality, it is the group training company which employs its own 'graduates'. Similarly TAFE also claimed a high level of placement of about 90% in the electrical field, with employers liking entry to electrical apprenticeships at a certificate III level because of safety issues.

The provider context

The sample also covered students studying with both public and private providers through TAFE and group training companies (a 60:40 split). Group training companies have taken up much of the slack in training supply caused by the decline in government enterprise and utilities' training provision. The approach to selection of students, level of pastoral care, and assistance in placement into apprenticeships (or employment and placement with host employers) were the main differences apparent between the public and private sectors. Group training companies, for example, carry out strict screening processes which affect employment outcomes. With a prime focus on job placement, they trade on the excellence of their graduates in terms of skills, attitudes

and overall job readiness. They said that the student's attitude is of prime importance. They are very strict on attendance and behaviour of the students and provide substantial support to nurture these aspects of a student's development. TAFE colleges on the other hand, are not structured to deliver the same level of pastoral care and placement activities. According to one TAFE contact, placement in TAFE was facilitated by making lists of students and lists of prospective employers to students available to employers. TAFE did not do matching as such. However, student outcomes and appraisal of courses offered in the public or private sectors were not very different in either of the technical/mechanical trade areas studied (that is, electrical/electronics, and automotive).

Areas of concern for pre-apprentices

It was found that the typical pre-apprentice was a male school leaver (mainly with Year 12 schooling). Older students, often identified as having the highest potential, faced specific issues associated with adult levels of pay and eligibility for government subsidies.

Female students in the traditional technical/mechanical trade areas (that is, electrical/electronics, and automotive) were rare and isolated in their courses. This project supported previous research by the authors that has indicated that they are older and more focussed on their choice of career. As Dumbrell et al. (2000) note: 'Women who had successfully entered male dominated occupations seemed to have done so if they had previous experience in the labour force' (p.2).

> Anna is a 26-year-old second year automotive apprentice. She worked for a GTC and has a job with a motor dealer. She is undertaking Stage 2 of the Light Vehicle Automotive Trade Course.
>
> She left school without her school certificate, and has worked previously in different jobs. Coming from a rural background, she has always played with and worked among the guys. She described herself as a tomboy, always enjoying cars.
>
> 'I was always a tomboy when I was little. My oldest brother started his apprenticeship when he was 16, so I was 8, and him and all his mates hanging around in their rev head cars and you see the cars and "Ooh I like that".' (Dumbrell et al. 2000, p.8)

The female electrical pre-apprenticeship student interviewed in this project, for example, was older than most of her peers in her class, had previous work experience and was set amongst a group of (male) school leavers. She needed the maturity to mix with a group of young Year 10 school leavers in her class.

All except two females interviewed in focus groups for this study (one each in electrical/electronics and automotive) were undertaking pre-apprenticeships in baking.

Four students interviewed (10%) had completed their pre-apprenticeship program and were in subsequent apprenticeships. These apprentices were older and had been in the workplace rather than being school leavers when they began their pre-apprenticeship. They had faced tight finances in not being eligible for financial assistance from Austudy while undertaking their full-time, up-front pre-apprenticeship training. Representatives of group training companies commented that, while young people with previous work experience and associated maturity were excellent students, often 'blitzing the class with their results', they were not eligible for the same subsidy as school leavers or students needing special assistance. Relatively few were taken on therefore, as classes were not viable without the additional support provided by government at the individual student level.

'Once students were 21 years it is hard to get them employment, however their adult attitude makes them the best pre-apprentices. They blitz the course and make the best trades people. While [the GTC] therefore takes on many, this is limited by subsidies and the additional work to get them employed. The objective of the pre-apprenticeship with [GTC] is to move young people into employment.'

Similar problems existed for retrenched workers being considered for pre-apprenticeships, despite obvious advantages in the transferability of many skills, as group training companies are precluded from subsidies when anyone with a qualification above a certificate II is taken on. This limits the organisation's ability to get good applicants with other trade backgrounds. An example offered was that of the suitability of former Ansett avionics engineers for electrical/electronic pre-apprenticeships—with their previous experience they would make good electricians and are suited for fast-tracking into the industry.

Even school leavers were affected by this funding issue, as funding was not available to students who had already undertaken school VET programs delivering certificate II qualifications.

'Careers advisers need to give this sort of advice so that school students can make informed decisions. They may want to choose not to do school VET programs if they know it will be more difficult for them to do pre-apprenticeships etc. after leaving school.'

Older students with histories on non-completion of previous training courses had a very real sense of achievement in the completion of short courses offered as pre-apprenticeships, both within the TAFE and private sectors. Some had unsuccessfully tackled longer courses in the past and had a sense of failure. The majority of students undertaking pre-apprenticeship courses however, were in the younger age brackets and were school leavers.

Skills of pre-apprentices

On the other hand, younger school leavers possess few mechanical skills or awareness. Trainers identified this as a very real problem.

'Very few of them come from homes where Dad services the car. Most would buy a new lawn mower rather than fix it; kids therefore have no idea of hand tools or any mechanical experience.'

'Kids who aspire to do apprenticeships need to address the gaps in knowledge attained through their schooling.'

Pre-apprenticeships were seen as a good way to address these limitations, and provide these skills to students in a practical way.

At a more technical level, Australia is very committed to international standards and performance tests in the electrical industry where safety is the key issue. In this area the application of theory is essential. The problem is that this competency can't be acquired quickly in a pre-apprenticeship; it is something that is acquired over time. Individuals can come out of pre-apprenticeships with the

knowledge to support the acquisition of this competency, and skills to apply the knowledge to the work situation to gain the competency. In this industry school leavers don't have this knowledge or the skills to underpin its requirements—both of which can be gained through pre-apprenticeships.

By contrast these young people have considerable technical skills and competencies associated with computer technology, and thrive on the training provision based on computer-simulated workplaces. Their own confidence in their computer expertise can be built upon with real-life application with the tools of the trade and simulated work experience. Electrical pre-apprentices believed computer simulation teaching was 'really good' and readily transferable to real-life situations.

Pre-apprenticeships were seen by students as giving a good leg up in the job, enabling then to start with advanced standing, higher pay and with some confidence. The latter, based on experience with the tools, knowledge of health and safety issues, and customer service is seen as important in matching young people/students with prospective employers.

Pre-apprenticeships and career options

It was interesting to note that group training companies see their role as labour market intermediaries; that is, work placement agencies. The training and the pre-apprenticeship programs they provide are seen as the ways to this end. From the students' perspective, the opportunity to 'try out' the job, so to speak, was repeatedly stated as a reason for choosing this path. This was especially so with the group of students in the baking course. These students seemed to have less focus, and less certainty about their study choice (as distinct from their career choice, which for most had not been made). They enjoyed the opportunity to try out this field of work—if they liked it they could choose a related career. Only two baking students interviewed were certain they wanted the pre-apprenticeship course to lead to an apprenticeship, a trade qualification and a job in the industry. All other baking students had chosen the course to give them a taste of the trade, which they could explore without committing themselves to an apprenticeship or job. Students in electrical/electronics, while more focussed on careers in their chosen field, also enjoyed this opportunity to 'try it out'. Automotive students were the most committed to their career choice: the desire to be a mechanic was the driving motivation for participation in the course, and they saw a pre-apprenticeship as giving them an edge over school leavers and other job seekers in getting sought-after apprenticeships in the trade.

A criticism being levelled at the group training companies is that students are being exploited in terms of hire-out charges and apprenticeship wages. However, none of the students interviewed raised this issue. The methodology used did not allow the researchers to make a judgement on this issue. To do so would require polling a large, representative sample of employers.

The prospect of being placed into an apprenticeship at the completion of their pre-apprenticeship was one that was liked by all students interviewed. Nearly all had expectations of being placed after the course, especially those in electrical/electronics and automotive. Student expectations were supported by high placement rates quoted as 95%+, for the group training companies (who employ their own students) and 80–90% for TAFE students. On the other hand, the introduction of pre-apprenticeships has, according to some contacts, led to greater difficulty for school leavers in getting full apprenticeships directly.

> 'School leavers can't get straight into apprenticeships.'

In Sydney in the hospitality trades pre-apprenticeships are often a student's second choice after seeking a full apprenticeship. However, on the North Coast of New South Wales (an area of

generally more limited employment opportunities) for example, it appears to be the logical first choice for students. Doing a pre-apprenticeship improved the individual's chances of getting an apprenticeship. Very few employers wanted first year placements, all opting for students with second year or preferably third year status. Half of the baking students in the focus groups expected they would get an apprenticeship upon course completion. This was low by comparison with the other trades studied in that many were uncertain of whether a career in baking was right for them.

Vocational training in schools

Students were sceptical about VET delivered in the school system, describing it as 'too basic', teachers not being good enough and the variable availability of courses from year to year making course planning difficult. Training providers were also negative about schools' ability to deliver realistic vocational training. In the commercial cookery area for example, effective training cannot be delivered within the confines of school time-tabling (that is, 40- or 80-minute sessions) and domestic-style kitchens. State programs enabling day-long delivery at TAFE in commercial kitchens go some way to overcome this.

> 'Schools are just not equipped to deliver commercial training, for example most did not have commercial kitchens or long enough teaching blocks.'

A new Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning was trialled in 2002 to address the need for new pathways for young people through education and training and to tackle school dropout rates. It will include a combination of accredited courses as well as studies in work-related competencies and an industry-based component, such as automotive, information technology, electronics or multimedia, and a personal development program. The new program for students who don't find the Victorian Certificate of Education relevant to their futures and who are at risk of dropping out of education is in response to the Kirby Review (Kirby 2000). It recommended more flexible arrangements for students in danger of dropping out of school, including combinations of part-time work and part-time school and an expansion of vocational education and training.

The review saw a big difference in that school maths did not relate to work situations. Students interviewed also compared maths delivered as part of their pre-apprenticeships to that offered at school, where school maths appeared not to relate to work situations. Two of the states included in this study are taking action in relation to this type of criticism, although the approaches are quite different. New South Wales recently introduced a more stringent maths curriculum in its new Higher School Certificate, while, as noted above, Victoria is trialling a new Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning which includes compulsory literacy and numeracy studies.

The issue of relevant careers advice at school was apparent from the pre-apprenticeship students in focus groups used in this study. School leavers were dismissive about any advice provided by their school careers advisers. It was perceived as having too much of an academic focus. School careers advisers in New South Wales or Victorian schools did not advise anyone from our focus groups about the group training company programs they entered. Several students commented that their school careers advice was focussed on university to the detriment of vocational education and training. There appeared to be stronger links in Western Australia between schools and the TAFE system; however, this could be explained by ready access to TAFE handbooks. This was not explored further by this study, but previous work by the authors found TAFE handbooks readily available and a major source of information and seen as reliable.

> ‘Every year we get the TAFE handbook in the family.’ (Dumbrell et al. 2000, p.13)

Young people in regional Australia faced a lack of choice in the range of pre-apprenticeships being offered in their cities and towns. Courses being funded on a minimum-class-size basis restricts the range of courses that can be offered, and availability is limited for pre-apprenticeships in the group training companies.

State variations also exist, in areas such as quality control. In Victoria, for example, pre-apprentices need to have a sponsor. This ties in the interest of an ongoing employer, and students benefitted from the link. The direct link with employers has made both the TAFE and group training company product a better quality. The link to the workplace is a critical issue.

Issues raised by training providers and training experts

As noted earlier in this paper, the researchers were surprised by the paucity of prior research into pre-apprenticeships. Major published studies on the broader subject of apprenticeship contain very few references to pre-apprenticeships and obtaining firm evidence on the origins and history of pre-apprenticeship in Australia proved elusive. It is likely therefore, that much of the valuable background material on pre-apprenticeships resides in the archives of federal and state/territory government departments.

In order to gain a better understanding of these issues in the absence of published research, the researchers conducted either face-to-face, group or telephone interviews with about 30 training providers and training experts. The experts were predominantly drawn from TAFE, group training companies involved in delivering pre-apprenticeship programs, representatives of state and national industry training advisory bodies and current or former senior public servants who had been involved in apprenticeship policy development or administration. The main issues that emerged from these discussions are presented in this section of the report.

Scope of pre-apprenticeships

Perhaps the most obvious conclusion to draw from these discussions is the piecemeal operation of pre-apprenticeships both in terms of industry of coverage and integration with other training programs. It would appear that pre-apprenticeships have been most commonly used in the engineering and construction industries and in a few other areas such as hairdressing and hospitality. Some contacts not associated with group training companies expressed reservations about the role of group training companies in relation to pre-apprenticeships. Some felt that there was the risk that group training companies could charge excessive hire-out rates to host employers. There were also some concerns expressed that group training companies could suffer conflicts of interest in providing formal training and earning income from the hiring-out of apprentices.

Most interviewees took the view that pre-apprenticeships were desirable, but saw their scope limited to the traditional trades areas. Many contacts felt that other forms of pre-vocational training were more appropriate for non-trade areas with shorter periods of training.

A recurring theme emerging from these discussions was the dilemma of whether it is desirable to provide the very specific training for individual trades in a pre-apprenticeship course which may then limit the options of the students to that trade, or whether a broader, industry-based approach should be used. Several of the more experienced contacts, who had had first-hand experience of pre-apprenticeships since the 1970s, indicated that they believed that the only correct application of the term ‘pre-apprenticeship’ was in relation to a course which led directly into a specific trade course and granted some exemptions from the course. Hence, current courses that did not meet this criterion were not in their view properly termed pre-apprenticeships. On the other hand, many of the interviewees used the terms ‘pre-apprenticeship’ and ‘pre-vocational’ interchangeably to refer to any VET preparatory courses.

Interviewees expressed a range of views on the desirability of narrowly or broadly focussed courses. One argument advanced by a number of interviewees was that pre-apprenticeship courses should

become broader in their intended occupational outcomes because many jobs were undergoing a similar broadening in skills. One example used was in the electrical trades, one of the areas where, in the view of the researchers, pre-apprenticeships appeared to be functioning well. Several contacts suggested that the application of electrical skills was broadening as new technologies opened new markets for these skills, including 'smart houses', industrial electronics and home entertainment. The argument proposed that some of the occupations emerging to meet these technology needs were not traditional electrical tradespersons and hence a pre-apprenticeship focussed purely on this outcome was unnecessarily limiting the options of students. A variation on this argument, one supporting an even broader scope for 'pre-apprenticeships', was that pre-apprenticeships should provide training for entry to a range of trades.

Vocational training in schools

Contacts were critical of the role of schools in relation to vocational education in general, with two themes central to this criticism of schools. The first related to careers advisers who were seen to favour university courses when providing advice and who appeared either to be ignorant or dismissive of VET options. Many contacts believed that the backgrounds of careers advisers themselves, typically going from school to university and back into schools worked against the provision of adequate information on VET courses. This criticism was supported by the students interviewed in New South Wales and Victoria (but not in Western Australia), few of whom had received information on their pre-apprenticeship course from school-based advisers. This issue is noted in the chapter in relation to the discussions with students. A related criticism made by several interviewees identified a more widespread shortcoming in the provision of careers advice, with one contact believing that the Australian National Training Authority's online provision could be improved.

The other area of criticism of schools was in relation to vocational education courses delivered in schools. The major point of these criticisms was that there was an insufficient linkage between the content of the courses and the needs of industry. Other contacts stated that VET-in-schools in general lacked credibility with industry and failed to increase interest in post-school VET courses. A number of contacts believed that the provision of certificate II and even III in schools devalued VET qualifications because these courses lacked on-the-job experience. Even though such courses might be addressing specific competencies derived from industry-identified needs, many contacts believed that these skills needed to be acquired in an industry-based environment to be meaningful to employers.

One example cited was the lack of parity between the Certificate II in Retailing available as a schools-based VET course and the Retailing Traineeship that also resulted in a certificate II but included substantial on-the-job training. The industry representative from the retailing sector believed that there was little value to retailing employers in training that lacked on-the-job exposure.

Several contacts, especially in Victoria, suggested that the demise of technical high schools had weakened the position of post-school VET through the imposition of an academic model on young people unable to cope with this type of learning. The current trial of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning in a number of Victorian schools, as an alternative pathway to the Victorian Certificate of Education, was regarded with considerably positive expectations.

One contact in the electrical industry believed that schools could effectively deliver a certificate I level course in electrical studies which could take the place of pre-apprenticeships. He said that, in his view, physics teachers could deliver the certificate I, providing good numeracy and literacy skills, instruction on how to use tools, knowledge of electricity etc. He believed that 'this is what employers want'. Taking a more critical view of pre-apprenticeships than most contacts, he felt that the introduction of pre-apprenticeships had led to greater difficulty for school leavers getting full apprenticeships directly—'school leavers can't get straight into apprenticeships'.

Skills of pre-apprentices

One point raised independently by a number of training providers and referred to in the previous chapter was concern over the demise of hand skills among young people. In essence their concern was that many of the young people applying for trade and pre-apprenticeship courses had had no exposure either at school or at home to hand tools, to 'tinkering' with engines or to other 'home handyman' skills. Many young people beginning pre-apprenticeship courses did not know the names or purpose of common hand tools. (On the other hand, many young people demonstrated advanced information technology/computing skills.)

They believed that this represented a significant social change, resulting from several factors. These included:

- ✧ increasing numbers of young people living in medium and high density housing where there was no backyard shed
- ✧ changed lifestyles where replacement of non-functioning goods was the norm rather than repair
- ✧ absence of fathers through either family breakdown or long working hours.

These concerns have recently been reported in other research. For example, the Victorian Office of Employment, Training and Tertiary Education in its report *Improved apprentice and trainee selection for small business*, noted:

> Anecdotal evidence suggests that small business employers, especially those who have not had any contact with schools or technical institutes since they did their own education and/or training, perceive current applicants to be poorly skilled. They believe that standards have dropped and that entry-level employees are not as prepared for work as they were. The Asquith Group research supports this with the following quotes from employers:
>
> 'We've got to teach the kids the fundamentals … here is a 'shifter', this is a screwdriver, it's unbelievable.'
>
> 'One of the biggest tests I ever found was to give them a hacksaw and a hacksaw blade—put a blade in a hacksaw—I've even had them putting the cutting edge facing upwards.'
>
> Those employers in the focus groups who were aware of pre-apprenticeship and VET-in-schools programs felt that they were a step in the right direction with regard to providing informed, skilled workers. (OETTE 2001, p.45)

A number of the group training companies providing pre-apprenticeship courses also noted a common problem with the standard of mathematics reached by some applicants for pre-apprenticeship places. Poor levels in school mathematics required some students undertaking electrical pre-apprenticeship courses to undertake further basic mathematics before they could successfully attempt the trade calculations required in the pre-apprenticeship course.

Pre-apprenticeships and hospitality

The introduction of traineeships appears to have had an impact on the operation of pre-apprenticeships in at least one area—the training of chefs. A trend has developed for employers to favour the employment of later year apprentices as apprentice chefs rather than school leavers. Industry contacts noted a change occurring from students doing a six-month, full-time pre-apprenticeship course to doing a certificate II course ranging between 16 weeks and six months. A number of certificate II and certificate III courses in cooking are now, according to contacts, delivered as 'pre-apprenticeship' programs. Those with the certificate II go into year 2 of the apprenticeship, while the position of those with a certificate III is less clear. In the opinion of the interviewee, this is a very cheap way for an employer to secure a well-trained apprentice.

Most students who were undertaking pre-apprenticeships in commercial cookery through the New South Wales group training company visited by the researchers were Year 12 leavers. This group training company noted that, in Sydney, a pre-apprenticeship is often a student's second choice after seeking a full apprenticeship. As noted earlier, on the North Coast of New South Wales however, doing a pre-apprenticeship improved the individual's chances of getting an apprenticeship. Very few employers wanted first year placements, all opting for students with second year or preferably third year status.

As with contacts in other industry sectors, the contacts in the hospitality sector were very critical of school-delivered hospitality courses, believing that school-based qualifications were being 'diluted' to increase pass rates. Schools, they stated: 'were just not equipped to deliver commercial training, for example, most did not have commercial kitchens or long enough "teaching blocks"'. Their criticisms mainly centred on the failure of school courses to deliver interpersonal and other underpinning skills, as well as technical skills. They said that 90% of those doing school-based hospitality courses need to redo their course to satisfy industry standards. They felt that home economics teachers who had been retrained to enable them to deliver hospitality courses had generally received inadequate training. One referred to vocational education in schools as 'entertainment'.

The group training company interviewed in relation to hospitality has experienced difficulties in recruiting suitable students, especially in Sydney where 90% of their current 150 vacancies exist. They were also recently unable to recruit sufficient students for a pre-apprenticeship course in Newcastle, receiving only two replies to their newspaper advertisement. Recruitment is aimed exclusively at under-21-year-olds because of wage costs for adults. TAFE contacts also reported that insufficient interest had resulted in a number of intended pre-apprenticeship courses being abandoned before starting.

The group training company in the hospitality area was also critical of the absence of an integration between pre-apprenticeship and new apprenticeship in terms of wages and other benefits. They saw the lack of pay for pre-apprentices as a major cause of the lack of completion, especially for the long certificate II and III courses. (Students interviewed in focus groups also believed that some support is required.) For example, the cost of fares is a real issue for some students. They see this as tied up with the wider issue of fully on-the-job training versus institutional training. They are concerned that many untrained people are now involved in training delivery and see a long-term reduction in training standards, especially in regard to hygiene and occupational health and safety. In their view there are significant shortcomings in regulatory systems in these areas.

The issue of declining standards in occupational health and safety training resulting from a greater reliance on insufficiently trained workplace trainers was not restricted to the hospitality sector. The issue was also raised by contacts in the electrical and electronics industry, where one contact stated that occupational health and safety statistical data revealed increasing rates of injury and death resulting from the decline in the number of licensed electrical tradespersons and a consequent decline in regulatory controls.

While these issues might appear to be rather remote from pre-apprenticeships, the reason for their being raised by a number of contacts was that they believed that there was a general pattern of deterioration in the quality of apprenticeship training and regulation, especially in the development of totally on-the-job training. They felt that, with the increased level of intensity in the workplace, apprentices were becoming less likely to receive adequate on-the-job instruction in these important areas. Hence, they felt there was a greater need for formal, up-front trade training conducted in a properly regulated environment.

Findings and conclusions

Pre-apprenticeships in many respects appear to be the orphan of the VET system. They grew out of traditional trades apprenticeships and, with the introduction of traineeships and subsequently, new apprenticeships, their role has been diminished among the larger agenda. The term 'pre-apprenticeship' has also become confused with other forms of preparatory training and is often used interchangeably with the term 'pre-vocational'. At present pre-apprenticeships seem to function in two ways. One is as a cheap and apparently efficient means of apprentice pre-selection for those trades that attract a relatively large supply of would-be apprentices, especially the electrical and automotive trades. The other is as a quasi-labour market program, to provide short-term vocational training to young people who have not achieved an apprenticeship, as a means for improving their chances of gaining an apprenticeship.

The reduction of training by government and quasi-government utilities appears to have created a hole in trade training provision nationally. The private sector, with an eye on the bottom line profitability in an era of unprecedented levels of competition, appears not to have taken up training sufficiently to fill this gap. Training providers and systems such as group training have expanded and seem to have gone some way to meet this shortfall in trade training. Pre-apprenticeship delivery is an important pathway to bringing the school leaver to a level of competence acceptable to many employers who would then take them on for trade training.

Most of the young people interviewed undertaking pre-apprenticeship courses were positive in their attitude to their course, generally comparing it favourably with their school experience. One of the most favourable characteristics of pre-apprenticeships seemed to be the short-term nature of the course, and furthermore, that the student would attain some form of recognition on completion. In this it seemed that the students saw intrinsic value in the course itself, not just because it was a possible means of attaining an apprenticeship. The students undertaking baking pre-apprenticeships were less enthusiastic about entering the bakery trade than those doing automotive pre-apprenticeships; however, they saw the bakery course as providing the best way for them to decide whether to commit to a full apprenticeship.

Perhaps predictably, training providers were also positive in their views on pre-apprenticeships. While several noted the difficulties in filling positions in pre-apprenticeship courses, most felt that such courses provided a desirable route into trade courses, often providing remedial education in mathematics for some students. Several training providers were critical of high school VET delivery in general, and mathematics courses specifically, as a preparation for trade calculations in demanding trade courses such as electrical trades. Training providers were unanimous in their assessment that young people generally lack mechanical knowledge and exposure to common hand tools. Many contacts believed that pre-vocational programs and pre-apprenticeships assist in addressing these shortcomings.

A common theme that emerged in discussions between the researchers and industry contacts during this project was that VET-in-schools or school career advisers were not functioning to channel school leavers into VET in general, and particularly not into apprenticeships and traineeships. The focus groups conducted with young people undertaking pre-apprenticeship courses revealed a similar theme—young people were not gaining an understanding of post-school VET options while at school. The young people undertaking pre-apprenticeship courses had mostly learned about these

courses either through friends or newspaper or internet advertising. However the use of TAFE handbooks was widespread and effectively directed young people from school to VET. Many were undertaking the pre-apprenticeship as a next best option after having failed to gain an apprenticeship.

Another conclusion from the examination of the NCVER data and discussions was the variability of pre-apprenticeships across Australia. An examination of the table in appendix 2 reveals the variation over time and between jurisdictions in the level of provision and the type of training provided. This variability indicates the unplanned and haphazard nature of pre-apprenticeships and the lack of integration of this type of course within a larger system of transition from school to work.

Future directions

With these conclusions in mind the following recommendations are proposed:

- ✧ The nomenclature of pre-apprenticeship and pre-vocational courses needs to be defined and used more precisely. Pre-apprenticeships should be used in a limited, focussed fashion and be trade-specific. They should create credits for further trade training.
- ✧ Pre-vocational courses should be defined as more broadly based, industry-focussed courses and should not provide credits towards specific trade courses. Generally there is a concern among group training companies and industry training advisory bodies that a 'credentials creep' is occurring, driven by the VET-in-schools agenda, lowering the regard for VET credentials among industry.
- ✧ Pre-apprenticeships and pre-vocational training was perceived as a good way to address limitations in mechanical aptitude, and provide these skills to students in a practical way.
- ✧ There appears to be a role to use pre-apprenticeships as a quasi-labour market program. This would involve providing these courses in regions where employment opportunities for young people are below average. Such provision would however, also require the development and co-ordination of services to assist graduates from these courses to be placed in apprenticeships, either locally or in regions offering better employment prospects. Given the financial discrepancy that exists between VET students and the government support offered to undergraduates at university (despite the Higher Education Contribution Scheme) and the greater earnings capacity of university graduates, such support would represent a small but effective means for improving the equity of government support for university and non-university students.
- ✧ Funding (training wage or Austudy) should be available to all undertaking pre-apprenticeships in a skill shortage area, to address the shortfall in training previously provided by the government and quasi-government utilities, to meet the needs of industry and to provide assistance to students.
- ✧ Financial assistance such as Austudy for certificate II and III courses of longer duration and fare concessions for others should be provided. There should be support for the lifting of restrictions on Commonwealth funding for students with previous VET experience and credentials such as VET-in-School certificate II qualifications.
- ✧ Governments should evaluate the credentials delivered from VET-in-schools in the context of pre-apprenticeships and other VET courses involving industry-based training. There is a widespread feeling among VET providers and industry representatives that the level of credentials available via VET-in-schools programs is inflated and detracts from the credibility of VET in general. This is not to say that VET-in-schools is not welcomed by these bodies; rather, many industry and VET representatives stressed that, for a certificate II or above VET course, to have industry credibility, it must incorporate relevant and realistic industry exposure or simulation, such as courses provided in partnership with TAFE and other registered training organisations.

- ✧ The provision of careers advice in schools should be reviewed. For this purpose, ex-TAFE teachers and other VET teachers could be utilised as careers advisers in secondary schools to provide informed advice on non-university study options.

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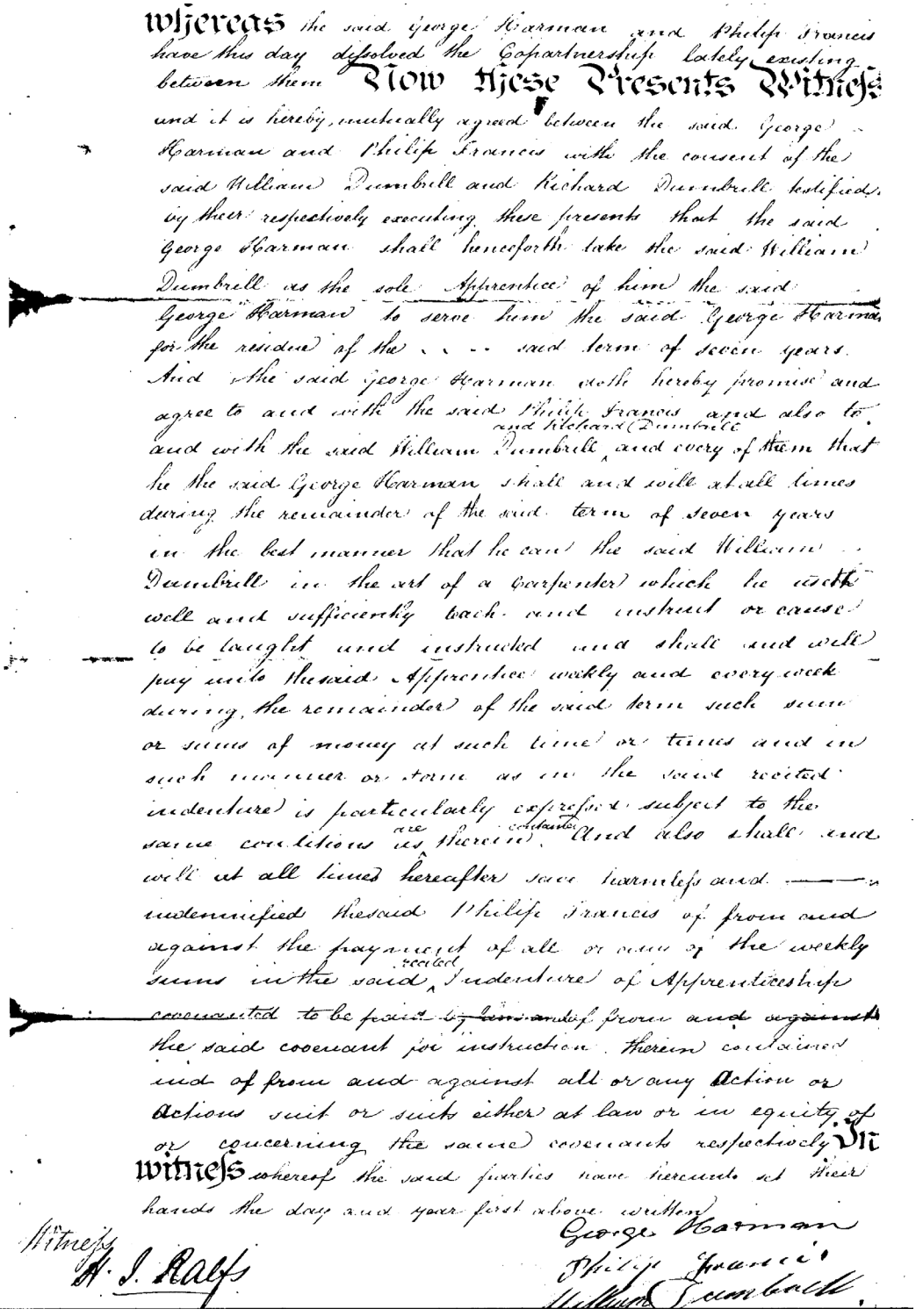
Appendix 1: Indenture of 1820s apprenticeship

The following image is an indenture of apprenticeship signed in England in the 1820s by William Dumbrell, the great great grandfather of one of the authors. It shows that the period of William's carpentry apprenticeship was for seven years.



Whereas the said George Harman and Philip Francis have this day dissolved the Copartnership lately existing between them Now these Presents Witness and it is hereby mutually agreed between the said George Harman and Philip Francis with the consent of the said William Dumbrell and Richard Dumbrell testified by their respectively executing these presents that the said George Harman shall henceforth take the said William Dumbrell as the sole Apprentice of him the said George Harman to serve him the said George Harman for the residue of the said term of seven years And the said George Harman doth hereby promise and agree to and with the said Philip Francis and Richard Dumbrell and also to and with the said William Dumbrell and every of them that he the said George Harman shall and will at all times during the remainder of the said term of seven years in the best manner that he can the said William Dumbrell in the art of a Carpenter which he useth well and sufficiently teach and instruct or cause to be taught and instructed and shall and will pay unto the said Apprentice weekly and every week during the remainder of the said term such sum or sums of money at such time or times and in such manner or form as in the said recited indenture is particularly expressed subject to the same conditions as therein contained And also shall and will at all times hereafter save harmless and indemnified the said Philip Francis of from and against the payment of all or any of the weekly sums in the said recited Indenture of Apprenticeship covenanted to be paid by him and of from and against the said covenant for instruction therein contained and of from and against all or any Action or Actions suit or suits either at law or in equity or concerning the same covenants respectively In witness whereof the said parties have hereunto set their hands the day and year first above written

Witness
W. J. Ralfs

George Harman
Philip Francis
William Dumbrell

Appendix 2: Pre-apprenticeship courses by enrolments by state/territory, 1994–1999

Pre-apprenticeship courses by state/territory 1994–1999

	Course	Enrolments
New South Wales		
1994	National Engineering Training Program	9203
1994	Carpentry and Joinery	349
1994	Marine Technician Alignment – Mechanical	243
1994	Commercial Cookery – Grade 1	207
1995	National Engineering Training Program	9289
1995	Fabrication	555
1995	Carpentry and Joinery Introduction Skills	380
1995	Commercial Cookery – Grade 1	352
1996	National Engineering Training Program	8693
1996	Cookery	837
1996	Hairdressing	617
1996	Carpentry and Joinery Introduction Skills	601
1997	National Engineering Training Program	8010
1997	Cookery	1013
1997	Hairdressing	738
1997	Carpentry and Joinery Introduction Skills	686
1998	National Engineering Training Program	4771
1998	Manufacturing and Engineering	3188
1998	Cookery	1195
1998	Hairdressing	1079
1999	Tourism	265
1999	Accommodation Services Supervision	259
1999	MYOB	34
1999	Metal Fabrication and Welding Pre-apprenticeship	2
Victoria		
1994	Pre-apprenticeship: Carpentry and Joinery (Housing/Industrial)	555
1994	Certificate in Building and Construction (Fitout and Finish) – Front-End Training	481
1994	Certificate in Automotive	417
1994	Certificate in Hairdressing (Stage 1)	277
1995	Certificate in Automotive	1110
1995	Certificate in Building and Construction (Fitout and Finish) – Front-End Training	842
1995	Pre-apprenticeship: Carpentry and Joinery (Housing/Industrial)	532
1995	Certificate in Hairdressing (Stage 1)	300
1996	Certificate II in Automotive (Technology Studies)	1688
1996	Certificate II in Building and Construction (Fitout and Finish)	1472
1996	Pre Apprenticeship Carpentry and Joinery (Housing and Industrial)	294
1996	Certificate I in Electrical (Pre-apprenticeship)	288

	Course	Enrolments
1997	Certificate II in Building and Construction (Fitout and Finish)	2235
1997	Certificate II in Automotive (Mechanical and Electrical; Body; Technology Studies)	2053
1997	Certificate I in Electrical (Pre-apprenticeship)	545
1997	Certificate I in Hairdressing	259
1998	Certificate II in Building and Construction (Fitout and Finish)	2459
1998	Certificate II in Automotive (Technology Studies)	2088
1998	Certificate I in Electrical (Pre-apprenticeship)	530
1998	Certificate II in General Construction	359
1999	Certificate II in Building and Construction (Fitout and Finish)	2862
1999	Certificate II in Automotive (Technology Studies)	1883
1999	Certificate I in Electrical (Pre-apprenticeship)	332
1999	Certificate I in Hairdressing	327
Queensland		
1994	Certificate in Engineering/Construction	8193
1994	Certificate in Introductory Trade Cooking	1119
1994	Certificate in Introductory Hairdressing	511
1994	Certificate of Vocational Studies	483
1995	Certificate in Engineering/Construction	5467
1995	Certificate in Construction (Fitout and Finish Stream	1766
1995	Certificate in Introductory Trade Cooking	1250
1995	Certificate I in Engineering (Pre-Employment)	892
1996	Certificate I in Engineering (Pre-Vocational)	3485
1996	Certificate in Engineering/Construction	2617
1996	Construction Fitout and Finish/Structure (Pre-Employment) Training Program	2277
1996	Certificate in Introductory Trade Cooking	1390
1997	Certificate I in Engineering (Pre-Vocational)	5222
1997	Training Program In Construction Fitout & Finish/Structure (Pre-Employment)	1791
1997	Certificate in Introductory Trade Cooking	1579
1997	Certificate I in Engineering (Pre-Employment)	696
1998	Certificate I in Engineering (Pre-Vocational)	4018
1998	Certificate I in Engineering (Manufacturing)	1971
1998	Training Program In General Construction (Pre-Employment)	1516
1998	Certificate II in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery)	1147
1999	Certificate I in Engineering (Pre-Vocational)	3797
1999	Certificate I in Engineering (Manufacturing)	2712
1999	Certificate II in Hospitality (Operations)	1941
1999	Training Program in General Construction (Pre-Employment)	1402
Western Australia		
1994	Certificate of Commercial Cookery	314
1994	Certificate Pre-apprentice Studies Metals and Engineering	233
1994	Certificate Pre-apprentice Studies Auto Electrical and Mechanical	86
1994	Certificate Pre-apprentice Studies Electrical Trades	84
1995	Certificate of Commercial Cookery	329
1995	Pre-apprentice Studies (Automotive Trades)	245
1995	Certificate II of Pre-apprentice Studies Building and Construction (Fitout and Finish Stream)	171
1995	Certificate of Pre-apprentice Studies Electrical Trades	136
1996	Certificate of Commercial Cookery	332
1996	Certificate of Pre-apprentice Studies (Automotive Trades)	188

	Course	Enrolments
1996	Certificate I of Pre-apprentice Studies Electrical Trades	160
1996	Certificate of Pre-apprentice Studies Carpentry and Joinery	149
1997	Certificate I of Pre-apprentice Studies Electrical Trades	269
1997	Certificate II of Building and Construction Pre-apprenticeship – Carpentry and Joinery	251
1997	Traineeship Engineering	179
1997	Certificate of Pre-apprentice Studies (Automotive Trades)	160
1998	Certificate II of Building and Construction Pre-apprenticeship – Carpentry and Joinery	278
1998	Certificate I of Pre-apprentice Studies Electrical Trades	250
1998	Traineeship Engineering	213
1998	Certificate of Pre-apprentice Studies (Automotive Trades)	201
1999	Certificate II in Children's Services (0–5 Years)	259
1999	Certificate I in Pre-apprentice Studies Electrical Trades	247
1999	Traineeship Engineering	188
1999	Certificate in Pre-apprentice Studies (Automotive Trades)	165
South Australia		
1994	Certificate in Vocational Education – Horticulture	220
1994	Certificate in Vocational Education – General Engineering (Transport Strand)	181
1994	Certificate in Vocational Education – Electrical/Electronic (Electrical Strand)	181
1994	Certificate in Vocational Education – Engineering Multi-Trades (Fabrication Strand)	170
1995	Certificate in Women's Education	1209
1995	Certificate in Vocational Education – Engineering Multi-Trades (Mechanical	512
1995	Certificate in Vocational Education – Horticulture	331
1995	Certificate in Vocational Education – Hair and Beauty Careers	325
1996	Certificate in Women's Education	1672
1996	Certificate in Vocational Education – Engineering Multi-Trades (Fabrication	214
1996	Certificate in Vocational Education – General Engineering (Transport)	207
1996	Certificate in Vocational Education – Hair and Beauty Careers	186
1997	Certificate in Women's Education	1648
1997	Certificate in Vocational Education – General Engineering (Transport)	196
1997	Certificate in Vocational Education – Hair and Beauty Careers	179
1997	Recognised Training Program (Pre-Vocational Building and Construction)	172
1998	Certificate II In Food Processing (Wine)	718
1998	Certificate in Women's Education	564
1998	Recognised Training Program (Pre-Vocational Building and Construction)	233
1998	Certificate II in Meat Processing (Slaughter and Boning Operations Room, Ops and Gen.)	225
1999	Certificate in Vocational Education – Hair and Beauty Careers	164
1999	Recognised Training Program (Pre-Vocational Building and Construction)	153
1999	Certificate in Vocational Education – Furnishing	127
1999	Certificate in Vocational Education – Sheetmetal Working/Plumbing	77
Tasmania		
1994	Pre-Employment (Cookery)	80
1994	Certificate in Vocational Studies (Pre-Employment) Auto Electrical/Mechanics	69
1994	Certificate in Vocational Studies (Pre-Employment) Bar Cellar and Tab (Dhc)	61
1994	Engineering Production (Aluminium Fabrication)	60
1995	Certificate in Vocational Studies (Pre-Employment) Auto Electrical/Mechanics	92
1995	Cookery (Pre-Employment)	88
1995	Occupational Skills – Building/Construction (F/F Stream)	56
1995	Certificate in Vocational Studies (Pre-Employment) Fitting and Machining	55
1996	Cookery (Commercial) – Certificate II	281

	Course	Enrolments
1996	Cookery (Commercial) – Certificate I	249
1996	Building and Construction (Structures) – Certificate II	132
1996	Certificate in Vocational Studies (Pre-Employment) Auto Electrical/Mechanics	75
1997	Cookery (Commercial) – Certificate II	327
1997	Cookery (Commercial) – Certificate I	90
1997	Certificate in Vocational Studies (Pre-Employment) Auto Electrical/Mechanics	73
1997	Engineering Trades (Preparatory)	68
1998	Hospitality (Beverage Service and Gaming) – Certificate II	461
1998	Hospitality (Food and Beverage Service) – Certificate II	448
1998	Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) – Certificate II	319
1998	Kitchen Attending – Certificate I	60
1999	Personal Services (Stage and Special Effects Make-Up)	26
1999	Engineering (Trades Preparatory) – Certificate II	4
Northern Territory		
1994	Pre-Vocational Institute	47
1994	Entry Level Training (Metals)	29
1994	Certificate in Gasfitting	12
1994	Automotive Pre-Vocational Training Program	12
1995	Certificate in Entry Level Welding	62
1995	Certificate in Pre-Vocational Studies	12
1996	Certificate in Applied Design and Technology	765
1996	Certificate in Entry Level Welding	100
1996	Certificate in Construction Skills (Fitout and Finish)	63
1996	Certificate in Construction (Fitout and Finish)	55
1997	Certificate in Construction (Fitout and Finish)	108
1997	Certificate I in Cookery (Commercial)	77
1997	Certificate II in Remote Community Essential Service Operations (Water/Waste)	50
1997	Certificate II in Remote Community Essential Service Operations (Power)	48
1998	Training for Trade Entry	181
1998	Certificate in Construction (Fitout and Finish)	85
1998	Certificate in Entry Level Welding	63
1998	Certificate I in Cookery (Commercial)	60
1999	Training for Trade Entry	225
1999	Certificate II in General Construction	92
1999	Certificate in Entry Level Welding	72
1999	Certificate in Construction (Fitout and Finish)	61
Australian Capital Territory		
1994	Gardening Assistant – ACT Traineeship	17
1994	Preparatory Training in Motor Mechanics	16
1994	Occupational Studies (Automotive Painting)	9
1994	Occupational Studies (Panel Beating)	6
1995	Occupational Studies (Commercial Cookery)	59
1995	Design Studies	33
1995	Preparatory Training in Motor Mechanics	22
1995	Clerical And Office Administration	15
1996	Design Studies	117
1996	Course in Automotive Light Vehicles Mechanics (Pre-Vocational)	17
1996	Clerical and Office Administration	15
1996	Automotive Mechanics Certificate II	12

	Course	Enrolments
1997	Office Administration	98
1997	Course in Automotive Light Vehicle Mechanics (Pre-Vocational)	25
1997	Electrical Worker – Level 2 Traineeship (Off-Job)	13
1997	Pre-Vocational Automotive Mechanics	12
1998	Certificate II In Office Administration	31
1998	Course in Automotive Light Vehicles Mechanics	16
1998	Automotive Light Vehicle Stage 3 – User Choice	15
1998	Electrical Worker – Level 2 Traineeship (Off-Job)	12

Appendix 3: VET-in-schools

Brief details of the growth of VET-in-schools are provided in the following table. It shows that the number of young people undertaking VET-in-schools programs rose by 45% between 1998 and 2001, compared with an overall rise in those in Years 11 and 12 of just 5.3%. Enrolments in business and clerical courses make up nearly 20% of the total, with general education (about 14%) being the next largest category in terms of Australian National Training Authority 'training area' definitions.

Table 3: Year 11 and 12 students, Australia, total and those in VET

		1998	1999	2000	2001
1	Total young people aged 16–18 years	785 653	800 855	811 025	816 576
2	Total full-time students in Years 11 and 12[(a)]	390 911	402 429	404 212	411 535
3	Number doing VET-in-schools[(b)]	117 000	136 710	153 616	169 809
4	*Proportion (3 as a percentage of 2)*	*30%*	*34%*	*38%*	*41%*

Notes: (a) These figures are for all ages in Years 11 and 12, full-time students
(b) Source: Report of the MCEETYA Taskforce on Vocational Education and Training in Schools, 2001

Source: NCVER undated, p.3

The following table, also taken from NCVER's submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools, shows a strong growth over the same period in the number of school students commencing a new apprenticeship while at school.

Table 4: New apprenticeship statistics, Australia, total and school-based or at school

Relevant new apprenticeship statistics		1998	1999	2000	2001
10	new apprenticeships: in training – all ages[(e)]	216 861	255 182	294 893	325 135
11	new apprenticeships: in training – age up to 19[(e)]	66 114	75 287	81 045	82 501
12	NA commencements – all ages[(f)]	154 922	198 445	210 156	228 014
13	NA commencements – up to 19	62 612	75 770	77 657	82 367
14	NA commencements – school leavers[(c)]	54 951	52 482	47 547	42 804
15	*Proportion (14 as percentage of 13)*	*88%*	*69%*	*61%*	*52%*
16	NA commencements – school-based or at school[(f)]	1 466	3 624	5 312	10 144
17	*Proportion (16 as percentage of 13)*	*2%*	*5%*	*7%*	*12%*

Notes: (c) Estimated figures for those up to 19 years of age, derived by distributing missing data on a pro rata basis. School leavers are defined as those who left school within the previous 12 months.
(e) Number in training at 31 December of the year. In-training figures exclude new apprentices who started and completed, cancelled or withdrew within the calendar year.
(f) All new apprenticeship commencement figures are the total for the whole calendar year. New apprenticeships reported as school-based or at school are for those up to 19 years of age only.

Source: NCVER undated, p.3

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research is Australia's primary research and development organisation in the field of vocational education and training.

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