

Indigenous staffing in vocational education and training: Policies, strategies and performance

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The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author/project team
and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government,
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The author/project team was funded to undertake this research via a grant under the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation (NVETRE) Program. These grants are awarded to organisations through a competitive process, in which NCVER does not participate.

The NVETRE program is coordinated and managed by NCVER, on behalf of the Australian Government and state and territory governments, with funding provided through the Department of Education, Science and Training. This program is based upon priorities approved by ministers with responsibility for vocational education and training (VET). This research aims to improve policy and practice in the VET sector. For further information about the program go to the NCVER website <<http://www.ncver.edu.au>>.

ISBN 1 921169 08 7 print edition

ISBN 1 921169 14 1 web edition

TD/TNC 85.01

Published by NCVER

ABN 87 007 967 311

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Contents

Tables and figures	4
Key messages	6
Executive summary	7
Introduction	11
Why this study?	11
Methodology	11
The national policy context: Policies, research and evaluations	14
Common policies, diverse employment pathways	17
Increasing the number of Indigenous staff in VET as a policy goal	18
The extent and distribution of Indigenous employment in VET	20
Research question 1: What is the extent and distribution of employment of Indigenous people in VET?	20
What proportion of staff in VET <i>should</i> be Indigenous?	26
Conclusion: What proportion of VET staff should be Indigenous?	37
Employment and retention	39
Research question 2: What are the patterns of employment and retention of these staff across the employment cycle?	39
Retention and support	44
Research question 3: Factors influencing the retention (and loss) of Indigenous staff in VET	44
Research question 4: What kinds and levels of support are available and accessible to Indigenous people, and what is their experience of the availability, accessibility and appropriateness of this support?	44
Conclusion: Strategic workforce planning and community ‘ownership’ of Indigenous units and services	65
Conclusions and implications	68
Context	68
Improving the stability of funding for Indigenous employment in VET	68
Improved national Indigenous employment databases	69
Barriers to Indigenous employment	70
References	71
Appendices	
1 Research questions 5 and 6	73
2 Additional tables	78
3 Additional notes on methodology	85
4 The survey	87

Tables and figures

Tables

1	Total number of Indigenous employees in government VET systems and non-government organisations receiving IESIP funding, 2000–03	20
2	Current employer type of survey respondents, 2004	21
3	Number and estimated full-time equivalent Indigenous employees in state and territory VET systems, by employment category, 2000–03	22
4	Number and full-time equivalent Indigenous employees in non-government organisations, 2000–03	23
5	Number and percentage of staff in state/territory government VET systems who are Indigenous	26
6	Indigenous population by state/territory, 2001	27
7	Proportions of Indigenous staff in VET by state/territory, government VET systems	28
8	Comparison of VET populations—Indigenous versus other, 1997 and 2001	29
9	Participation rates by geographic regions by Indigenous status, 2001	36
10	Distribution of Indigenous staff in VET survey respondents by place of residence	36
11	Qualifications of Indigenous VET teachers	39
12	Main function of current VET job	40
13	Rank order of perceived main employment problems and issues for Indigenous staff in the VET sector	47
14	Three approaches to workforce planning	66
15	Teaching areas	78
16	Employment status	78
17	Employment status	78
18	Employment status by type of employment contract	78
19	Source of funding for the position (where known)	79
20	Whether the job is a designated position	79
21	Funding source of designated positions	79
22	Employment status by funding source (where known)	79
23	Employment status by main job function	80
24	Number of paid jobs in last five years	80
25	Number of paid jobs in the VET sector in the last five years	80
26	Length of employment in current VET job	81

27 Level of satisfaction with current VET job	81
28 Whether mentoring is available	81
29 Effectiveness rating of those for whom mentoring was available	81
30 Whether the mentor was Indigenous	82
31 Whether the mentor was Indigenous by rating of effectiveness of mentoring	82
32 Whether the current employer has professional training and development specifically for Indigenous staff	82
33 Rating of the effectiveness of Indigenous-specific professional training and development	82
34 Whether the current employer has other general professional training and development programs	83
35 Whether the current employer has career planning specifically for Indigenous staff	83
36 Effectiveness ratings of career planning programs specifically for Indigenous staff	83
37 Distribution of survey respondents by age and sex	83
38 Whether last job was in the VET sector	84

Figures

1 Total number of Indigenous employees in government VET systems and non-government organisations receiving IESIP funding, 2000–03	21
2 Number and estimated full-time equivalent Indigenous employees in the state/territory VET systems, 2000–03	22
3 Number and full-time equivalent Indigenous employees in non-government organisations, 2000–03	24
4 Percentage of staff in government VET systems who are Indigenous (by type)	26
5 Participation rates in VET by Indigenous status, 2003	29
6 The age structure of the non-Indigenous and Indigenous populations of Australia, 2001	31
7 The age structure of non-Indigenous and Indigenous participation in VET, 2001	31
8 Age profile of VET professionals, 1997 and 2001 (%)	32
9 Survey respondents by age and sex (%)	32
10 Percentages of male and female survey respondents by age	33
11 Population distribution of the whole estimated resident population, and the Indigenous resident population of Australia, 30 June 2001	34
12 Location of Australian population by Indigenous status and remoteness, 2001	35
13 Australian Standard Geographical Classification Remoteness Structure	35
14 Distribution of Indigenous population of Australia compared with Indigenous staff in VET survey respondents by place of residence	37

Key messages

Between the years 2001 and 2003 there was an overall decline in the number and proportion of Indigenous staff in the public vocational education and training (VET) system. The decline is contrary to the intentions of policies across the Australian VET sector, whereby an increase in Indigenous employment was required.

- ✧ If employment targets for Indigenous staffing in VET were set according to the proportion of Indigenous students in VET (whose participation rate in VET is generally high across states and territories), then substantially higher numbers of Indigenous employees would be needed than current targets indicate, especially by providers serving outer-regional, remote and very remote areas.
- ✧ At present, uncertainties about funding affect all aspects of the employment cycle for Indigenous employees, from position identification to succession planning, to the relations between VET providers and Indigenous communities.
- ✧ As previous studies have shown, data collection on Indigenous employment in VET is currently inadequate. In particular, the current data do not reflect critical differences in the proportions of Indigenous people in urban, inner- and outer-regional, remote and very remote areas. Strategic workforce planning for Indigenous staff at system and provider levels depends on the availability of such data.
- ✧ Competition between providers for qualified Indigenous staff is likely to become extremely intense in the coming years. VET employers will need to be more proactive and more effective in attracting, recruiting, developing and retaining Indigenous staff. This study identifies a range of models of effective practice in each of these areas. VET employers must adopt proactive approaches to the development of community networks to ensure identification of potential Indigenous staff, professional and career development for existing staff, and succession planning that will ensure the long-term sustainability of training in and for their communities.

Executive summary

This study was conducted as part of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) Indigenous research program. This research program, in addition to informing interested people about Indigenous issues in vocational education and training (VET) more generally, also aimed to provide information to the Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council, an advisory body to the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA).

The focus of this study is Indigenous staff in VET, and responds to Objective 1 of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategy for VET (ANTA 2000a): 'Increasing involvement of Indigenous people in decision-making about policy, planning, resources and delivery'. The associated 'blueprint' for implementation of the strategy (ANTA 2002b) highlights the need to increase the number of Indigenous staff in VET.

The study aimed to explore the extent and distribution of Indigenous staff in VET, their conditions of employment, retention, and a variety of features of their experience of employment in VET through the whole employment cycle, from position identification through to succession planning.

The study employed a multi-method approach, involving policy analysis, interviews with key informants (including representatives of employers of Indigenous staff in VET, as well as Indigenous staff themselves), case studies and a survey. The project builds on the research and findings conducted as part of the mid-term review of implementation of the national Indigenous strategy for VET, *Partners in a learning culture* (Kemmis et al. 2004) and makes use of contemporary data from all Australian states and territories. The variety of research methods employed allowed the researchers to compose a rich picture of the state of Indigenous employment in VET, although the sample for the survey was biased towards continuing, permanent Indigenous employees in government organisations undertaking administrative and policy work. Further research should be conducted to address this bias, but the experience of this study is that face-to-face interviewing, although resource-intensive, would be more effective in reaching such employees and would more adequately capture the complexity of the issues surrounding Indigenous employment in VET.

Key findings

Finding 1

The Australian Government and all states and territory governments are aiming through policy initiatives to increase the number and proportion of Indigenous staff in VET.

In spite of these policies there has been an overall decline in the number and proportion of Indigenous staff in VET. Over the last four years, following a period in which numbers increased, there was a decline in the number and proportion of Indigenous staff in VET. This has been the result of restructuring of some VET organisations, reductions in National Indigenous Education Literacy and Numeracy Strategy funding over the period, and a possible drift of Indigenous employees from government to non-government providers. The decline was most evident among public VET organisations, especially between 2002 and 2003. On the other hand, there has been a general increase in the number of Indigenous staff employed by non-government providers between 2000 and 2003.

Implication: Employing organisations need to act to reverse the decline in Indigenous staffing in VET and more actively implement policies that require an increase in the numbers of Indigenous staff in VET.

Finding 2

There is a strong argument for setting the proportion of Indigenous students in VET (as a proportion of all students) as the target for the proportion of Indigenous staff, rather than the proportion of Indigenous people in the Australian population, as is currently the case. This report reviews data on the age and gender structure of the Indigenous population and their geographic distribution, comparing population data with data about Indigenous students and VET staff in general. It concludes that the current target is well below the target necessary to meet the requirement for Indigenous teachers for Indigenous students. The target is also below that required for non-Indigenous students, a target justified according to principles of cultural diversity in the workforce. The qualified success story of increasing Indigenous student participation in VET needs to be supported by equivalent numbers of Indigenous staff who are able to meet the cultural and educational needs of these students.

Implication: Employing authorities need to consider progressively raising Indigenous employment targets to match the proportion of Indigenous students in VET, with the double aims of improving participation and retention of Indigenous students and developing the cultural sensitivity of non-Indigenous students and staff.

Finding 3

As a percentage of the overall population, Indigenous people are younger than their non-Indigenous counterparts and have significantly shorter lives. In statistical terms Indigenous people are likely to have fewer years in which to complete their studies, gain employment and experience, and perhaps move into a career in VET teaching.

Implication: Employing authorities need to focus on the recruitment and retention of younger Indigenous staff.

Finding 4

Indigenous staff in VET occupy a variety of positions as teachers, managers, administrators and support staff and are often involved in more than one of these roles. While a small number of Indigenous staff have been employed in VET for many years (15 years or more), about one-third have been in the same job for five years or more, and a sizeable majority (58.8%) have been in their positions for two years or less. Indigenous staff in VET are highly mobile, with a history of jobs both inside and outside the VET sector.

Implication: Employing authorities need to work towards creating employment conditions that reduce employment instability for Indigenous staff, especially in the early stages of employment; for example, by guaranteeing continuing funding for Indigenous positions.

Finding 5

Most current Indigenous staff in VET are satisfied with their present jobs. However, a number identified a range of problems in employment and employment conditions that need to be addressed if Indigenous staff are to be retained. Indigenous employees in VET report experiencing barriers to initial employment in the sector (for example, uncompetitive salary rates or difficulties about the kinds of qualifications or previous experience required for a particular position), as well as difficulties in gaining access to professional and career development regarded as appropriate to the position and opportunities for personal and professional advancement.

Implication: Employing authorities should adopt specific and appropriate principles for Indigenous recruitment, selection and retention. Some suggestions are made in this report.

Finding 6

Across Australia, policies and strategies urge strategic workforce planning and more culturally sensitive employment practices throughout the employment cycle. Nevertheless, Indigenous

informants contacted in the course of this study reported experiences of culturally insensitive treatment in relation to most phases of the employment cycle. Respondents frequently commented that overt, covert and institutionalised racism affects the capacity of employers to attract and retain Indigenous staff. This racism is particularly obvious when the bond between work and community life is misunderstood. A lack of deep cultural understanding and taking a ‘Western’ perspective are other ways of describing the current situation.

Implication: Employing authorities need to establish and support strategies that welcome Indigenous ways of working. These include respecting culture, eliminating racism and supporting workplace practices that provide flexibility and cultural comfort for employees.

Finding 7

An Indigenous community development approach to employment practices is likely to be the most appropriate way to meet the concerns of Indigenous staff in VET. A strategic workforce planning approach will go some way to meeting their concerns, while a bureaucratic approach is least likely to address their concerns.

Implication: Employing authorities need to adopt the Indigenous community development approach to Indigenous staffing. Some suggestions about this approach are made in this report.

Finding 8

Many Indigenous-controlled VET providers, particularly those in rural and remote areas, have created pathways within their organisations to encourage the employment of more qualified Indigenous VET staff. The potential success of these pathways is often compromised by unstable and short-term funding that militates against long-term and systematic planning.

Improved monitoring is needed to achieve more strategically justified, systematic and culturally sensitive employment for Indigenous people in VET. Evaluations of employment strategies for increasing and retaining numbers of Indigenous staff in VET have identified many strategies to improve employment of and for Indigenous staff in VET. More widespread implementation of these strategies is needed.

Implication: VET employers need to monitor Indigenous employment and employment conditions to ensure that their employment practices are strategic and culturally sensitive.

Finding 9

Indigenous staff report that there are many opportunities to be involved in decision-making about Indigenous education, but not necessarily about Indigenous employment or employment conditions. Indigenous staff report that their employment conditions have a positive impact on the provision of VET, especially in relation to Indigenous people and communities, but concerns about employment, especially job security, reduce morale and commitment.

Implication: VET employers need to consult regularly with Indigenous employees about Indigenous employment and employment conditions to encourage higher levels of Indigenous participation and retention in the VET workforce.

Finding 10

Organisations and systems involved in VET across Australia need to participate in the collection of accurate, complete and comparable data about Indigenous employment. The Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs has agreed on a standard set of categories for reporting on staffing nationally, but most jurisdictions continue to maintain their existing and incompatible categories for data collection. The ministerial council proposals are only a first step towards reporting to inform strategic workforce planning. More detailed data on the employment status of Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff are needed to meet this objective.

Implication: All VET employers need to participate in collecting agreed, accurate, comprehensive and comparable data for monitoring Indigenous employment in the sector.

Finding 11

More secure funding than Commonwealth supplementary recurrent provisions is needed, particularly in some jurisdictions, if uncertainties about employment and employment conditions are to be overcome for Indigenous staff. There is also a need to implement Indigenous employment policies more vigorously in ‘mainstream’ VET—at the organisational and departmental levels, not just in Indigenous-controlled registered training organisations and Indigenous units in technical and further education (TAFE) institutes and colleges.

Implication: VET authorities and employers need to design their budgets to provide a secure funding base for Indigenous employment in VET and extend the proportion of Indigenous employment in ‘mainstream’ programs.

Introduction

Why this study?

This study is part of the Indigenous Australians in vocational education and training (VET) national research strategy for 2003–06 and was prompted by continuing concerns about the number and experiences of Indigenous students and staff in VET. The mid-term review of Australia's national strategy for VET for Indigenous people, *Partners in a learning culture*, articulated many of the issues vis-a-vis VET for Indigenous people, including the need to increase Indigenous staff in VET and improve their sometimes difficult experiences in securing employment and professional and career development (Kemmis et al. 2004). This study aims to further explore these issues by answering six research questions:

- 1 What is the extent and distribution of employment of Indigenous people in VET?
- 2 What are the patterns of employment and retention of these staff across the employment cycle (from position identification through employment to re-entry, to changed employment)?
- 3 What factors influence the retention (and the loss) of Indigenous staff in VET, particularly in relation to employment, professional development (both accredited and unaccredited) and career development policies, strategies, practices?
- 4 What kinds and levels of support are available and accessible to Indigenous people, and what is their experience of the availability, accessibility and appropriateness of this support?
- 5 What roles do Indigenous people have in decision-making in the sector, especially concerning the range of matters relevant to Indigenous employment through the whole employment cycle?
- 6 What do Indigenous staff in VET think about the adequacy and appropriateness of VET provision for Indigenous people and communities?

Information on questions 5 and 6 can be found in appendix 1, sourced predominantly from research conducted for the mid-term review (Kemmis et al. 2004).

Methodology

In the 2004 research conducted for this report, the researchers contacted 80 Indigenous staff in VET, in government and non-government agencies, across teaching and non-teaching positions, and in the administration of VET. Interviews were conducted with representatives of VET employers and with Indigenous employees themselves. Further interviews were conducted in the course of case studies completed in the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria. Since the participants involved are easily identified, these case studies are not presented in this report for reasons of confidentiality. However, the insights provided by the case studies form an important pool of data for this study. These qualitative studies supplemented qualitative research undertaken in 2003 by Kemmis et al. (2004) for the 2002–03 mid-term review, which included consultations in New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia.

In 2004, the researchers also collected information via a written survey from 102 Indigenous people nationally, of whom 99 were Indigenous employees in VET (a number equivalent to about 9% of

the Indigenous staff in VET and counted in Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program statistics). The study thus adopted a multi-method approach, employing a range of qualitative and quantitative techniques.

Analysis of existing databases, reports and previous research literature

The project team accessed a number of existing national and state/territory databases for data on Indigenous employment. The Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training kindly provided data from its annual *National report to parliament on Indigenous education and training* (Department of Education, Science and Training 2003). Relevant data from a range of other evaluation and research reports were also analysed, including data and material used or collected for the mid-term review of *Partners in a learning culture*.

Consultations

The researchers consulted a variety of people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, about the extent and distribution of, and issues in, Indigenous employment in VET. This included some consulted in the course of the mid-term review, together with other representatives of VET authorities and providers in all jurisdictions, and with members of the Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council (an advisory council of the Australian National Training Authority [ANTA]) on the reference group for the study.

Informant interviews

Telephone interviews were conducted with representatives (including human resources staff) of employing VET organisations and Indigenous employees in a sample of VET organisations, including public and private providers in and/or for metropolitan, rural/regional and remote locations. Through these contacts, a number of Indigenous employees in VET were identified and contacted for interview.

Survey

A written survey of Indigenous employees was conducted via a stratified sample of VET providers, including TAFE systems, private providers (including Indigenous-controlled registered training organisations), group training companies, enterprise providers (some of which are not registered training organisations), and community organisations. The purpose of the survey was to quantify the employment experiences of Indigenous employees in VET in administrative, management and teaching roles.

The survey was distributed via email or post to contact people in the relevant organisations and through these contacts to individual Indigenous employees. It was hoped that the survey might generate 200 responses, but it generated only 99 useable returns. The size of the survey may have daunted some employees. It was extremely difficult to locate part-time employees and to establish the personal contact that is needed if questionnaires are to be completed. Some did not have phones or email addresses that would have made this possible. Telephone follow-up with individuals and organisations produced a small increase in the return rate, as did the offer to conduct the interviews over the telephone. The research team concluded that in future study the expense of face-to-face interviewing would be warranted to generate a more reliable and national stratified sample of Indigenous employees in VET.

The data collected in the survey are not an entirely accurate reflection of the national population of Indigenous employment in VET; for example, some states (like Queensland and New South Wales) were over-represented while Western Australia was under-represented in our sample. Because of the problem of getting the survey to part-time and casual teaching staff, the sample included many more non-teaching staff than teaching staff (reversing the balance in the population). The effect of this was that more staff in state training authorities were contacted via the survey than would be

expected on the basis of the size of the whole population of Indigenous staff in VET nationally. Appendix 3 contains some additional information about the survey. Appendix 4 contains the survey itself.

Case studies

The research team drew on case study evidence collected in the course of fieldwork for the mid-term review of *Partners in a learning culture* and supplemented this archive with seven more case studies in jurisdictions where fieldwork was limited or not conducted during the mid-term review. This gave the researchers field data from every state and territory in Australia, and included providers of VET in metropolitan, rural/regional and remote locations; public and private providers; and Indigenous-controlled providers. The case studies explored the whole of the employment cycle, from position identification through employment, career planning, professional development, through to end of contract, exit and entry to new employment, from the perspective of the employing organisation. They also explored the place of employment in VET as part of their whole-of-life and whole-of-career development and their views on the adequacy and appropriateness of Indigenous VET provision from the Indigenous employees' perspective.

Research questions 5 and 6 relating to the roles that Indigenous people have in decision-making in the sector, especially concerning the range of matters relevant to Indigenous employment through the whole employment cycle, and to the opinions and attitudes that Indigenous staff in VET hold about the adequacy and appropriateness of VET provision for Indigenous people and communities. These questions were covered extensively in the qualitative research undertaken in 2003 by Kemmis et al. (2004) for the 2002–03 mid-term review of *Partners in a learning culture*, Australia's national strategy for vocational education and training for Indigenous people. Appendix 1 reports on both these findings and the findings from the current research.

The national policy context: Policies, research and evaluations

It is clear that all governments have taken the issue of policy formulation about Indigenous employment seriously, although some have devoted more time and effort to implementation and monitoring than others. In all states and territories an office equivalent to a commissioner for public employment has developed policies, reporting protocols and monitoring strategies mandatory for all public sector organisations and those non-government organisations receiving government funding. Similarly, the state and territory departments of education and training also have policies specifically related to the employment of Indigenous staff in the VET sector. In most cases this is mirrored by the development of employment policies within technical and further education (TAFE) institutes. However, the effectiveness of these policies must be placed against the overall decline in the numbers of Indigenous staff in VET.

The policy environment for Indigenous employment issues is therefore rich with reports, measures of accountability and further policy and program responses. Appendix 2 to the Department of Education, Science and Training *National report to parliament on Indigenous education and training 2002* (2003) covers the period from the 1960s to the present. It outlines Commonwealth involvement in education framed in terms of policy and funding initiatives. Arguably, the most significant national policy has been the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy. Signed in 1989, it has as its primary objective the achievement of 'educational equality for Indigenous Australians' (Department of Education, Science and Training 2003, p.109). The aim was to establish 'as the standard for Indigenous Australians, the level of educational access, participation and outcomes achieved by non-Indigenous Australians' (Department of Education, Science and Training 2003, p.109). This policy, and the set of targets it implies, is still in effect today.

Since 1989 there have been further reviews, evaluations and consequent modifications and amendments to Indigenous education and training policy and funding arrangements. These identified new initiatives, with a major shift in focus from inputs to outcomes-based reporting and funding. The introduction of the Commonwealth Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program (now the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme) in 1990 represented a major policy response to low levels of improvement in key indicator areas such as retention, participation and attendance, and low levels of literacy and numeracy and poor completion rates for Indigenous students. One of the current eight priority areas in Indigenous education and training for the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs is aimed at *increasing Indigenous staff in VET*.

The Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) provides supplementary funding to government and non-government providers in the preschool, school and vocational education and training (VET) sectors.

Education providers in receipt of IESIP funding report against outcomes in eight priority areas, four of which relate to improved educational outcomes and four of which relate to Indigenous influence, involvement and presence. For each year of the quadrennium (2001–2004), targets are established against performance indicators in the priority areas and providers submit an annual performance report showing their outcomes against these indicators and targets. (Department of Education, Science and Training 2003, p.xiv)

The *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000*, which covers the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program, has as one of its objectives 'an increase in the number of Indigenous

people who are employed or otherwise involved in education' (Commonwealth of Australia 2000, p.7). More recent data, where the accountability measures for the receipt of funding from the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program were tightened (2000), show limited improvements in the outcomes for Indigenous students and staff.

Legislation, programs and their evaluations, and the existence of national strategies in their various iterations are one frame of the picture of Indigenous education and training. The effectiveness of all these initiatives needs to be conceptualised within a broader canvas. The recent publications by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2004) and the Productivity Commission (2005) offer a picture of Indigenous life chances and educational and training opportunities far below those experienced by their white contemporaries (Kemmis et al. 2004). In spite of the observable disadvantages that Indigenous people confront, it remains true that Indigenous participation in VET over the ten-year period since the Aboriginal Education Policy was initiated remains a qualified success story (Robinson & Hughes 1999). The qualifications hinge, amongst other things, on situations where Indigenous students are still clustered at the lower qualification levels; retention as opposed to enrolment figures often indicating low levels of completion; the delivery of training often experienced as culturally insensitive; and a lack of workplaces where Indigenous students can develop their skills and identity (Kemmis et al. 2004). The qualified success story could unfold more positively if the slow progress in key areas such as the employment of Indigenous staff could be speeded up. There is an obvious need to increase the proportions of Indigenous staff in VET (Robinson & Hughes 1999, p.xii).

At a national level, the release of the definitive five-year (2000–05) national strategy for VET for Indigenous Australians—*Partners in a learning culture* (ANTA 2000a)—was highly significant. This policy provides an integrated account of what is intended by the actions, strategies and objectives listed in the accompanying 'blueprint' (ANTA 2000b) which outlines the strategies for implementation of this policy. In particular, the blueprint set out a total of 60 different actions clustered under the 13 strategies to be taken by ANTA and 55 other partner agencies, most of whom were signatories to the blueprint. This policy document has formed the basis for individual state and territory policy formulations across Australia. For instance, in New South Wales the *New partners, new learning: New South Wales State VET plan 2001–2005* (New South Wales Department of Education and Training 2001a) and the *NSW vocational education and training strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people* (2001b) are based on the national *Partners in a learning culture* and, while having their own distinctive flavour, increasing Indigenous involvement 'at all levels of VET decision-making, administration and delivery' (2001b, p.8) is a policy priority. The strategies to achieve this aim include the appointment of Indigenous representatives to boards of management; the establishment of Aboriginal advisory committees; Indigenous participation in curriculum, program and resource development; and strategies to increase the number of Indigenous teachers, managers and support staff (2001b, pp.9–10).

In relation to Indigenous employment in the VET sector, strategy 3 listed under objective 1 of the blueprint for implementation of *Partners in a learning culture*, 'increasing involvement of Indigenous people in decision-making about policy, planning, resources and delivery', recognises the importance of securing 'Indigenous employment in key areas of the VET sector' (ANTA 2000b, p.27). The actions recommended to achieve this goal involve all organisations proactively developing plans to increase the number of Indigenous employees and the development of systematic approaches to the collection of statistical data to monitor the progress of this strategy. The findings from the mid-term review indicated that slow progress is being made in achieving the goal of increasing Indigenous employment levels in the VET sector to be equivalent to Indigenous population levels across Australia (Kemmis et al. 2004). This target becomes even more pronounced in the mainstream delivery of VET, since many Indigenous staff are concentrated in Indigenous units. 'There has been less progress in increasing the number of Indigenous employees in VET (Strategy 3: Objective 1), and this means that VET organisations are deprived of Indigenous perspectives and advice as a routine part of their operations' (Kemmis et al. 2004, p.117).

The other significant national policy is *Shaping our future: Australia's national strategy for vocational education and training 2004–2010* (ANTA 2003). One of the four objectives for 2004–10 is: 'Indigenous Australians will have skills for viable jobs and their learning culture will be shared' (p.2). This objective is explained further in the policy in the following terms:

Vocational education and training will help increase employment and business development opportunities for Indigenous people and communities, providing a foundation for greater economic independence. Vocational education and training will be enriched through an exchange of learning culture. Indigenous people will be enabled to create and adapt vocational education and training products and services in order to exercise their rights to positive learning environments for their communities. (ANTA 2003, p.13)

ANTA's action plan for 2004–05 specifies that this objective will be achieved through the following measures:

- ✧ drive implementation of the *Partners in a learning culture*, national Indigenous VET strategy and blueprint
- ✧ coordinate a coherent national research strategy which reduces the gaps in knowledge and understanding as identified by the 2003 review of the Blueprint's progress
- ✧ develop more strategic, long-term and coordinated links between Community Development Employment Projects, VET and sustainable mainstream employment and business outcomes through Pathways to Employment national pilot and similar transition initiatives
- ✧ link to the Council of Australian Government trial sites with Indigenous communities to raise the profile of VET as a core element in generating better outcomes for these communities. (ANTA 2004b)

The key performance measure suggested in the national plan relevant to this study is: 'The proportion of the vocational education and training workforce who identify as Indigenous'. This key performance area will be monitored throughout the life of the national strategy using a variety of techniques, including 'data on access, participation and outcomes'.

Some jurisdictions and organisations in the sector have begun to demonstrate deliberate and determined employment and career development plans that can help in meeting the need for more Indigenous staff. However, a number of significant technical problems with employment statistics continue to make it difficult to be certain about Indigenous employment in the sector. This is not a problem confined to data collection about the levels of Indigenous employment, as the authors of the ANTA (2004a) *Enhancing the capability of the VET professionals* project concluded:

The search for reliable data about the profile and performance of the current VET workforce was disappointing, with data collection patchy and inconsistent across States, territories, registered training organisations and national research centres. There is a lot of data available but it is neither collected nor organised in a nationally consistent or usable way. (ANTA 2004a, p.3)

Any analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of state, territory or national policies on Indigenous employment and the strategies and programs that accompany them, needs to be placed in this context.

For the purposes of this report, policies have been analysed in terms of the various stages of the employment cycle, and commentaries about them appear in the relevant sections of the findings reported in this, and later sections of the report. Policy documents relating to Indigenous employment have been obtained from all Australian states and territories, and a full list appears in the references cited at the end of this report.

Common policies, diverse employment pathways

Policy relating to Indigenous employment in VET is one thing, practice is another. Any composite ‘story’ of Indigenous employment in VET must take account of the very different pathways into and through employment in different kinds of positions in the sector. Indigenous staff come into VET from different kinds of backgrounds and with different kinds of experience (for example in trades, in teaching or in administration) in different kinds of organisations inside and outside the VET sector. They also enter very different kinds of positions in the sector (for example, teaching in a trade area or in an Indigenous unit, or in an administrative or policy or support role). They also experience different kinds of conditions in their appointments (full- or part-time or casual) with different kinds of opportunities for professional and/or career development in their roles. The following are some of the main pathways into and through the sector.

- ✧ Many Indigenous teachers in Indigenous units in technical and further education (TAFE) and other VET providers, including Indigenous registered training organisations, come to their positions by applying for positions and are selected on merit from among qualified applicants, in many instances after hearing about a position because of their personal contacts in the Indigenous community and community networks.
- ✧ Some Indigenous teachers in VET come to their positions from other organisations and sectors (positions in health, justice or school education).
- ✧ Some Indigenous teachers in VET come to their positions from work in trades and other occupations (timber and construction, child care or legal services) and are selected on merit from among qualified applicants.
- ✧ Many Indigenous managers are promoted from within Indigenous units to coordination roles, and then to other institution-level management and policy positions.
- ✧ Some Indigenous managers come to institution-level or sector-level management and policy positions from positions in Indigenous organisations outside VET.
- ✧ Similarly, some Indigenous managers come to institution-level and sector-level management and policy positions from other agencies and sectors (like health, justice or school education).
- ✧ Many Indigenous managers come to sector-level management and policy positions from institution-level management and policy positions in specific VET institutions (for example, TAFE colleges or Indigenous registered training organisations).

The different pathways into and through the sector for different Indigenous employees are also influenced by other factors, for example:

- ✧ the complexities of different kinds of organisations in the sector (TAFE versus Indigenous-controlled registered training organisations versus private providers, for example)
- ✧ complexities associated with different kinds of locations (metropolitan, rural or isolated).

Taken together, these different kinds of pathways, conditions and contexts produce great diversity in patterns of Indigenous employment in VET. There is not just one, or just a few, patterns of Indigenous employment in VET about which generalisations might easily be made. One of the benefits of qualitative research is that it can illustrate such diversity, and resist tendencies towards simplification of diverse and complex circumstances and their consequences in people’s different kinds of experiences.

While some broad conclusions can be drawn from the research reported here, we are also conscious that the diverse conditions and circumstances of Indigenous staff will not be adequately addressed by simple remedies in policy or practice. A more nuanced view is needed to respond to different conditions, circumstances and contexts of Indigenous employment in VET. This is particularly so at the level of the local employing institution—whether a TAFE institute, an Indigenous-controlled registered training organisation or a private provider—where policy is expected to emerge in practice.

Increasing the number of Indigenous staff in VET as a policy goal

All major government employment policies reflect a focus on increasing the number of Indigenous staff in the public sector. The common aspiration is to have Indigenous people employed at the equivalent level to their distribution in the total Australian population (2.4%). It is also worth noting that this aspiration implies a target for Indigenous participation for each state and territory in Australia. It is also useful to juxtapose this national target with the number of Indigenous students now participating in VET across Australia:

In 2001, the 55,000 Indigenous students represented 20 per cent of all Indigenous people over 15 years of age. This was approximately twice the participation rate for all other people aged over 15 years, of whom 11 per cent participated in vocational education and training in 2001.

(Saunders et al. 2003, p.12)

In some instances, the increased numbers of Indigenous staff working in VET and other public sector organisations was to be achieved through a whole-of-government approach, as was the case in Queensland. In that state, the Wal-Meta Unit is responsible for the administration and implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Public Sector Employment Policy. The unit:

... responsible for achieving the whole-of-government employment goals set by the Queensland Cabinet in 1998. The Queensland Government is committed to achieving 2.4 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment across the entire public sector by the end of 2002, and 2.4 per cent of all employees at all salary levels in the sector by 2010. (Queensland Department of Employment and Training 2002)

The Australian Capital Territory *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and career development framework for the ACT Public Service* sets out in clear terms the need to attract more Indigenous staff to public sector employment. This is to be achieved by actions that fall into the categories of recruitment, career development, support mechanisms and monitoring and reporting (Australian Capital Territory Public Service n.d., p.3).

The Western Australian policy, *Making it happen: Improving training and employment opportunities for Indigenous Western Australians 2001–2005* (Western Australian Department of Training 2001) builds directly on the policy framework endorsed in *Partners in a learning culture*. In response to objective 1: 'Increasing involvement of Indigenous people in decision-making about policy, planning, resources and delivery', strategy three of the Western Australian policy focuses specifically on securing 'Indigenous employment in key areas of the VET sector' (Western Australian Department of Training 2001, p.6). The actions suggested include the development of an *Indigenous employment and career development strategy*, a revision of the benchmarks for Indigenous staffing levels in TAFE colleges and Indigenous training providers and the monitoring of change, a review of the professional development needs of all staff working in VET, and the management of the Indigenous Career Development Program.

Many organisations in VET bound by the respective national and state and territory policies have developed their own policies and strategies to increase the number of Indigenous staff working in VET. For example, the Canberra Institute of Technology (n.d.) states that:

One of the aims of the CIT Indigenous Employment Strategy is to increase the number of Indigenous staff. Anecdotal evidence from the staff at the Yurauna Centre indicates that if Indigenous staff numbers were to increase, so would the number of Indigenous students at the Institute. A greater presence of Indigenous role models would be a comforting factor for the students. (Canberra Institute of Technology n.d., p.5)

Some private sector organisations have also developed policies that relate to increasing the number of Indigenous employees in VET. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

‘acknowledges that Indigenous Australians remain the most disadvantaged group in the labour market and advocates the need for specific policy responses’ (n.d.). The policies that the chamber has formulated in relation to increasing the number of Indigenous employees in VET include targeted employer incentives and assistance to Indigenous people to enable ‘access to private sector employment as distinct from community and public sector options’.

As this brief overview of the contemporary policy context shows, Indigenous employment policy and the target of increasing Indigenous employment in VET are well recognised in the VET sector. On the other hand, as will be shown, Indigenous employment in the sector remains at levels lower than would be expected on the basis of these policies. Somewhere between policy and its realisation lie barriers and obstacles that prevent these policies from attaining their desired outcomes.

The extent and distribution of Indigenous employment in VET

Research question 1: What is the extent and distribution of employment of Indigenous people in VET?

Indigenous employment in VET: The current situation

The best current estimate of the number of Indigenous staff in VET is based on the reports from VET organisations receiving funding from the Department of Education, Science and Training's Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program. These data are recognised as underestimating the number of Indigenous staff in VET generally because they do not include Indigenous employees in organisations not receiving funding from the program. There are also other reasons that these data are underestimates, to be discussed later in this section.

Looking at the total number of Indigenous employees in VET organisations receiving Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program funding, the data show an increase from 1171 in 2000 to 1225 in 2001, and a decrease thereafter to 1170 in 2003. The detailed numbers of Indigenous staff are presented in table 1, and the trends are depicted in figure 1.

The overall trend in the number of Indigenous staff in government providers of VET has been static at best to one of slight decline. As indicated, this is contrary to the intentions of national and state/territory policies for Indigenous employment in the sector. Among non-government providers of VET (including Indigenous-controlled registered training organisations), however, there was a steady increase in Indigenous employment, rising to a full-time equivalent staff level of about half the employees in the government VET sector.

Table 1: Total number of Indigenous employees in government VET systems and non-government organisations receiving IESIP funding, 2000–03

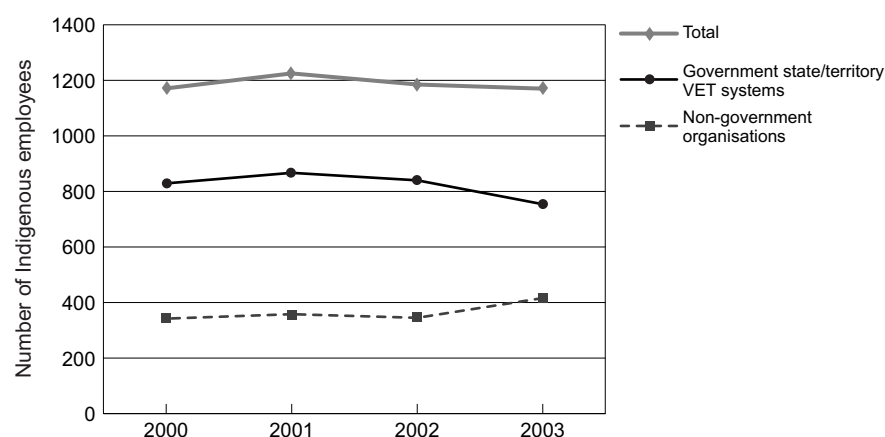
		2000	2001	2002	2003
		Number	Number	Number	Number
Government state/territory VET systems	Indigenous teaching and other professional staff	415	438	452	375
	Other Indigenous staff	414	429	388	379
	Total Indigenous staff	829	867	840	754
Non-government organisations	Indigenous teaching and other professional staff	154	193	181	223
	Other Indigenous staff	188	165	164	193
	Total Indigenous staff	342	358	345	416
All Indigenous employees	Indigenous teaching and other professional staff	569	631	633	598
	Other Indigenous staff	602	594	552	572
	Total Indigenous staff	1171	1225	1185	1170

Note: IESIP = Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program.

Source: Department of Education, Science and Training performance reports from the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (2000–03); government data exclude the Northern Territory which does not have a government VET system

The trends are made plainer in figure 1.

Figure 1: Total number of Indigenous employees in government VET systems and non-government organisations receiving IESIP funding, 2000–03



Note: IESIP = Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program.

Source: Department of Education, Science and Training performance reports from the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (2000–03); government data exclude the Northern Territory which does not have a government VET system

Arguably, the peak in the number of Indigenous employees achieved in 2001 was the consequence of the implementation of *Partners in a learning culture* (ANTA 2000a). The decline from this peak is difficult to explain, but qualitative data gathered in the course of this study suggested that the decline may be due to a progressive reduction of funding that providers had received under the National Indigenous Education Literacy and Numeracy Strategy program (which led to a reduction in the number of some Indigenous contract staff) and structural reorganisations in some VET systems that apparently affected the number of Indigenous people employed in those organisations.

Employers of Indigenous staff participating in the survey

Table 2 shows the current employer type of the Indigenous staff in VET participating in the written survey conducted for this study. Two-thirds of respondents worked in TAFE (as teachers, administrators, support staff, managers and policy staff). A further 11.2% worked in state/territory VET authorities, 9.2% in Indigenous organisations (including Indigenous registered training organisations), 7% in ‘other’ organisations, 4% in Commonwealth education and training agencies, and 2% in private sector organisations. The distribution of survey respondents differed from the distribution of Indigenous staff in VET counted in Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program reports: over twice as many Indigenous staff in Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program reports worked in government rather than in non-government organisations, while over four times as many survey respondents worked in government rather than in non-government organisations.

Table 2: Current employer type of survey respondents, 2004

Employer type		Number	Percentage
Government organisations	Commonwealth	4	4.1%
	State	11	11.2%
	TAFE	65	66.3%
<i>Subtotal government organisations</i>		<i>80</i>	<i>81.6%</i>
Non-government organisations	Indigenous organisation	9	9.2%
	Private	2	2.0%
	Other	7	7.1%
<i>Subtotal non-government organisations</i>		<i>18</i>	<i>18.2%</i>
Total*		99	100.0%

Note: * Includes one ‘missing’ response.

Government VET systems

Table 3 and figure 2 present the number and full-time equivalent load of Indigenous employees in state/territory government VET systems. Commenting on 2001–03 trends in Indigenous employment in *government VET systems* nationally in its 2003 report to parliament on Indigenous education and training, the Department of Education, Science and Training notes:

Six of the seven government systems reported an overall decline in employment of Indigenous people between 2002 and 2003, while the remaining system increased its number of Indigenous employees by just one. The 2003 result is the lowest for the quadrennium and indicates a situation that needs to be closely monitored as there have been significant falls in both the number of employees and in their full time equivalent (FTE) employment over a short period.

(Department of Education, Science and Training 2005, p.72)

Table 3: Number and estimated full-time equivalent^(a) Indigenous employees in state and territory VET systems, by employment category, 2000–03

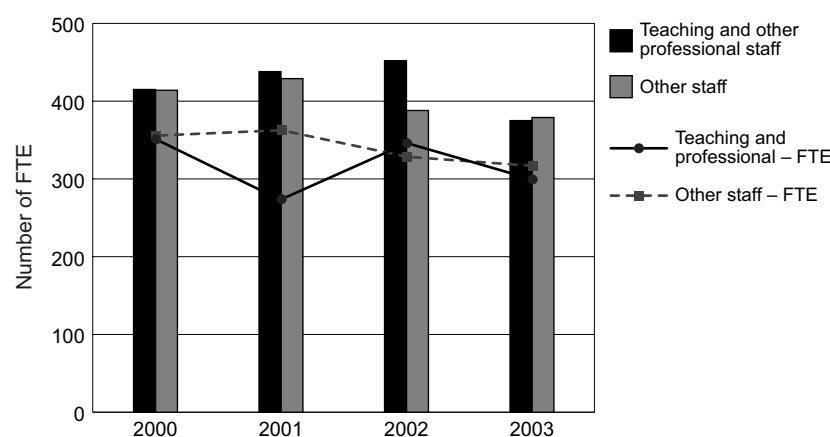
Indigenous staff	2000		2001		2002		2003	
	No.	FTE	No.	FTE	No.	FTE	No.	FTE
Teaching and other professional staff	415	350	438	271	452	345	375	297
Other staff (b)	414	355	429	362	388	327	379	315
Totals	829	705	867	633	840	672	754	612

Notes: (a) Not all VET government systems provided the Department of Education, Science and Training with full-time equivalent numbers for 2003. In this table, the department gives estimates of the number of full-time equivalent positions for these missing cases based on total staff figures in both of the categories.

(b) 'Other staff' are mainly administrative and clerical staff, but also includes teachers' aides and assistants, laboratory assistants and other technical staff.

Source: Department of Education, Science and Training performance reports from the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (2000–03); government data exclude the Northern Territory which does not have a government VET system

Figure 2: Number and estimated full-time equivalent Indigenous employees in the state/territory VET systems, 2000–03



Note: FTE = Full-time equivalent.

Source: Department of Education, Science and Training performance reports from the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (2000–03); government data exclude the Northern Territory which does not have a government VET system

As full-time equivalent positions declined by less than the number of Indigenous employees over the period, it is likely that Indigenous employees were working more hours, perhaps particularly part-time and casual employees.

The Department of Education, Science and Training continues:

In the teaching and other professional category there was a significant decrease in the number of Indigenous people employed between 2002 and 2003 from 452 to 375 (a fall of 17.0%) together with a concomitant decrease in full time equivalent (FTE) employment from 345 to

297 positions (13.9%). In addition, the number of 'Other staff' fell slightly from 388 to 379 (2.3%) while the FTE figure fell from 327 to 315 (3.7%).

There were sharp decreases in three of the larger systems where the numbers of Indigenous employees in both categories decreased significantly. Written comments from these providers indicate that part of that decline stems from:

- ✧ a restructure in one of the largest systems and financial constraints in its institutes; and
- ✧ structural amalgamations in other institutes resulting in a loss of staff.

Other reported factors that may have contributed to lower outcomes include:

- ✧ doubt in one large system that staff have been correctly classified; and
- ✧ staff development programmes that have assisted some Indigenous staff to apply for alternative positions and gain mandatory qualifications.

A number of systems indicated that Indigenous employment strategies were in place and were expected to result in improvements.

Overall IESIP targets are set to bring about increases in both staff numbers and full time equivalent employment in both employment categories. Between 2002 and 2003, however, the overall number of Indigenous staff decreased from 840 to 754 (10.2%) while the level of full time employment decreased by 8.9% from 672 to 612 positions.

(Department of Education, Science and Training 2005, pp.72–3)

It is possible that the marked decline in numbers of Indigenous staff reported here reflects a shift of qualified Indigenous staff to the non-government sector. Some informants contacted in the course of this study also indicated that numbers of experienced and qualified Indigenous staff are highly sought by other organisations and sectors, both government and non-government. Attractive salaries in other positions also draw some employees out of the VET sector. As the picture depicting pathways presented earlier in this report showed, pathways for Indigenous staff typically include movements in and out of the VET sector, not just within it.

Non-government organisations

Table 4 and figure 3 show the situation of Indigenous employment in non-government provider organisations. Commenting on Indigenous employment in *non-government providers* nationally (including Indigenous-controlled organisations), the Department of Education, Science and Training observes that:

Indigenous employment outcomes for the non-government providers were quite different from those of the government sector. Between 2002 and 2003 there was a substantial increase in the number of Indigenous employees in both employment categories shown in [table 5, which also includes data for 2000] and in their full time equivalent employment. The number of teaching and other professional staff increased to an all time high of 223 people (155 FTEs) as did the number and FTE of 'other staff'—193 people (183 FTEs).

(Department of Education, Science and Training 2005, p.73)

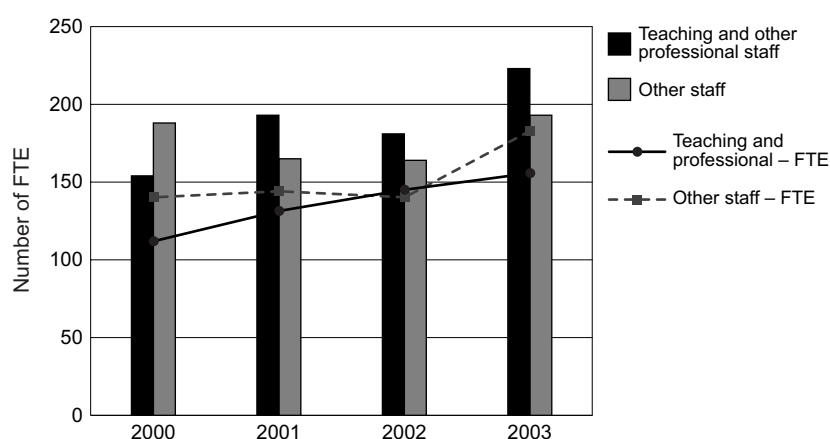
Table 4: Number and full-time equivalent Indigenous employees in non-government organisations, 2000–03

Indigenous staff	2000		2001		2002		2003	
	No.	FTE	No.	FTE	No.	FTE	No.	FTE
Teaching and other professional staff	154	110	193	130	181	144	223	155
Other staff	188	139	165	143	164	139	193	183
Totals	342	249	358	273	345	283	416	338

Note: FTE = full-time equivalent.

Source: Department of Education, Science and Training performance reports from the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (2000–03); government data exclude the Northern Territory which does not have a government VET system

Figure 3: Number and full-time equivalent Indigenous employees in non-government organisations, 2000–03



Note: FTE = full-time equivalent.

The Department of Education, Science and Training further observes:

Many of the Indigenous controlled VET providers, and especially those in the Northern Territory, are located at considerable distances from major population centres. Because of the difficulty of finding suitably qualified and experienced Indigenous staff, a number of institutions report that there is a greater emphasis on targeting students as future employees. In some places students have been kept on as part-time trainers' assistants, training them by course work and teaming them with experienced staff for short periods before moving into full-time trainer positions. In at least one college there is a policy of employing Indigenous New Apprentices and one initiative takes full time Horticulture trainees who may eventually take up a permanent job at the college.

Other reported strategies that have led to positive Indigenous employment outcomes in non-government organisations include:

- ✧ employing community based Indigenous people as tutors to build community capacities and function as mentors and role models for disengaged youth;
- ✧ affirmative action plans to attract Indigenous staff; and
- ✧ appointment of a Staff Development Officer to address professional development needs of Indigenous staff.

(Department of Education, Science and Training 2005, p.73)

Interviews and case study information collected for this project confirmed that the strategies described above indicate ways in which Indigenous staff levels in VET can be increased. However, informants also commented that such strategies require a longer view of the staffing process, are resource-hungry, and depend on stability of funding over a longer period of time than is currently the case.

Given the depth of policy commitment to increased Indigenous employment in the sector, the declining trend in Indigenous employment in government VET systems is a matter of concern for governments and many TAFE institutes. As already indicated, a range of measures have been implemented by government VET systems and providers to address the issue, including the development of Indigenous employment strategies, the designation of positions for Indigenous staff, enhanced professional development opportunities and career development planning and mentoring. Some of these initiatives (for example, designation of positions for Indigenous employees in some jurisdictions) precede the employment provisions of the national 2000–05 strategy for VET for Indigenous people, *Partners in a learning culture*, while others have been implemented as part of specific jurisdictions' commitment to that strategy. It is possible that jurisdictions' and providers' commitment to these strategies will reverse the current trend, but

clearly, dedicated efforts will be required to achieve a stable and sustainable increase in the number of Indigenous staff in VET nationally.

Discussion

The Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program data reported here underestimate the number of Indigenous staff in VET because they are based on the program's performance reports to the Commonwealth from agencies receiving funding through the program. This includes all the state/territory government systems, along with several other non-government and Indigenous-controlled providers, which in total deliver training to over 90% of Indigenous students in the public VET system (Department of Education, Science and Training 2003). It does not, however, include information from other agencies, including registered training organisations, which do not receive funding through the strategic initiatives program.

There are further limitations to the data collected through the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program and by other bodies investigating the extent and distribution of Indigenous employment in VET. These include:

- ✧ lack of information about Indigenous staff who do not identify as Indigenous in their employment
- ✧ lack of employment records or inadequacies of employment information systems which allow Indigenous staff to be identified and counted
- ✧ occasional misidentification of non-Indigenous staff as Indigenous
- ✧ many difficulties in gathering more complex information about the employment status of Indigenous staff (full-time versus part-time versus casual and the full-time equivalence of these employees)
- ✧ permanent versus non-permanent
- ✧ accurate representations of teaching versus non-teaching duties of staff (for example, many non-teaching staff do a significant amount of teaching among their various duties; it is difficult to distinguish management and policy staff from other support staff such as administrative assistants and ground staff).

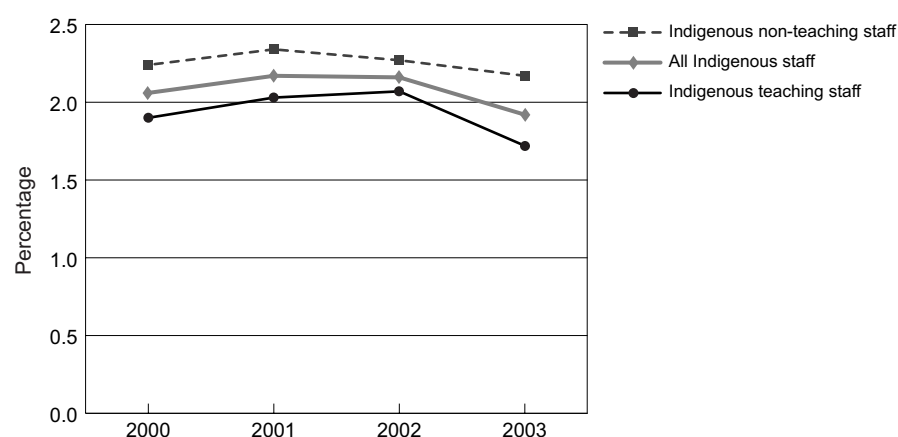
Although fully comparable data are not available for non-government providers (because this would permit identification of providers in some jurisdictions), it is possible to say a little more about the proportions of Indigenous staff in state/territory VET systems. Although the full-time equivalent data were estimated in the strategic initiatives funding information reported above, the data on numbers of staff were adequate for further analysis. The strategic initiatives funding data made available to the research team included data on non-Indigenous staff as well as Indigenous staff. It permits us to calculate Indigenous staff as a proportion of all VET staff across government VET systems (except the Northern Territory, which does not have a government VET system). (See table 5 and figure 4.)

Table 5: Number and percentage of staff in state/territory government VET systems who are Indigenous

Number		2000	2001	2002	2003
Indigenous	Teaching	415	438	452	375
	Non-teaching	414	429	388	379
	Total	829	867	840	754
Non-Indigenous	Teaching	21 443	21 167	21 377	21 425
	Non-teaching	18 031	17 905	16 686	17 071
	Total	39 474	39 072	38 063	38 496
All staff	Teaching	21 858	21 605	21 829	21 800
	Non-teaching	18 445	18 334	17 074	17 450
	Total	40 303	39 939	38 903	39 250
Percentage					
Indigenous	Teaching	1.90	2.03	2.07	1.72
	Non-teaching	2.24	2.34	2.27	2.17
	Total	2.06	2.17	2.16	1.92

Source: Department of Education, Science and Training performance reports from the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (2000–03); government data exclude the Northern Territory which does not have a government VET system

Figure 4: Percentage of staff in government VET systems who are Indigenous (by type)



Note: Excludes the Northern Territory which does not have a government VET system.

What proportion of staff in VET *should* be Indigenous?

This section explores the question of what kinds of reference points (or targets) might be appropriate for determining the appropriate level of Indigenous staff in VET in Australia. The data presented in the section below show that, while varying widely between states and territories, Indigenous people were 2.4% of the population of Australia in 2001, but Indigenous students were 3.3% of all VET students—nearly one-and-a-half times the proportion of Indigenous people in the whole population.

It is not clear which of these proportions (or some other) might be an appropriate benchmark against which to set targets for the rate of Indigenous employment in VET: the proportion of Indigenous people in the population (which varies greatly from one state or territory to another), or the rate of Indigenous students in VET in particular states or territories. The first might be justified on a principle of equal opportunity in employment; the second might be justified on arguments about the need for Indigenous teachers and role models for Indigenous students in VET and for non-Indigenous students who could be given the opportunity to extend the boundaries of their cultural understanding through a greater degree of exposure to Indigenous teachers and trainers.

The latter suggestion was widely supported by informants in this study. Many felt that, while Indigenous student participation in VET was a success story, this needed to be balanced against the levels of study and the retention and completion rates for Indigenous students. As one respondent commented, ‘Indigenous participation is high but there is a 50 per cent drop out rate according to our figures. We are not servicing their needs. We just don’t have the Indigenous teachers to deliver.’

A draft report of an evaluation of the Queensland Stepping Stones Program (Parter 2002), aimed at encouraging Indigenous people to progress through levels of the Queensland public service, suggests that there is reason to set government targets higher than the representation of Indigenous people in the population. Parter quotes a February 2002 response by the Queensland Department of Employment and Training and Youth Affairs to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, which, at Recommendation 306 states that:

[the] government attempts to encourage Aboriginal employment in the private sector, but until the private sector level of Aboriginal employment reaches an acceptable level, government should be prepared to set targets for recruitment into the public sector at somewhat higher target figures than would reflect the proportionate representation of Aboriginal people in the population.

(Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody cited in Parter 2002, p.5)

The data presented below allow us to explore some of the demographic dimensions of variation in the Indigenous population—such as age structure, gender, and population distribution (by jurisdiction and by accessibility/remoteness). It is clear, for example, that Indigenous people (and Indigenous students and staff) make up different proportions of the population of each state and territory. These variations are highly relevant in setting policy about the appropriate levels for Indigenous staffing in VET.

The proportion of Indigenous people in the Australian population as a reference

As shown in the discussion of the contemporary policy context for Indigenous staffing in VET, most jurisdictions use as the key reference value for the proportion of Indigenous staff in VET the level of Indigenous people in the population. These key reference values are used by agencies (like state training authorities, VET providers, universities) in Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program performance reports to the Commonwealth.

In state/territory government VET systems (excluding the Northern Territory, which does not have a government VET system), the proportion of Indigenous staff in 2001 nationally was 2.17%—a little below the 2.4% which represented the proportion of Indigenous people in the Australian population.

Table 6: Indigenous population by state/territory, 2001

	Indigenous population	Proportion of the total Australian Indigenous population	Proportion of the total state or territory population
	Number	Percentage	Percentage
New South Wales	134 888	29.4	2.1
Victoria	27 846	6.1	0.6
Queensland	125 910	27.5	3.5
South Australia	25 544	5.6	1.7
Western Australia	65 931	14.4	3.5
Tasmania	17 384	3.8	3.7
Northern Territory	56 875	12.4	28.8
Australian Capital Territory	3 909	0.9	1.2
Australia (includes other territories)	458 520	100.0	2.4

Source: ABS and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2003, p.16)

Table 7 shows the representation of Indigenous staff as a proportion of all staff in VET in government VET systems, based on strategic initiatives program data. Comparable data at an aggregated level are not available for non-government VET providers. The data shown here use a single reference value drawn from the data on Indigenous population by state and territory (ABS & Australian Institute for Health and Welfare 2003), namely, the proportion of Indigenous people (of all ages) in the relevant state/territory population at 30 June 2001. As did those above, strategic initiatives program data for Indigenous employment in government VET systems and non-government providers receiving this funding indicate an overall decline in the *number* of Indigenous staff in VET between 2001 and 2003, despite increases in VET staff in non-government VET providers. The decline is also evident in the *proportion* of Indigenous staff to non-Indigenous staff in almost all jurisdictions listed in table 7.

Table 7: Proportions of Indigenous staff in VET by state/territory, government VET systems

	Indigenous staff as a proportion of all staff	Reference value % Indigenous 2001	2000	2001	2002	2003
NSW	Teaching staff		1.90	1.77	1.76	1.57
	Non-teaching staff		2.39	2.18	2.41	1.94
	All staff	2.1	2.10	1.93	2.02	1.73
Vic.	Teaching staff		1.20	1.85	1.95	1.60
	Non-teaching staff		0.45	0.37	1.11	0.85
	All staff	0.6	0.85	1.16	1.60	1.29
Qld	Teaching staff		3.11	1.20	1.10	1.06
	Non-teaching staff		2.91	2.91	2.80	2.76
	All staff	3.5	3.01	2.07	1.95	1.94
SA	Teaching staff		2.58	1.79	2.06	1.28
	Non-teaching staff		2.67	1.58	1.43	1.14
	All staff	1.7	2.62	1.70	1.79	1.23
WA	Teaching staff		2.27	4.92	3.96	3.43
	Non-teaching staff		5.33	6.78	3.55	4.48
	All staff	3.5	3.83	5.90	3.76	3.94
Tas.	Teaching staff		0.41	0.46	0.84	1.04
	Non-teaching staff		0.90	1.26	1.45	1.44
	All staff	3.7	0.69	0.88	1.17	1.25
ACT	Teaching staff		0.44	0.80	1.19	0.75
	Non-teaching staff		1.48	0.89	1.76	1.09
	All staff	1.22	0.76	0.83	1.37	0.87

Source: Department of Education, Science and Training performance reports from the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (2000–03); government data exclude the Northern Territory which does not have a government VET system. Reference values for proportions of Indigenous people in state and territory populations are from ABS and Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (2003, p.16). In the latter source, the 2001 proportion of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory population is 28.8%

Taking the point from Parter's report on the Queensland Stepping Stones Program, it might be concluded from this table that only in the public VET system in Western Australia and Victoria has the proportion of Indigenous staff consistently exceeded the reference value of the proportion of Indigenous people in the population of the state.

The proportion of Indigenous students in the VET student population as a reference

The Saunders et al. (2003) report *Indigenous people in vocational education and training: A statistical review of progress* auspiced by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) shows that the numbers of Indigenous students increased from 1997 to 2001, and that more Indigenous

people are undertaking VET (as a proportion of Indigenous people aged 15 years and above). As table 8 shows, 20.4% of the Indigenous population aged 15 years and above were participating in VET in 2001, compared with 11.2% of the non-Indigenous population aged 15 years and above.

Table 8: Comparison of VET populations—Indigenous versus other, 1997 and 2001

Indicator	Indigenous			Other ^(a)		
	1997	2001	Change (1997–2001)	1997	2001	Change (1997–2001)
Number of VET students	38 528	58 046	+50.7%	1 420 072	1 698 723	+19.6%
Australian population 15 years and above	241 301	285 296	+18.2%	14 363 309	15 140 746	+5.4%
VET students as a proportion of respective population aged 15 years and above	16.0%	20.4%	+4.4 % points	9.9%	11.2%	+1.3 % points

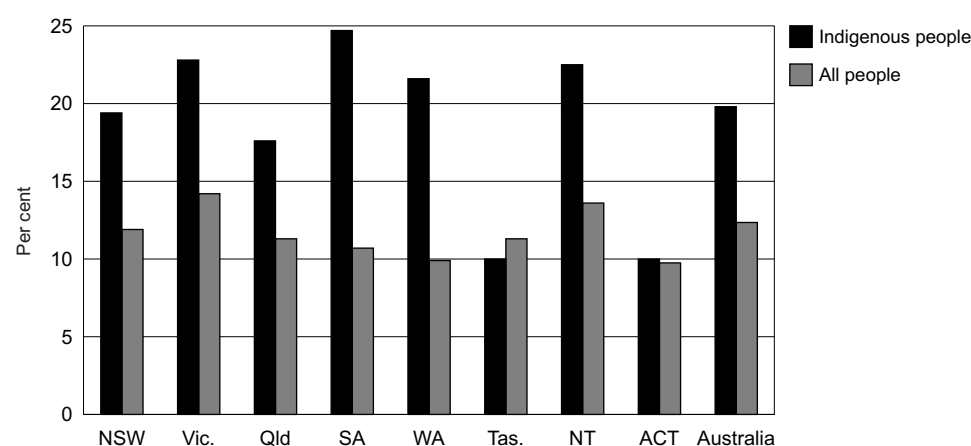
Note: (a) Includes persons for whom Indigenous status is not known.

Source: Saunders et al. (2003, table 2, p.9)

Many, although far from all Indigenous students have not completed high school before undertaking their VET studies; and many enter and remain at certificate I and II courses rather than higher Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) levels (certificates III and IV and diploma) which produce stronger employment outcomes for those completing the courses (Kemmis et al. 2004). In general, Indigenous students participate at a higher rate than their non-Indigenous counterparts in courses at lower AQF levels (and in adult basic education courses and sometimes in non-accredited training) with more limited employment outcomes. They are thus more likely to be clustered in particular areas of VET; for example, in training offered in Indigenous units or adult basic education, or, in some of the best but infrequent cases, in training linked to particular local employment or employment opportunities.

Using data provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and NCVER, the Productivity Commission report, *Provision of government services 2005* gives the following data on Indigenous participation rates by Indigenous status in 2003 for each state and territory and for Australia as a whole. Figure 4.7 from that report is reproduced as figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Participation rates in VET by Indigenous status, 2003



Notes: Participation rates are derived from calculating students aged 15–64 (labour market age) as a percentage of the estimated residential population in the corresponding age groups. Indigenous participation is based on students who self-identified in 2003, and does not include students for whom Indigenous status is unknown. Excludes students participating in VET in Schools.

Sources: ABS (2004) *Experimental estimates and projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians* (cat.no.3238.0), ABS (2003) *Estimated Resident Population, By Age and Sex, Preliminary—30 June 2003* (cat.no.3201.0) and NCVER (unpublished 2003), National collection for VET providers

Like table 7 giving the distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff by state/territory presented earlier, figure 5 also shows wide variation in student participation rates by jurisdiction. Nationally, participation rates for Indigenous students are one-and-a-half times the rates for non-Indigenous students. This is reflected in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory, where Indigenous participation rates are about one-and-a-half times the non-Indigenous rates. In Tasmania, by contrast, the Indigenous participation rate is about equal to, but a little below, the non-Indigenous participation rate, while in the Australian Capital Territory, they are about the same, but the Indigenous participation rate is a little higher than the non-Indigenous rate. In South Australia and Western Australia, however, Indigenous participation rates are nearly two-and-a-half times the corresponding non-Indigenous participation rates.

If these levels of participation are used as a reference figure for Indigenous staffing in VET, as would be argued on a principle of recognising and responding equitably to cultural diversity in the VET student population, substantially more Indigenous staff would be needed by most employing organisations.

Taking into account the age structure of the Indigenous population, including the age structure by gender

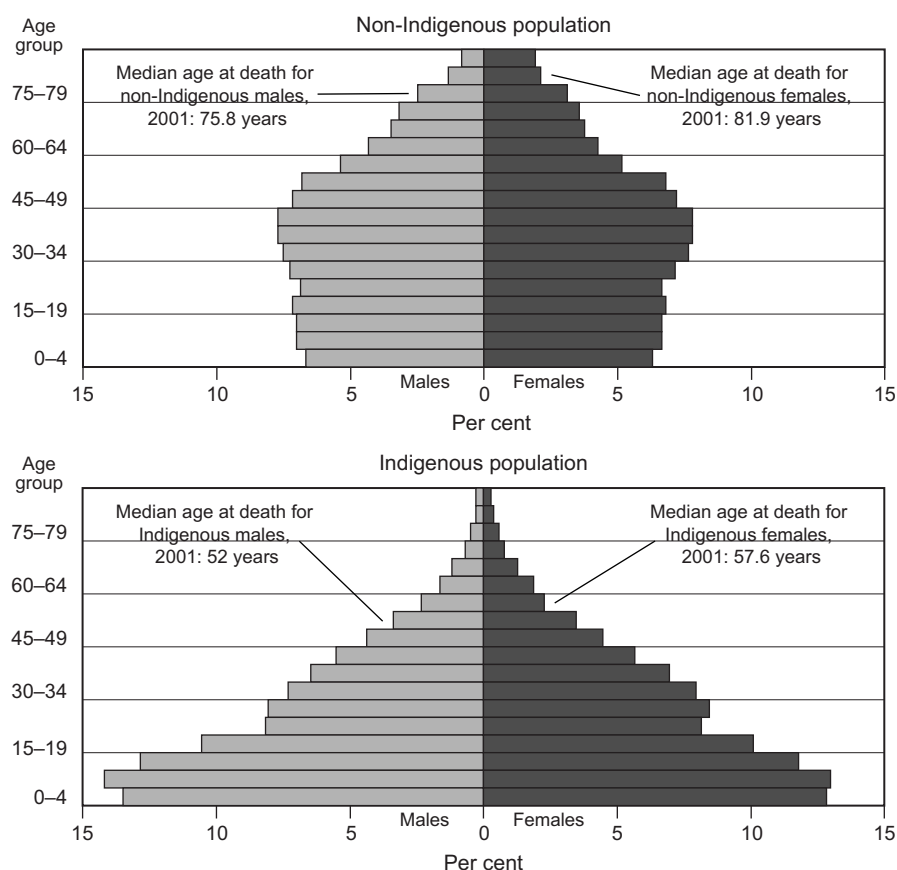
Figure 6 shows the age structure of the non-Indigenous and Indigenous populations of Australia. These give a framework within which to consider expectations about targets for numbers of Indigenous students in VET, and by inference, Indigenous staff in VET. The numbers given below are national figures, and relevant benchmarks for each state and territory differ markedly from this national picture. A more nuanced view of strategic workforce planning in VET might take account of the age structure of the student population, and, in particular, the Indigenous student population.

The age structure of the non-Indigenous population of Australia is typical of developed Western industrial countries around the world, and is 'typical of many fully industrialised countries such as England, Germany, Japan and the USA' (ABS 2004a, p.3). We have added to the figure the median age at death for non-Indigenous males and females in 2001: 75.8 years for males and 81.9 years for females.

The age structure of the Indigenous population of Australia is unlike that of the developed and industrialised West. It is similar to the age structure of some of the poorest nations in the world, for example, Ethiopia and Tanzania. The median age of Indigenous Australians in 2001 was 20 years, by contrast with the median age of 35 years for non-Indigenous Australians, a difference of 15 years. The life expectancy of Indigenous males in 2001 was 56.3 years (compared with 77 years for males in the general population) and for Indigenous females it was 62.8 years (compared with 82.4 years for females in the general population) (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2003). The median ages of death of Indigenous males and females in 2001 are also indicated on the figure: 52 years for Indigenous males and 57.6 years for Indigenous females. In each case, the median age for Indigenous people at death was over 20 years fewer than for their non-Indigenous counterparts (ABS & Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2003).

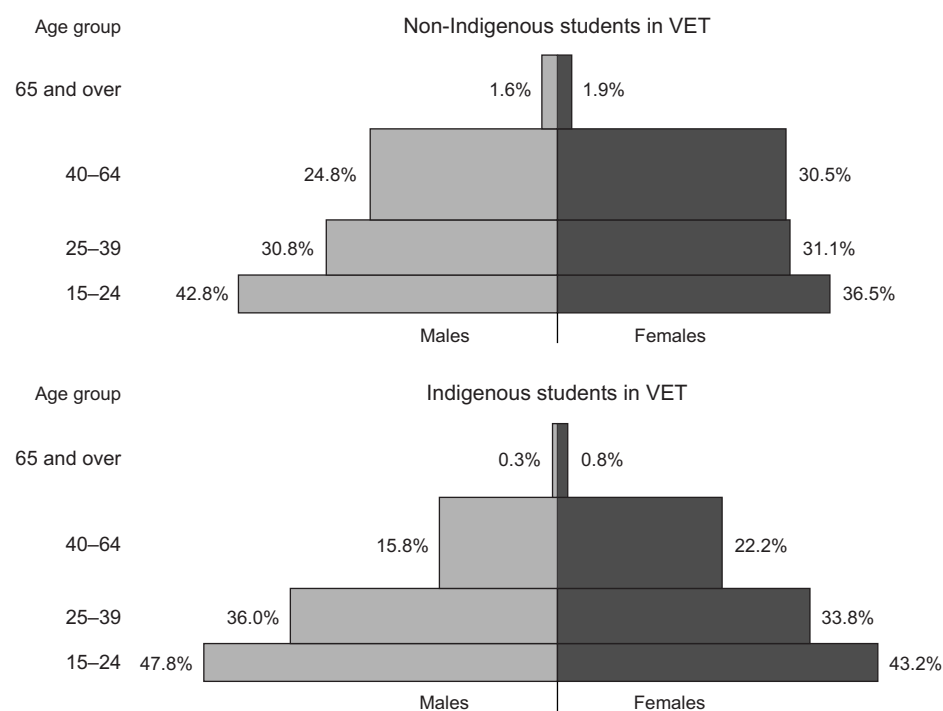
As figure 7 shows (although the age groups differ slightly from those in figure 6), the age structures of non-Indigenous and Indigenous participation in VET differ from one another, but they are similar in shape to their respective age structures in the population of Australia.

Figure 6: The age structure of the non-Indigenous and Indigenous populations of Australia, 2001



Sources: Estimated resident population, based on ABS Census (2001); median age at death data, ABS and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2003)

Figure 7: The age structure of non-Indigenous and Indigenous participation in VET, 2001

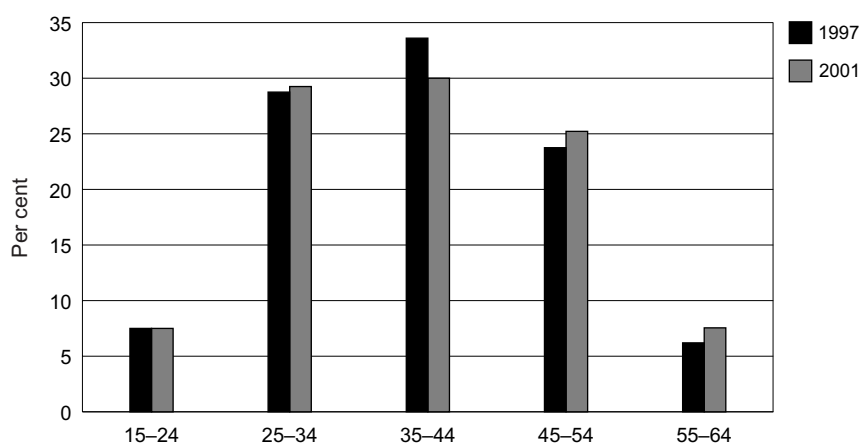


Source: Calculated from data about Indigenous participation in VET by age, presented in Saunders et al. (2003, table 9, p.14)

In general, then, Indigenous people are younger than their non-Indigenous counterparts and have shorter lives. If they start their VET studies later, they are likely to have fewer years in which to complete their studies, gain employment and experience, and perhaps move into a career in teaching in VET. The age structure of the Indigenous population shows much about the conditions of life and health of Indigenous people (similar conditions to those of non-Indigenous people in Australia in years around 1910), and of the consequences of these conditions that could or should be taken into account in arranging and explaining education and employment arrangements and outcomes.

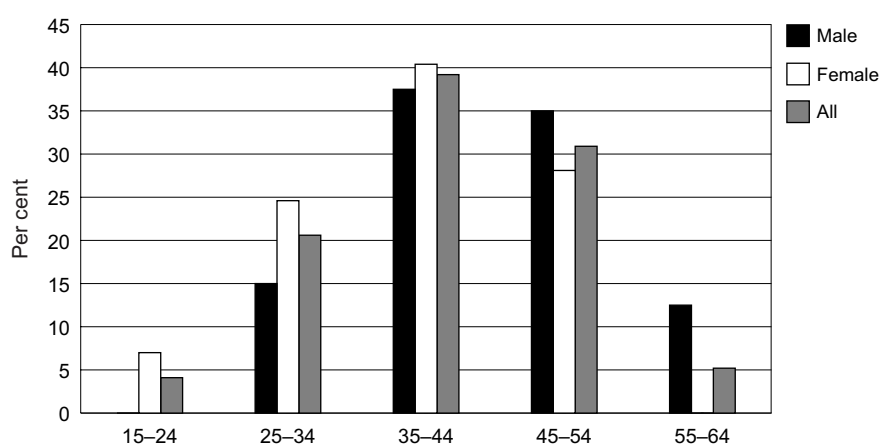
How do these age structures—for the general populations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in VET—compare with the age structure of VET staff? NCVER, in its report *Profiling the national vocational education and training workforce*, presents ABS statistics on the age profile of VET professionals 1997 and 2001 (2004, p.29). This is shown in figure 8. The distribution of Indigenous staff in VET surveyed for this study is presented in figure 9.

Figure 8: Age profile of VET professionals, 1997 and 2001 (%)



Source: NCVER (2004, figure 6, p.29)

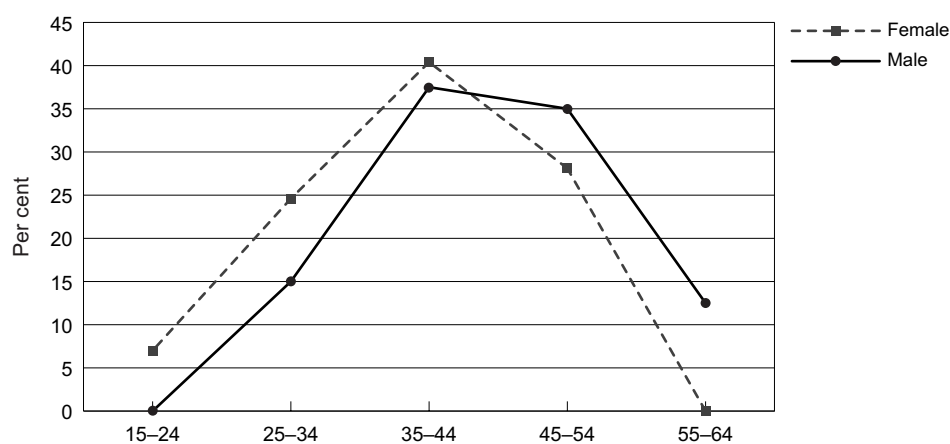
Figure 9: Survey respondents by age and sex (%)



While the overall pattern of the age structure for all Indigenous staff is similar to that for VET professionals in general, the age structures for Indigenous males and females responding to the survey are rather different. This is shown more clearly in figure 10. In general, this figure shows that males responding to the survey are in slightly older age groups than females. If this trend were typical of the overall age and gender structure of Indigenous staff in VET nationally, then it would be likely that the gender balance of rising generations of older and probably more senior staff will change towards a

greater proportion of females, assuming, which it may not be prudent to do, that opportunities for promotion and access to more senior positions are equitably distributed for males and females.

Figure 10: Percentages of male and female survey respondents by age



Note: Percentages are of males or of females in the relevant age group.

If these age structures were characteristic of the population of Indigenous employment in VET (which cannot be assumed, given the sample responding to the survey), there would be very significant implications for Indigenous staffing in VET at each stage of the employment cycle, suggesting that Indigenous workforce planning strategies may need to be particularly gender-sensitive. Similarly, if these age structures were typical of the population of Indigenous staff in VET at large, they would have significant implications for Indigenous students in VET, especially in terms of the nature of the gendered educational experiences of male and female students interacting with male and female Indigenous teachers and other professionals as role models.

Moreover, if these differences between male and female age distributions were characteristic of Indigenous staff in VET in general, it would indicate that a major shift in the VET workforce is likely to occur in coming years as older males retire and a younger generation of females rises through the age structure. Since the sample is biased towards staff in administrative positions, this might also have implications for the structure of the Indigenous workforce in VET, with a possible trend towards a greater proportion of women in senior positions, assuming (which may be false) gender equity in promotion and access to senior positions in VET.

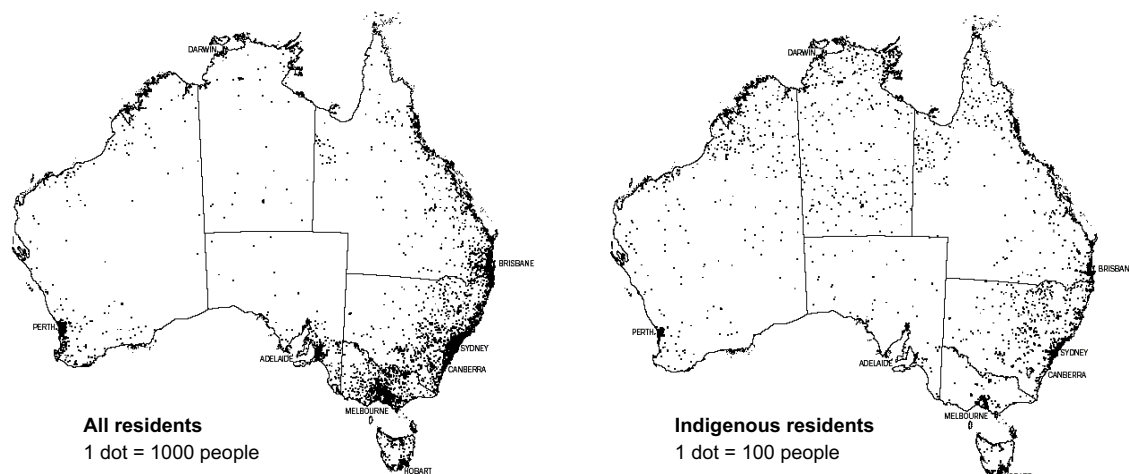
Taking into account the geographical distribution of Indigenous people

Opportunities for Indigenous people to undertake VET studies and to take up employment in VET (and other occupations) vary markedly between different regions in Australia. Different kinds of industries are found in different areas, with different kinds of employment opportunities. As the mid-term review of *Partners in a learning culture* showed, some Indigenous communities are undertaking close analyses of economic development opportunities in their areas, as well as skill needs and shortages in existing industries, and developing plans for education and training to match their economic and community development aspirations. In the recent collection of research readings *Equity in vocational education and training* (Bowman 2004) Marika et al. describe the efforts made by an Indigenous community to develop training to suit its social, economic and environmental conditions and how this set of community aspirations often come into conflict with performance measures and assessment. The authors suggest ‘... that a shift away from focusing on statistical outcome measurement and its associated notions of disadvantaged groups allows us to see the strengths of Indigenous communities in their learning cultures’ (p.72).

The distributions of the whole of the resident population of Australia and the Indigenous population of Australia in June 2001 are shown in figure 11. For the whole population, each dot on

the map represents one *thousand* people; for the Indigenous population, each dot represents one *hundred* people.

Figure 11: Population distribution of the whole estimated resident population, and the Indigenous resident population of Australia, 30 June 2001



Sources: ABS (2004b, pp.2, 3)

The ABS comments:

While most of the Australian population is concentrated along the eastern and south-west coasts ... the Indigenous population is more widely spread. The total population is contained within the most densely settled areas of the continent, while the Indigenous population live in areas covering more of the continent. This partly reflects the higher level of urbanisation among the non-Indigenous population than the non-Indigenous. Indigenous people are much more likely to live in very remote areas than the non-Indigenous population. The SLAs [Statistical Local Areas] with the highest number of Indigenous people per square kilometre were located in Darwin, whereas the SLAs with the highest densities for the population as a whole were located in Sydney. (ABS 2004b, p.3)

Partners in a learning culture indicated that:

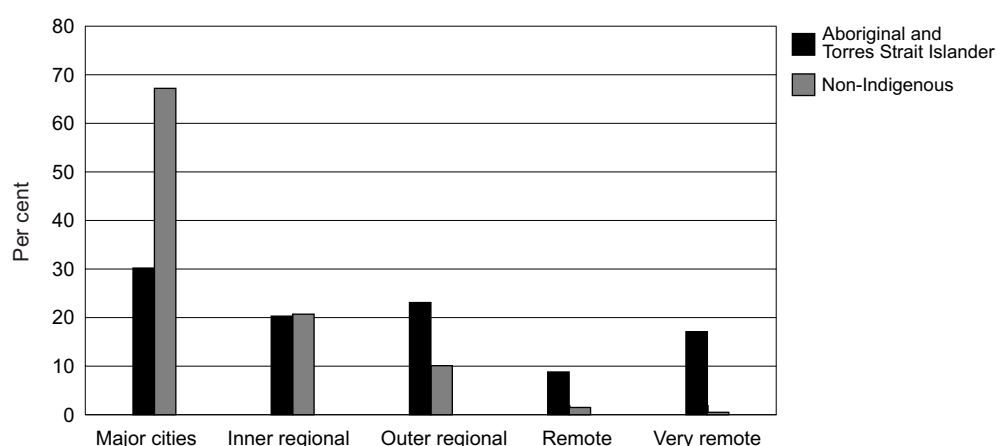
[In 1996]... 64 per cent of Indigenous people living in rural areas live more than 50 km from the nearest TAFE College ... Indigenous students comprise a much higher proportion of Australians enrolled in VET in remote communities. For example in 1996, 26 per cent of Indigenous VET participants lived in remote communities compared with just three per cent of non-Indigenous VET participants. (ANTA 2000a, p.13)

The dots on the map of the Indigenous population of Australia show not only where Indigenous *students and potential students* in VET are located, but also where Indigenous *staff and potential staff* in VET are located. It gives a sense of the great differences between metropolitan, rural and remote, educational and employment needs and opportunities in VET, as well as other sectors of education and employment. Such differences were explored in appendices to Saunders et al. (2003)—an analysis of Indigenous participation in VET by metropolitan, rural and remote locations.

In the Northern Territory, for example, where Indigenous people represent 28.8% of the population in 2001, would one expect 28.8% of students in VET to be Indigenous and 28.8% of VET staff to be Indigenous? And to what extent would one expect the conduct and staffing of courses to reflect the different proportions of the Indigenous people living in metropolitan, rural and remote regions of the territory?

Nationally, there are great differences in the distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people by remoteness. Figure 12 summarises these differences.

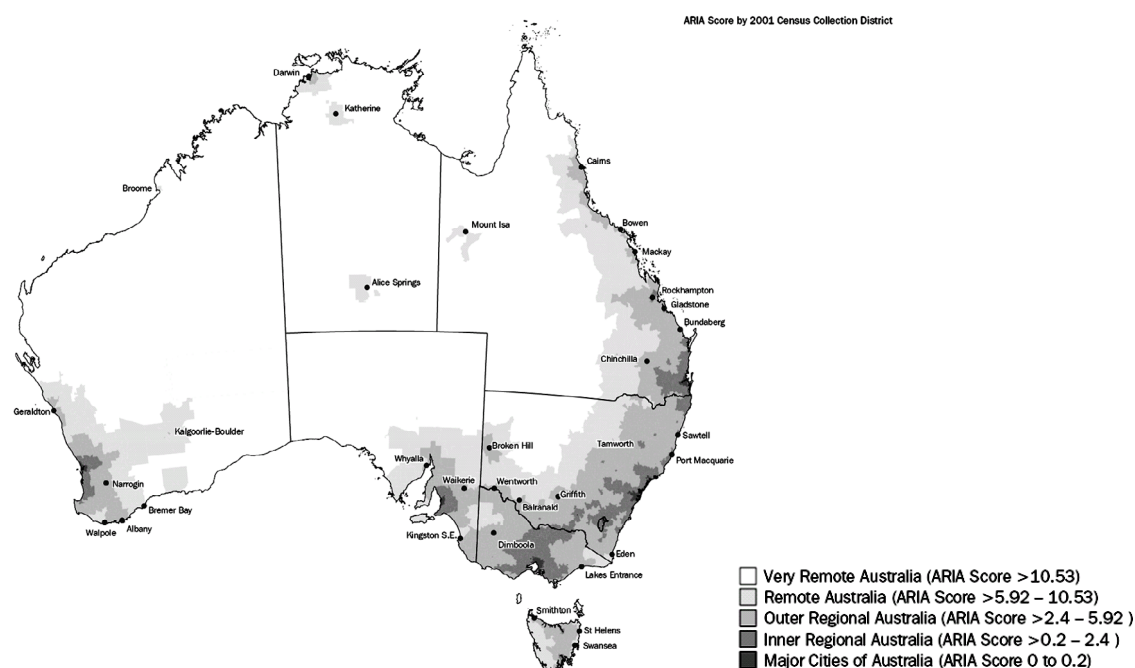
Figure 12: Location of Australian population by Indigenous status and remoteness, 2001



Source: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2003, table 4)

Since 2001, the ABS has been using a measure of remoteness called the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia developed by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and subsequently revised by the ABS in the light of consultations (ABS 2001). In this measure, 'accessibility' is based on a geographical measure of distance (road distance between places in Australia) rather than measures like cost of getting to a major city (which are affected by socioeconomic variables). A score is calculated for each 'populated place' in Australia to give an index value. The ABS (2001, p.18) cautions against inappropriate use of Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia scores in policy contexts where other measures of remoteness or accessibility may be more appropriate, but it is appropriate here to consider access to VET and employment in VET at a national level (the former is a national measure of accessibility/remoteness, and other measures may be appropriate within states or territories or other regions). Figure 13 is the ABS map of remoteness areas of Australia, showing the five levels (major cities, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote) used in the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia classification (which also, since 2001, includes 'migratory' for people living outside Australia, on ships, and others).

Figure 13: Australian Standard Geographical Classification Remoteness Structure



Source: ABS (2001, p.19)

Using a three-fold classification ‘metropolitan’, ‘rural’ and ‘remote’ (based on a report by Gelade & Stehlik 2004), Saunders et al. (2003, p.15) present data showing the participation rates of Indigenous students in metropolitan, rural and remote locations. Participation rates indicate the number of students in VET as a proportion of the total number of the stated social group (Saunders et al. 2003, p.8).

Table 9: Participation rates by geographic regions by Indigenous status, 2001^(a)

	Indigenous population			Other population		
		('000)	(%) ^(b)		('000)	(%) ^(b)
Metropolitan	17.1	106.1	37.7	9.3	11 113.3	73.1
Rural	21.4	100.3	35.7	13.5	3 763.3	24.8
Remote	19.9	74.7	26.6	15.3	325.0	2.1
Total	19.7	281.0	100.0	10.7	15 201.6	100.0

Notes: (a) Includes students living outside Australia and students whose region was not known.

(b) Proportion of population where region was known.

Source: Saunders, et al. (2003), table 12, p.15

Saunders et al. comment:

Indigenous people from rural areas show the highest participation rate (21%) while Indigenous people residing in metropolitan areas have the lowest participation rate (17%). About 20% of Indigenous people from remote locations participated in vocational education and training in 2001. (Saunders et al. 2003, p.14)

If employment targets for Indigenous employees were set on the basis of the participation rates of Indigenous students in VET, and if local providers aimed to set their own targets on the basis of Indigenous student participation in their own regions, then we might expect 37.7% of Indigenous teachers in VET to be working in providers serving metropolitan regions, 35.5% to be in providers serving rural locations, and 26.6% to be in providers serving remote locations. That is, particular providers might want to use Indigenous student participation by location as a parameter to be considered in setting their own targets for Indigenous staffing.

The data available from our survey may or may not give an accurate picture of whether Indigenous employment by location matches what might be expected of Indigenous student participation by location. Further research is needed to clarify this. In our survey of Indigenous employees in VET, in which Indigenous managers and administrators in VET were over-represented (and thus major cities), respondents were asked to give the postcode of their place of residence (which might differ slightly from the postcode of their principal work place). These postcodes were matched to the ABS Australian Standard Geographical Classification Remoteness Structure (based on Accessibility/ Remoteness Index of Australia scores by 2001 Census Collection Districts, as in the map in figure 13). Table 10 summarises the distribution of respondents' residences.

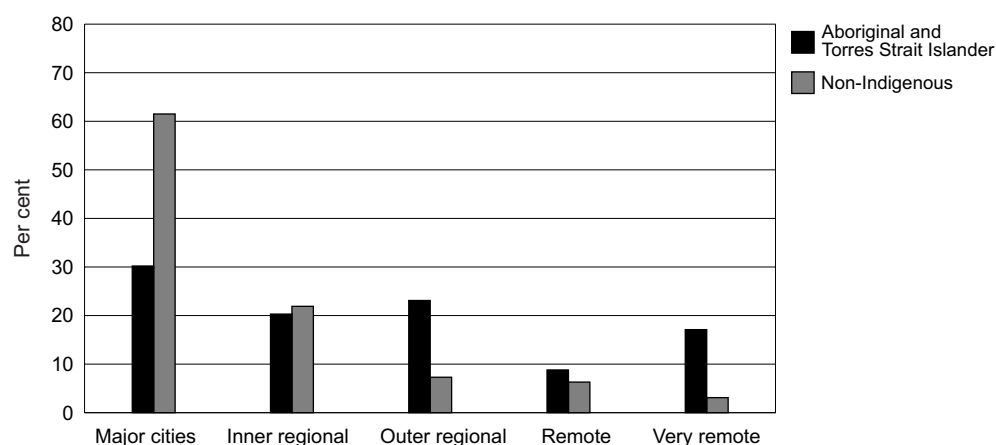
Table 10: Distribution of Indigenous staff in VET survey respondents by place of residence

Residences of Indigenous staff in VET survey respondents		
	Number	%
Major cities	59	61.5
Inner regional	21	21.9
Outer regional	7	7.3
Remote	6	6.3
Very remote	3	3.1
Total	96	100.0

Source: Survey data using ABS Australian Standard Geographical Classification Remoteness Structure index measures for postcodes

Figure 14 compares the distribution of survey respondents with the distribution of the Indigenous population of Australia by accessibility/remoteness of their places of residence. As the figure shows, survey respondents were biased towards major cities, and outer regional, remote and very remote locations were under-represented.

Figure 14: Distribution of Indigenous population of Australia compared with Indigenous staff in VET survey respondents by place of residence



Source: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2003, p.4)

Other analyses of the survey data showed that Indigenous staff respondents differed in location by the kinds of roles they had. Staff describing their work as being in ‘support’ or ‘other’ roles generally lived in major cities or inner regional areas (35 lived in major cities, nine in inner regional areas, one in an outer regional area, and one in a very remote area). By comparison, greater proportions of staff describing their roles as principally ‘teaching’ or ‘administration’ lived in outer-regional, remote or very remote locations compared with staff in support roles (four of 12 whose roles were mostly ‘teaching’, and nine of 27 staff whose roles were mostly ‘administration’).

Conclusion: What proportion of VET staff should be Indigenous?

The question of the appropriate proportion of Indigenous staff in a VET system, in a particular VET provider, in a particular jurisdiction and location is clearly vexed. Policy around Australia has been based on using the proportion of Indigenous people in the population of the relevant state or territory at the last census. There is a hint of a challenge to this in the Queensland Wal-Meta comments in response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, in that government VET systems might need to set a higher proportion while the total of non-government sector providers (who are encouraged to adopt the state or territory target) lag behind proportional representation of Indigenous staff.

The information presented in this section suggests that state or territory targets are a crude policy instrument. While recognising the differences in the proportions of Indigenous people in the different state and territory populations, this proportion does not reflect variations between regions (major cities, inner and outer regional, remote and very remote) within jurisdictions—something that particular provider organisations may need to take into account. Nor does it adequately respond to the age and gender structure of the Indigenous population by comparison with the non-Indigenous population of Australia.

More particularly, using the proportion of Indigenous people in the population of a state or territory as a reference point does not reflect the fact that Indigenous students are a greater

proportion of the student population in VET in most jurisdictions, and that it might be reasonable, both for those students and their non-Indigenous counterparts, if the proportion of Indigenous students in the whole populations of students in VET were used as the benchmark. This would mean that existing targets for the employment of Indigenous staff in many jurisdictions with larger proportions of Australia's Indigenous people would increase by a factor of 1.5 or so nationally (although it would vary between jurisdictions in line with the local proportion of Indigenous students among all students).

Employment and retention

Research question 2: What are the patterns of employment and retention of these staff across the employment cycle?

Qualifications of Indigenous staff in VET

The recent national NCVER study, *Profiling the national vocational education and training workforce* (NCVER 2004) included an analysis of the qualifications of all teachers in TAFE which found that 17% had trade or occupational qualifications relevant to their teaching. Perhaps unexpectedly, however, a large proportion (around two in three) had no education or training qualifications (NCVER 2004, pp.34–5), although Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training is said to be the minimum qualification for teaching in the VET sector. No doubt many in this group have been assessed as having qualifications or experience equivalent to the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, but there is a question about the exact proportion of teachers holding no appropriate education or training qualification. As table 11 shows, many of the 99 Indigenous VET teachers and other staff participating in the survey for this study held trade and other qualifications—and many were very well qualified.

Table 11: Qualifications of Indigenous VET teachers

	Frequency	Percentage
Trade certificate	16	16.2
TAFE certificate	31	31.3
Diploma	29	29.3
Undergraduate degree	29	29.3
Postgraduate degree	9	9.1
Other	14	14.1

Main job functions of Indigenous staff in VET

Turning to what Indigenous employees do in VET, there are a variety of jobs Indigenous people hold in the sector, many of which involve multiple tasks across the spectrum. Some teach, some coordinate and administer programs, some work in management and policy positions, and some work in other support positions (including administrative assistance and ground staff and other kinds of work).

Table 12 suggests that Indigenous teachers in VET may be under-represented in the survey sample—but it may also be true that they are not. The Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program data reported earlier show a rough equivalence between the number of teaching and other professional staff on the one hand, and support staff on the other. Those identifying their main functions as ‘teaching’ and ‘administration’ in the survey combine to a total of 47.1%, which is similar to the proportion of ‘teaching and other professional staff’ in these data, but it is not clear that those doing the reporting (employees in the survey sample and employers in the strategic initiative program data) are categorising staff in the same way.

Table 12: Main function of current VET job

Main job function	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Teaching	12	13.8	13.8
Administration	29	33.3	47.1
Support role	19	21.8	69.0
Other	27	31.0	100.0
Missing	12		
Total	99	100.0	

Note: Those listed as 'missing' are mostly respondents who identified their current jobs as government administration and some who have both teaching and coordination roles.

Many Indigenous employees who have primarily non-teaching functions nevertheless do some teaching. For example, a number in coordinating and management positions are responsible for offering cross-cultural awareness training. Although 12 respondents to our survey indicated that their primary function was teaching, more than twice that number did some teaching (see table 15 in appendix 2). A few Indigenous staff teach only in 'mainstream' courses, more teach Indigenous students only, and a similar number teach in both areas.

Employment conditions

In TAFE colleges and institutes around the country, it is sometimes suggested that about 30% to 40% of all teaching staff might be expected to be in permanent positions and about 60% to 70% in contract or casual positions. 'TAFE teachers overall are employed on a non-permanent basis. Across the states and territories this figure is as high as 77.9% in New South Wales and 72.8% in South Australia, and as low as 56.0% in the Northern Territory' (NCVER 2004, p.18).

The situation for Indigenous staff in VET participating in the survey is roughly the reverse of this expectation. Although many Indigenous staff said that permanency in their positions was (or had been) a pressing concern for them, 73.5% of respondents were currently in permanent positions and 26.5% were in fixed-term contract or casual positions (see table 16 in appendix 2).

The following comment of one Indigenous informant stands for literally hundreds of similar statements made in interviews, case studies and consultations undertaken for the study reported here:

It is vital that Aboriginal staff have a major role in the implementation of programs, but it is impractical when they have no job security. There is no sustainability for me, and I am sure there will be no sustainability in our projects for my Indigenous clients because of the uncertainty of my role.

A greater proportion than might be expected of Indigenous employees participating in the survey were also in full-time positions, rather than part-time (see table 17 in appendix 2).

A cross-tabulation of type of contract (permanent, fixed-term, casual) by employment status (full-time, part-time) shows that 59 of 83 Indigenous respondents (or 71.1%) for whom data were available were both permanent and full-time. This finding may be surprising to some in the sector, particularly among Indigenous staff in VET who, in qualitative data gathered in the survey and in interviews, argued emphatically and repeatedly for just these conditions for Indigenous staff in the sector. The figure reported here may reflect the bias in the sample participating in the survey, which included more non-teaching staff, more senior staff, and generally older staff than might be general in the sector, including among all Indigenous employees in the sector.

The funding of positions for Indigenous staff in VET

Not all staff in VET are aware of the sources of the funding for their positions; about half of the Indigenous staff in VET participating in the survey knew of the sources of funding for the positions they occupy. Many, for example, were aware that their positions were funded through the

Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program, or that particular states or territories and particular TAFE institutes (for example) had taken responsibility for funding Indigenous positions from normal operating grants. Forty per cent of those who knew the source of funding for their positions stated that they were funded from ordinary operating funds for their agency (including such organisations as government departments, TAFE institutes and other kinds of VET providers; see table 19). Many of those whose funding was from the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (and/or the National Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Strategy) were anxious about being on recurring fixed-term contracts (often for a year or less), and in some cases, angry that their state or territory or VET provider would not act to secure their position by ensuring it was made permanent, and funded from ordinary institutional operating funds. As one respondent commented, 'if they withdraw IESIP we will all go down'. This frustration is understandable. Strategic initiatives program funding is intended to be a 'supplementary' source of income to the states and territories (Department of Education, Science and Training 2003, p.xiv).

One of the consequences of the reliance on short-term funding is that the programs introduced are compromised by a lack of continuity of staff. As one respondent said:

It is vital that Aboriginal staff/people have a major role in the implementation of programs but it is impractical when they have no job security. Currently the majority by far of teaching staff are casual/part-time. They have no job security. This is totally ineffective. It is not possible for casual employees who do not know whether they have a job from semester to semester to introduce effective innovative programs and that is what is needed in Aboriginal education.

One of the ways VET agencies act to secure Indigenous staff and positions for Indigenous staff is to designate positions as principally for Indigenous people (although sometimes non-Indigenous people are appointed to such positions in the absence of qualified and appointable Indigenous applicants). Sixty-four per cent of those responding to the survey were in such positions—again, perhaps reflecting a bias in this sample towards states and territories which have made deliberate efforts in recent years to secure Indigenous staff and funding for their positions to ordinary operating funds (see table 20).

Among respondents to our survey, most designated positions were funded from institutions' ordinary operating funds, although significant numbers of designated positions are also funded from federal, state/territory and other sources (see table 21).

Indigenous staff contacted in the survey were predominantly in permanent employment, most funded from ordinary sources of institutional funding, with similar proportions of these permanent staff (around 16%) in positions funded by federal, state or other grants (see table 22).

Most permanent Indigenous VET staff contacted for the survey were in administrative positions, followed by other positions, support roles, and teaching (although it should be remembered that many staff in primarily non-teaching positions do some teaching; table 23). The smaller number of Indigenous VET staff in contract and casual positions, by contrast, were spread almost equally between administration, support roles and other positions, with a smaller proportion in teaching positions.

Retention: Time in the job

Some participants in the survey had been in a number of positions (inside or outside the VET sector) in the last five years. While 32.3% had been in a single paid position for the last five years, 22.9% had two jobs, 26.0% had three jobs, 8.3% had four jobs, and 10.4% had five or more jobs in the last five years (including one who had ten identifiable jobs; table 24).

In relation to the number of positions respondents had *in the VET sector* in the last five years, 51.6% reported having held only one VET sector job, 26.3% had two, 11.6% had three, and 8.5% had four or more (in one case, ten; table 25).

A sizeable majority (58.9%) of respondents to our survey had been in their current positions in VET for two years or less. Twenty per cent had been in their positions for less than a year, a further 27.1% for a year; and a further 11.8% for two years.

On the other hand, some Indigenous employees in VET have worked in the sector for a long time—cumulatively, just over a quarter (a 27.6%) had been in their current job for five years or more. Of these, 4.7% had been employed in their current VET job for 15 years or more, 7.1% had been in their current job for 12 to 14 years, and 15.8% had been in their current job for five to 11 years.

The picture of Indigenous employment in VET revealed by our survey differs markedly from the data provided in *Profiling the national vocational education and training workforce* (NCVER 2004) on the length of service of all (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) TAFE teachers in Australia:

For the four states [covered in the *Profiling the National VET Workforce* data], a substantial proportion of permanent teachers have had at least 15 years of service (ranges from 41.4% to 52.6%). There was a larger proportion of males than females with 15 or more years of service in all four states. By contrast, there were relatively few permanent teaching staff with fewer than five years service across the four states (range from 1.9% to 12.3%). For each of the states, there are more permanent female teachers with fewer than five years service than permanent male teachers.

As would be expected, length of service for non-permanent staff teaching is lower than for permanent teaching staff. Indeed, for the three states which reported these data, between approximately 59.4% and 79.2% of non-permanent staff had fewer than five years service (NCVER 2004, p.22)

Comparing the data from our survey of Indigenous VET staff (not all in government VET and not all of whom classified themselves either wholly or partly as teachers) with the data on the TAFE workforce in four states suggests that a much smaller proportion of Indigenous staff have been in their jobs for more than 15 years (4.7% compared with over 40%), and it seems likely that a far larger proportion of Indigenous staff have been in their positions for fewer than five years (nearly 75%) compared with total staff in the four states (from 1.9% to 12.3% of permanent teaching staff and from 59.4% to 79.2% of non-permanent staff).

There is also some ‘churning’ in employment in the VET sector generally; that is, people move in and out of employment in the sector. Among respondents to our survey, a majority of respondents (54.4% of those now in a VET position) were previously in another VET position; that is, their *last job*—while 45.6% were previously employed outside VET. One-third of respondents’ *second last jobs* were inside the VET sector; two-thirds outside VET. A slightly higher proportion (58.8%) of respondents reported that their *third last job* was in the VET sector and 41.2% outside VET. Around three-quarters of respondents reported that their fourth and fifth last jobs were outside VET, and about a quarter reported that they were then employed in VET (table 26). Most of those moving in and out of the sector were younger and were on short-term contracts. Further research is needed to explore whether there are differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees in their respective rates of movement in and out of employment in the sector.

Discussion

Indigenous staff in VET occupy a variety of positions as teachers, managers and administrators, and support staff; the positions of many involve more than one of these roles. They are employed under a variety of conditions: full-time, part-time or casual, permanent or on various kinds of short-term contracts. A small percentage have been in their positions for more than ten years; many (especially those on contracts) have been in their positions for less than a year. Some are in designated positions. Many are employed through Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program funding, but an increasing proportion are funded through the operating grants of their institutions. A large proportion has also been highly mobile in their employment: they have been in a variety of jobs both inside and outside the VET sector over the last five years.

A greater proportion of Indigenous informants contacted in this study were in permanent and full-time positions than is likely for non-Indigenous counterparts in VET. Many we spoke to were in senior positions in policy and administration. Our survey respondents were more widely spread across employment conditions, but the sample was also biased towards more senior staff.

Some data on these characteristics and conditions of employment are collected nationally through the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program, but the information is not systematically collected in a single national database to allow accurate, comprehensive and comparable analysis across all jurisdictions, let alone at the organisational level. Respondents to our survey illustrated the variation in these dimensions of employment, but it is unlikely that the variation shown in our sample matches that of the Australian population of Indigenous people in VET, or the general population of staff in VET. Systematic data linked to Indigenous status on all of these dimensions are needed not only for accountability purposes, but also as an indicator of whether VET organisations or systems are meeting policy targets in Indigenous employment. They are essential for strategic workforce planning purposes to enable systems and provider organisations to determine the levels of Indigenous staffing needed currently and in the future, partly in relation to the Indigenous status of their client groups, and certainly on the grounds of equal opportunity in employment. The Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs has come to this conclusion, and states and territories appear to have agreed in principle. It is essential that the decision be acted upon.

Implication

The ageing of the population of VET staff, Indigenous staff included, means that many more staff will be needed in the next five years. Given the mobility of Indigenous staff, the attractiveness of qualified Indigenous staff to employers in all sectors, and the rising proportion of Indigenous students in VET, the need for Indigenous staff is likely to be even more urgent than the already pressing need for a rising generation of new staff in VET.

Crucial to the question of how many Indigenous staff will be needed is the question of the extent to which Indigenous staff are currently being retained in VET, and the extent to which they will be retained in the future. Part of the answer to this question is how satisfied current Indigenous staff are with their employment conditions, and with the way they experience the whole employment cycle in VET—from position identification to professional development and succession planning.

Retention and support

Research question 3: Factors influencing the retention (and loss) of Indigenous staff in VET

Research question 4: What kinds and levels of support are available and accessible to Indigenous people, and what is their experience of the availability, accessibility and appropriateness of this support?

Retention of Indigenous staff

The need to attract and subsequently retain Indigenous staff is recognised both nationally and by the states and territories as being an important feature of any employment policy. Low retention rates of Indigenous staff influence or are the result of the degree of success that other strategic directions arising from policy can expect to have (Australian Capital Territory Public Service n.d., p.11). Career planning, for instance, is a developmental process based on the identification of the professional goals and aspirations of the individual. It implies that time and stability are available to the individual in their employment, and that the organisation involved takes seriously the job of analysing professional strengths and weaknesses and the provision of professional development to create opportunities to realise these goals. The age profile of all TAFE teachers and their employment status indicates that across Australia ‘there are very few permanent teachers under the age of 30’ (NCVER 2004, p.21). This fact presents a range of challenges to the implementation of policies related to improving retention rates for Indigenous teaching staff working in VET. These include the difficulties of targeting Indigenous part-time staff for career advancement at an age where the programs are likely to be most influential. Given that ‘Approximately 70 per cent of teaching staff are employed on a non-permanent basis’ (NCVER 2004, p.25), and that this is the direct reverse of the trend in the overall Australian labour force (p.24), policies and their strategies related to retention become extremely problematic. Initiatives such as the development of support mechanisms for Indigenous staff (Australian Capital Territory Public Service n.d., p.12) that focus on mentoring, the creation of formal networks and the encouragement of supportive work environments are strategic responses to these problems.

A number of reports, including the *Aboriginal employment strategy report 2003–2008* (South Australian Department of Education and Children’s Services 2002), have identified factors that encourage or discourage the retention of Indigenous employees in the public sector. This South Australian report indicated that Indigenous staff were more likely to be retained when support mechanisms for induction, mentoring and professional and career development were in place, and where senior managers were aware of the particular kinds of pressures, both internal and external to the

organisation, that impact on Indigenous employees. Induction was also seen as having a significant impact on retention:

The major factors identified as militating against the retention of Aboriginal staff were job insecurity created by casual and short-term employment, the prolonged restructuring within the department in recent years and more enticing employment conditions and opportunities in other agencies.

(South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services 2002, p.7)

As already suggested, the survey data on recency of appointment to the current positions held by Indigenous staff and their longevity in their positions indicate that, while some staff remain in positions for ten years or more, there is some 'churning' at entry to positions in VET. Many are in fixed-term contract positions and are thus obliged to apply for 'their' position annually or for even shorter terms. A surprisingly large number of those surveyed were in permanent positions, however, and had been in them for more than five years. Some kinds of positions (for example, teaching in Indigenous units versus non-teaching positions in VET providers and government departments) may be differentially prone to this churning, as the data gathered in the survey and our qualitative data from interviews and case studies suggest. The positions most prone to fixed-term contract and casual employment seem to be those funded by special-purpose Commonwealth, state/territory and other grants, but even in these positions, steps are being taken by employers to make permanent positions available. Only in one jurisdiction did the researchers observe an almost absolute dependence on special purpose funding for Indigenous staff in Indigenous VET. This situation was the source of very real anxiety and some resentment for the staff concerned. The concern is justified since Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program funding is intended to be 'supplementary' and is clearly not being used in this way.

In such cases, employing organisations must have some concern about their capacity to retain Indigenous staff, most of whom seem eminently employable anywhere, but profoundly committed to working in VET. One respondent commented that 'poaching is common and teacher salaries do not compete with public sector wages'. In some jurisdictions, steps have clearly been taken to secure these staff in permanent positions even though the particular positions are funded from special-purpose funds (like the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program). It seems reckless to do otherwise, given the high employability of these much-sought-after individuals and the pressing needs of this and other sectors for their services.

Racism

Respondents frequently commented that racism in its overt, covert and institutionalised forms has a lot to do with the problems of retaining Indigenous staff, particularly in mainstream positions. As one respondent commented: 'You can feel it rippling through the workplace'. Other respondents maintained that this uncomfortable topic is not dealt with appropriately in the workplace in spite of the prodigious number of (generally voluntary) cross-cultural awareness programs that have been offered to all staff. One interviewee commented:

The lack of industrial strategies to protect the rights of Indigenous workers in non-Indigenous settings means that our people only want to work in Indigenous environments: places of cultural comfort. Micro-management frustrations, arguments over what constitutes legitimate work, organisational processes and the focus on culturally exclusive outcome measures makes covert racism an easy practice.

The evidence for this study leads us to the conclusion that most Indigenous employees experience the sector as (our words) 'racially charged'—which is not to say that all experience racism in their positions. However, all are acutely aware of social and cultural differences that cause them to experience their work and workplaces in ways generally different from that which they understand to be the experience of non-Indigenous employees. For some, the experience of organisations as assimilative, if not more directly racist, is a matter of 'that's just how it is' in non-Indigenous organisations. For others, however, the generally non-Indigenous character of organisations in the sector represents an opportunity for

recognising, respecting and celebrating cultural difference by opening the organisation to more culturally appropriate forms of practice in teaching and in administration.

Work life versus home and community life

The misunderstanding of the bond between work and community was identified as one of the most tangible expressions of racism, or of a 'racially-charged' sector. The quantitative data make it immediately clear that the Indigenous people participating in the survey for this study are all engaged in a variety of contributory, time-hungry and capacity-building community activities. Respondents to the survey were involved in between one and nine community committees (boards of management or other governance positions) or activities (from cultural activities to sports coaching), and frequently in senior positions that involved significant responsibilities for organisations and their communities. As the survey and other data collected in this study show, they have powerful and substantial links with their immediate and distant communities, yet they are constrained by the predominantly white cultural view that work and 'other' do not spill over into one another. It might be suggested that, for many Indigenous Australians, home and community life are understood as being extended through and into the activities that constitute work life, not as separate from it. The ease with which this relationship between community and work is stereotyped at worst, or only accommodated in limited ways at best, is a measure of how far cultural understanding at a deep level has to move so that a greater alignment can be achieved and the recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff in VET improved.

In a paper on Indigenous education in Australia and North America, Hickling-Hudson and Ahlquist (2003) refer to the tendency of white administrators and educators to see Indigenous affairs from a 'Westernist' perspective. The distinction between work life and home and community life may be an area in which 'Westernist' perspectives frequently emerge in policy documents and assumptions about procedures to be followed in organisations. In many jurisdictions, Indigenous people's attendance at key community cultural events (like funerals) is respected and encouraged, but issues about Indigenous attendance and performance at work raise sensitive questions about the home–community–work distinction.

One respondent commented that even the architecture of the workplace militates against contact. 'The idea that we work at a work station means that we are structured, separate, narrow and straight. Everything we know about is missing. The community focus is absent in our workplaces'.

The Office of Equal Employment Opportunity in Western Australia recognises this area of sensitivity by referring, in its listing of key result areas, to a notion of 'cultural security', which:

... is the freedom to express cultural rights, values and expectations of Indigenous Australians. It reflects an appreciation of the need for cultural diversity to provide effective public sector programs, services and administration.

(Government of Western Australia 2002a, p.8).

This key result area is supported by strategies that will 'welcome Indigenous ways of working' (p.8). These include 'respecting culture', 'eliminating racism' and 'workplace practices' that provide flexibility and cultural comfort for employees.

It is also clear from the survey data that many of the Indigenous staff currently employed in VET have been in several different positions in the sector during their last five jobs. Some have left and returned, perhaps to similar positions, but others (especially given the large proportion of management and administrative staff among those surveyed) have clearly been promoted to more senior coordinating and management roles. Because targeted at current Indigenous staff in VET, the survey does not give a clear picture of where Indigenous staff leaving VET go. Many representatives of employer organisations interviewed in the qualitative components of this research indicated that there is a high level of job mobility for experienced and qualified Indigenous people. As they emphatically stated, VET can ill-afford to lose them.

Indigenous employees' satisfaction with their current job

An overwhelming majority of Indigenous staff in VET responding to the survey were generally very satisfied (38.7%) or somewhat satisfied (54.8%) with their current position. Only 6.5% reported that they were not really satisfied. Notwithstanding these high levels of satisfaction, many identified a range of problems in their employment and conditions that employers may want to address when devising responses to the need to retain Indigenous staff.

Main problems for Indigenous staff in the VET sector

In our survey, respondents were asked to rank elements of the employment process that presented problems or issues for them. Table 13 outlines the areas where respondents experienced problems. Arguably, the greatest sources of problems were related to transitions in employment—applying to get into a position, promotion from one position to another, and the general process of career planning. Once committed to employment, other problems like the interview for the job, professional development in the job, and retaining the job were concerns for around a quarter of the sample.

The identifying process for Aboriginality was a particular concern for 20.2% of respondents, as was confirmed, in particular, in interview data in Tasmania where there are controversies about identification of two kinds: first, the possible non-identification of some employees who are in fact, Indigenous, and second, the false identification of some people who, some Tasmanian Indigenous people claim, are not in fact Indigenous. The issue of identifying as Indigenous has two major dimensions more generally around Australia. The first of these is that there is no national uniform method for collecting these data from the states and territories. In some cases VET employees are required to identify as Indigenous at the point of application, in others they are not. It would seem that any system of national accountability that measures the progressive achievement of targets should logically demand this. Assuming that this national agreement could be achieved on the generation and collection of this data, the criteria for being registered as an Indigenous employee remain contestable. There is another set of factors that militate against identification as Indigenous, and these relate to the concept of 'shame'. In a number of cases those interviewed for this study mentioned that Indigenous people have not identified preferring to renounce their heritage and escape prejudice.

Table 13: Rank order of perceived main employment problems and issues for Indigenous staff in the VET sector

	Frequency	Percentage of sample
Applying for the position	44	44.4
Promotion	39	39.4
Career planning and development	33	33.3
The interview process	29	29.3
Professional development	27	27.3
Retaining the job	24	24.2
Identifying process for Aboriginality	20	20.2
Other issues	42	42.4

Note: Respondents could rank as many of the possible responses as applied to them (thus total percentage is greater than 100%).

As will be shown in what follows, employing authorities and organisations around Australia have developed many policies and strategies to address the problems identified by our informants, including our survey respondents. Clearly—because our informants have experienced or currently experience the problems—there is some way to go in the implementation of these policies and strategies.

Kinds of support available and accessible to Indigenous staff in employment, professional development and career development

In the sections that follow, we discuss a range of issues in Indigenous employment in VET arising at different stages in the employment cycle, from pre-recruitment stages to post-exit and succession planning. As will be shown, each stage is important, and each presents challenges and obstacles for Indigenous staff moving into and through a career in VET. The issues discussed have different expressions and implications in different organisations, and different organisations may need to take different kinds of action to support Indigenous staff at each stage of the cycle and in deciding what overall view of Indigenous staffing and staff development to take. Perhaps the most significant set of differences occurs between staff working in Indigenous units in TAFE, those working in the mainstream (although these numbers remain embarrassingly small), and people employed by private registered training organisations, both Indigenous-controlled and otherwise. Later, we will present three broad views of Indigenous workforce planning—a bureaucratic view, the strategic workforce planning view which appears to underlie most national and state policy for Indigenous staffing, and a community development view which seems characteristic of a number of successful Indigenous-controlled registered training organisations.

Stages in the employment cycle include:

- ✧ establishing the need for the position
- ✧ recruitment and selection
- ✧ induction
- ✧ mentoring
- ✧ monitoring, reviewing and managing performance
- ✧ professional development
- ✧ career counselling, planning and development
- ✧ retention (discussed in the previous chapter)
- ✧ exit strategies
- ✧ succession.

Each of these stages will now be discussed in turn.

Strategic workforce planning and establishing the need for positions

Strategic workforce planning involves consistently planning for the achievement of employment policies to match the key strategic objectives of the organisation. In this way the workforce capacities and capabilities match the capabilities required for organisational development and success. It is a process that is future-oriented, takes into account longer-term objectives, and is based on projections, advice and the observation of current and past trends. It requires accurate profiling of the current workforce as a benchmark for projecting staffing needs to meet an organisation's strategic intentions.

Strategic workforce planning entails a view of the employment cycle from beginning to end, one which accepts that each stage of the cycle, from position identification to succession planning, is interwoven with all of the others.

To some extent, Australia-wide public sector and VET policies for increasing the numbers and proportion of Indigenous staff in VET are expressions of the strategic workforce planning process. It is an implicit component of all the policy documents. In Western Australia, for example, this feature is made explicit, although it is somewhat submerged amongst other strategies. The

strategies suggest that managers and chief executive officers need to 'Identify areas where Indigenous staff are under-represented in general positions and implement measures to achieve equity in those areas' (Government of Western Australia 2002a, p.12). In particular, the policy goal of increasing the numbers and the extent of the representation of Indigenous people in the VET sector has been facilitated by strategic workforce planning. Some states are further advanced in this process than others.

There has been an increasing focus on workforce planning for Indigenous employment in government providers across all Australian states and territories. This emphasis has translated into strategies and initiatives to increase Indigenous recruitment; to improve the support for Indigenous employees once in a job; and to retain and promote Indigenous staff at higher levels. As one respondent commented, 'This is a process of building people into a job, not just tacking them on. It needs to be supported by mentoring and greater training opportunities'. The importance of broadening the cultural mix of teachers working with students from a range of different backgrounds has been recognised for some time (Robinson & Hughes 1999). This has been both in terms of increasing the number of Indigenous teachers for Indigenous students and for the cross-cultural value of Indigenous teachers for non-Indigenous students. Robinson and Hughes suggest that recognition of the importance of the cultural mix is particularly relevant when applied to the VET sector, where large numbers of Indigenous students are studying in mainstream courses:

There is a pressing need to change the balance so that proportionally more of the total Indigenous staff presence in TAFE and other VET providers are in teaching/trainer/instructor roles ... This is particularly important given the emphasis placed by the Indigenous students themselves on the quality of the teachers and trainers in being one of the key factors they identify as necessary to achieving success. (Robinson & Hughes 1999, p.57)

This view was expressed by many of the people interviewed for this project.

At state and territory government level, a number of policy and strategy documents of the last five years or so reflect a concerted effort to merge the various stages of the employment cycle into a more integrated set of strategies that better meet the needs of Indigenous people working in the public sector and to encourage greater levels of participation. In Queensland, the Wal-Meta Strategy was developed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Public Sector Employment Development Unit.

This unit is dedicated to working with government agencies to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples achieve equity with non-Indigenous Australians in terms of employment and economic status. The unit also seeks to ensure that employment equity is complementary with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and cultural values.

(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Public Sector Employment Development Unit 2002)

The unit provides advice on recruitment and selection, advancement programs, the development of Indigenous employment strategies, support for Indigenous staff, mentoring programs, executive leadership, senior management programs and the Stepping Stones Program which mentors employees from traineeships into permanent employment.

Following an internal review of Indigenous employment in 2000, the South Australian Department of Education, Training and Further Education recommended a set of implementation strategies subsequently reflected in South Australia Works, a program with a specific component devoted to Indigenous employment (South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology 2003a). The *South Australian Aboriginal employment strategy report 2004–08*, based on 12 months of extensive consultation and research, identified the crucial function that workforce planning occupies in moving Indigenous employment in the VET sector from the peripheral, 'tacked on' role of the past to a coherent policy with clear targets and accountability measures in place. It begins with the premise that rates of Indigenous employment matching Indigenous population

distribution is the desirable outcome. Its recommendations encompass the whole of the employment cycle and cover all Indigenous employees. The recommendations included:

- ✧ increasing the flexibility created by global budgeting to increase the number of Indigenous employees
- ✧ the development of an employment register
- ✧ the expansion of the Indigenous Traineeship Scheme and the parallel development of a mentoring program to support these trainees
- ✧ a more inclusive and sophisticated skills verification process for Indigenous people
- ✧ training and development strategies
- ✧ promotion and monitoring of the strategy

(South Australian Department of Further Education,
Employment, Science and Technology 2003a)

It is clear from the qualitative data gathered for this study that many Indigenous informants believe that the employment practices involved in their recruitment differed from that which would be expected on the basis of a commitment to strategic workforce planning. Indeed, many experienced the procedures as bureaucratic and dominated by concerns about institutional procedures rather than organisations' strategic goals or even the key concerns of Indigenous communities. Thus, for example, 'the interview' and application process were rated as two of the areas of concern encountered by Indigenous respondents to the survey, a finding replicated in the results of interview, consultation and case study components of the research. On the other hand, it is clear, especially from interviews with employer representatives, that many employing agencies, especially in the public sector, are taking a much more strategic approach to the employment of Indigenous staff. This is in line with Commonwealth, state/territory and some TAFE institutes' Indigenous employment policies and strategies. At the same time, a rather different dynamic seems to be at work in some Indigenous units in TAFE institutes and in many Indigenous-controlled registered training organisations, where the strategic approach is supplemented by something more 'organic'; namely, a view that the unit or registered training organisation is a creature of the Indigenous community, to be nurtured and replenished as a sustainable part of the community's capacity and capacity-building processes. In relation to recruitment, this means that these units and registered training organisations take steps to identify and prepare prospective employees, either before employment or by making an appointment, and building the employee's qualifications and skills in the job.

Strategic workforce planning is clearly needed. Respondents commented that it was the new 'buzz' term but, in spite of its recent arrival in the VET policy lexicon, the process has a great deal to contribute to a more rational and responsive approach to the various stages of the employment cycle for Indigenous people. As one participant said: 'It gives a focus and then a push. It analyses strengths and weaknesses and it gets what people know into practice'.

But preliminary work, especially the collection of relevant and reliable data, is needed before strategic workforce planning can become a reality in VET across the board. Given the flaws in the national collection of Indigenous workforce data, NCVER (2004) concluded:

Without reliable benchmark data, any exercise in workforce planning will be flawed. With reliable benchmark data, it is possible to make predictions of the size of the VET workforce, the numbers and age profile of those exiting the VET workforce, and therefore the level of recruitment that will be required to make up the shortfall. (NCVER 2004, p.38)

To achieve the goal of a better balanced workforce profile more justly representing the distribution of Indigenous people in the population, institutions and government departments have adopted a range of strategies, some of which are adapted by Indigenous-controlled registered training organisations and Indigenous units in TAFE to more adequately fit their particular needs and

circumstances. In one Indigenous-controlled registered training organisation, the community-based organisation had recently adopted the strategic direction of employing only Indigenous staff. This strategy is supported by activities such as mentoring, targeted selection and the 'growing of Indigenous staff' based on projections of student requirements, community needs and staff capacities. Where required, exemptions from the relevant *Equal Opportunity Act* are sought and obtained. In this way the organisation is able to give absolute priority to Indigenous candidates.

This new policy direction for this registered training organisation means that, over the next four to five years, the existing staff profile will change, subject to the governing board overcoming a series of problems. The governing board maintains that Indigenous staff will need to be mentored as they step up to take on their new teaching positions, and funding needs to be found for this. The registered training organisation considers that one possible solution lies in traineeships being made available through state government funding for the development of novice teachers. Informants reported that there is a profound shortage of qualified Indigenous people who are easily able to move into the role of teachers. This shortage is particularly acute in those areas of study classified as 'mainstream'. The governing board is therefore currently addressing the problems of recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff. The board has considered strategies such as 'shoulder tapping' and 'head hunting' and is focused on the question of how the registered training organisation can make the prospective employment attractive to Indigenous people.

Similarly an Indigenous unit within a Victorian TAFE college, under the assertive and capable leadership of an experienced Indigenous educator, actively seeks Indigenous staff for the unit, even if candidates are not 'up to speed' with the required skills, preferring instead to foster the development of the staff through well-planned professional development, mentoring and shadowing activities.

State, territory and national policies refer to the need to define and describe positions and employment criteria in ways that will attract Indigenous people to apply for work in the VET sector. These policies are particularly relevant, since many criticisms have been levelled against past employment practices that have been found to be unfriendly and discouraging for Indigenous people. In some places, the policy response has been to focus attention on creating a sense of cultural security. Within the context of cultural security, recruitment practices are expected to be more finely tuned to Indigenous needs, and the practical expression of this would emerge in the definition and description of possible positions.

In practice, the defined and described positions are most frequently referred to as being 'designated' for Indigenous people. While these policies appear to work effectively in providing staff for Indigenous centres, the documents are less clear on how the strategies are to be applied to mainstream VET positions. This avoidance of clarity creates the space for inactivity, and the words appear at times only tokens rather than directions for overt action. For instance, *Oana Mallacka: Tasmanian plan of action for increasing Aboriginal people's access to vocational education and training 2002–2005* (Tasmanian Department of Education and Training 2002) is based on the policies articulated in *Partners in a learning culture* and sets out strategies that will help to secure positions for Indigenous people in the VET sector. These include encouraging organisations to develop plans to increase the number of Indigenous employees with a particular focus on 'targeting professional positions' (p.15). The plan of action further suggests that targets be set with TAFE Tasmania and that these targets should include training in the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, and that a recruitment plan should be developed. The lack of distinction between Indigenous centres and the mainstream as possible sites for achieving employment targets for Indigenous staff in VET is of special concern, given the number of Indigenous students who are currently participating in VET courses in Australia.

In some jurisdictions, arrangements have been put in place to allow recruitment preference to be given to Indigenous people, but these arrangements have tended to confirm employment in

Indigenous units rather than in the mainstream. For instance, the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services commented:

An equal opportunity program gazetted in June 1999 enabled directors of institutes to advertise positions of up to 12 months to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people only, in the first instance. Given the autonomy of institutes, there is no centralised mechanism for determining the extent to which this special provision has actually been used. The data reveals that Aboriginal employment levels in the TAFE sector as at June 2001 were relatively high compared with representation of Aboriginal people in other areas of the department.

However, the majority of these employees were located within Aboriginal education units.

(South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services 2002, p.6)

One respondent suggested that if more Indigenous people are to be employed in mainstream VET positions, then 'HR must be much more active in earmarking opportunities for Indigenous staff'. Informants to the present study also suggested that this was not only true at the institute level where the Indigenous units had responsibility for teaching some Indigenous-only modules and courses and special responsibility for Indigenous access as well as cultural-awareness training for all staff, but also at the level of state training authorities, where Indigenous staff were frequently concentrated in Indigenous policy units.

Taking a strategic view of workforce planning locates decisions about recruitment and other employment processes in a greater timeframe for the organisation; it takes a more historically sensitive view of the past, the present and the future.

VET employers contemplating creating positions for Indigenous staff or filling existing positions may need to be more conscious of the likely personal, family and community circumstances of prospective employees. While other groups of employees may have similarly difficult home and life circumstances and while most Indigenous people available for employment in VET have already avoided or emerged from such difficulties in their lives and communities, it is nevertheless the case that a greater proportion of Indigenous than non-Indigenous people are more likely to have experienced or witnessed life circumstances that sometimes breed despair, hopelessness or a deep sense of alienation. As a matter of bureaucratic fairness, employers may want to consider prospective Indigenous employees on exactly the same terms as any other employees vis-a-vis qualifications and relevant experience, but in fact they are likely to be considering people who are, sociologically and culturally speaking, different from other employees. It is necessary to recognise this, especially when the new Indigenous employee will have social and cultural capital which is necessary for working with Indigenous staff, and with Indigenous clients. As one respondent said:

A lot of Aboriginal people with great communication and personal skills are missed because of the criteria for some positions. The hurdles are set too high. Time and time again they are denied the chance to even get to the interview table. These people do not have written qualifications or academic background, but they know how to get into people's minds, they know how to talk to them, they understand the complications of the extended family, they are masters of body language.

These people have frontline experience and live and breathe the problems of education and training, employment, health, housing racism, drugs and so on. Academics get their wisdom from books written by non-Aboriginals or from an old Aboriginal man who used to chop wood at their grandfather's farm when they were 3. Reminiscent of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Truck loads of consultants, forests destroyed for piles of paper, years of fruitless meetings and hundreds of recommendations. \$31,000,000 and yet it is still happening.

An old Aboriginal proverb translated means 'Sit and listen to your peers and inhale their knowledge through your ears'.

The social justice value of recognition and respect for cultures other than one's own implies recognition of the life circumstances of others. Employers cannot act on this value if they rely only

on ‘bureaucratic fairness’—treating prospective Indigenous employees on exactly the same basis as any others. Fairness at a deeper level means acting on the value of cultural recognition and respect in order to recognise and value what Indigenous employees bring with them to the job. On the one hand, they bring ‘Indigenous qualifications’; for example, language, social affinity, knowledge of a community and its culture. On the other, they also bring life experience, often at first hand, of the difficulties faced by many people in their communities, including people who may be prospective or potential clients of VET. Most Indigenous employees have faced family and community difficulties that impact more frequently on people in Indigenous populations across Australia—poorer health outcomes, lower life expectancy, lower maternal age at birth, higher rates of unemployment, higher rates of exposure to family abuse and violence (as victims and as perpetrators), higher rates of detention and incarceration, and poorer outcomes in education and training (Productivity Commission 2003). Some Indigenous people and communities have rightly been described as ‘traumatised’ by these life experiences. Thus, many Indigenous people are described by some researchers as ‘discouraged workers’ (Hunter & Gray 2000), and may be ‘discouraged applicants’ for positions. As one respondent to the survey remarked:

It is important to be recognised as capable and be invited into employment: having the confidence to apply for a position is a huge problem. [All too often] positions [like those in VET] just seem beyond our capabilities.

Indigenous employment policies are more likely to recognise the need for Indigenous personal, social and cultural capital as an important resource for Indigenous employees dealing with Indigenous staff and clients, but may be less overtly willing or able to recognise the strength and experience of prospective employees who have endured and emerged from conditions of hardship. There is an argument that bureaucratic approaches to the employment of Indigenous people, although they may be based on bureaucratic fairness, fail to take account of these human conditions. One survey respondent said ‘A lot of Aboriginal people with great communication and personal skills are missed because of the criteria for some positions. You need to be respected for the skills you have and what you can contribute to the team.’ Affirmative action strategies, familiar in strategic workforce planning, are more likely to address the conditions Indigenous people have faced. In Indigenous registered training organisations and units, these conditions are well understood, and the ways individuals have responded to family and community circumstances are likely to be part of the measure of applicants’ positive potential as prospective employees and as resources for their communities. This view was expressed by a number of informants contacted during the case study research.

Recruitment and selection—formal and informal

Recruitment and selection are the first encounters that many prospective Indigenous employees in VET have with an organisation, and these encounters have often been identified as being extremely culturally unfriendly. A range of policies and actions to address these criticisms have been developed. The Australian Capital Territory *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and career development framework for the ACT Public Service* (Australian Capital Territory Public Service n.d.), for example, has, as one of its strategic objectives, the development of recruitment selection processes that are culturally sensitive and respectful (p.7). In response to the criticism that interview panels are often culturally inappropriate, a register of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees available to participate in interview panels was recommended, and all interview panels involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates are to have ‘an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander panelist or staff who have completed accredited cross-cultural training’ (p.7).

Similarly, through extensive consultations, Canberra Institute of Technology (n.d.) has devised a set of strategies to implement its policy of increased Indigenous entry into employment. These strategies, their performance criteria and statements of institutional responsibility include rethinking the style and content of advertised positions, dissemination of advertising material for positions, the use of Indigenous networks for advertising, and positive marketing of the institute as a culturally sensitive employer (p.12). The institute has also addressed the recruitment and selection procedures

used to make them more focused on potential Indigenous employees. Faculties are encouraged to target potential staff and provide them with opportunities to encounter the workplace before applying for a position (p.13). Selection panels are to be aware of cultural sensitivities and differences, and where there is an Indigenous applicant, the panels should have at least one Indigenous person on the panel (p.13).

The policies and strategies outlined above are familiar in most states and territories. In Western Australia, for instance, the key result area of 'recruitment and induction' (Government of Western Australia 2002a) is supported by possible actions that include working with Indigenous communities and organisations to 'identify appropriate recruitment and selection strategies that convey to Indigenous applicants they are valued and welcomed in the organisation' (p.12). Culturally appropriate and widespread advertising is also suggested, as is the use of Indigenous recruitment agencies (p.12). Traineeships, cadetships and apprenticeships are recognised as being valuable ways of encouraging Indigenous people to apply and secure positions. Recruitment should also involve ensuring that 'job descriptions include the specific skills required to effectively service Indigenous clients. Where necessary, use identified Indigenous positions with clearly articulated responsibilities and expectations and classification levels that recognise the level of skills required' (p.12).

Most importantly, the Western Australian strategies make explicit the value of life and workplace experience that prospective Indigenous employees have. This experience is to be balanced against the need for formal qualifications in the recruitment of staff (p.12). Similarly in South Australia a 'skills verification process' is being introduced to recognise and accredit the expertise of Indigenous people.

Some informants to this study maintained that Indigenous people often did not consider applying for employment in mainstream VET since the processes of selection were based on notions of 'white merit'. This led them to believe that 'they had no bloody chance of getting the job so why bother'. Clearly much remains to be done to dispel this perception and a great deal depends on the policies and practices that surround the notions of equitable competitiveness; for example, through the social justice value of recognition and respect for cultures other than one's own, and for the life circumstances of people in those cultures.

There has been an increase in the number of *designated positions* made available to Indigenous people across a range of government portfolios. In the VET sector, this relates not only to employees in Indigenous units but also to positions in administration, management, policy and support services. Recruitment strategies may also include the process of 'active searching' where Indigenous people with particular skills are identified outside the parameters of usual recruitment practices. This is particularly the case where Indigenous communities are asked to provide nominees for positions. They are then placed into the possible employment pool, where they are subject to the normal selection and employment processes.

In Tasmania, guidelines have been developed 'to assist Agencies in the recruitment of Aboriginal Identified positions' (Tasmanian State Service 2000, p.5). Similarly, in the Northern Territory, the development of more 'Indigenous-sensitive' job descriptions and culturally inclusive advertisements for employment are also being recognised as two strategies that need promotion within the public sector (Northern Territory Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment 2000, p.9). A more significant representation of Indigenous people on selection panels for employment at all levels has been suggested as a way to increase Indigenous representation in the workforce (Northern Territory Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment 2000, p.9), on the grounds that the interview panel will be perceived as more culturally sensitive.

Targeting prospective employees was acknowledged by informants as being a legitimate way of ensuring that Indigenous staff are suited to the job. This takes the form of careful observation of their working relationships in other positions within Indigenous community organisations or other institutions, such as correctional services. In one Indigenous unit, although the manager is subject to organisation-wide human resources policies and procedures, with the support of management he

is able to exercise some discretion over matters related to the appointment and management of Indigenous staff. One respondent felt that in his state the section in the *Equal Opportunity Act* that allows for designated appointments to be made was 'very underutilised' because his organisation seemed to him to have a deeply ingrained 'meanness to promote equity'.

Recruitment of Indigenous staff was shown to be most successful where the broader principles from national and state government strategies were applied in a customised way at the local level. In Queensland, for instance, a partnership between TAFE, industry, communities and education has helped to create new career paths for Indigenous people. As one interviewee remarked of the operation of the new partnerships and career paths, 'They began by wiping the slate clean and set up their own structures to achieve their own outcomes'.

However, a number of respondents mentioned that, while targeting in its various forms was a strategy that could be used to recruit Indigenous staff, the issue of the availability of Indigenous candidates remained a complex problem. The nature of the complexity lies deep inside Indigenous participation in the VET sector. The available 'pool' of potential Indigenous people qualified for mainstream employment as teachers is relatively small. This 'domino effect' can be traced back, according to one highly placed Indigenous respondent, to the fact that:

Indigenous business is not core business in the VET sector and unless Indigenous knowledges are built into mainstream accreditations, our people will never be able to access these courses at higher levels.

In some places and with some courses, progress is being made. In one jurisdiction a number of traineeships for potential Indigenous teachers were introduced to increase the pool of applicants able to apply for mainstream employment in VET. However, the question of preparing Indigenous people for their place within the culture of an organisation which is, for some, inherently unfriendly and alien, remains unanswered. As one Indigenous informant said, 'If I could achieve one thing it would be to know how to bring them [Indigenous people] into the world of TAFE a little more'.

Under the provisions of the Australian Quality Training Framework (ANTA 2005), all registered training organisations must have documented equity policies. Standard 6 (ANTA 2005, p.8) 'Access and equity and client service' specifies that 'The registered training organisation's policies and procedures must incorporate access and equity principles' (6.1). 'The registered training organisation must set out its access and equity policies in a code of practice or similar document' (6.2a) and 'The registered training organisation must ensure that copies of any instruments developed under Standard 6.1 are provided and adhered to by staff' (6.2b). However, as indicated in the *Stage one progress report: Indigenous employment policy evaluation* conducted by the Evaluation and Programme Branch of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations:

Only 14% of firms surveyed as part of this research had a documented Indigenous employment policy. The views reported by CEOs indicated that increasing the employment of Indigenous workers is constrained most strongly by employers' perceptions of the level of education, skills and commitment of Indigenous job seekers. This translated into specific CEO concerns about absenteeism and non-retention and represents a significant barrier to increasing Indigenous employment.

(Department of Employment and Workplace Relations 2002, p.48)

Induction

Induction is a particularly critical aspect of the employment cycle, especially where the organisation into which the Indigenous member of staff is moving is a large and often a bureaucratically complex one. However, this specific phase of the employment cycle is often discussed in tandem with issues of retention and the provision of professional development for Indigenous staff. Many respondents did not identify the processes of induction separately.

The Western Australian Office of Equal Employment Opportunity (2002) developed a strategy document that grew out of a statement of commitment between the Western Australian

Government and the Aboriginal people of Western Australia (2001) and that state's Equity and Diversity Plan for Public Sector Workforce 2001–2005. There is a clear expectation that agencies are to support and implement this plan, particularly in view of the declining equity index for Indigenous staff employed in the public sector. The strategies focus on all the key phases of the employment cycle. Among them, induction is recognised as being a significant and influential factor in the retention and comfort of Indigenous staff. 'Employers also need to focus on retention if the representation of Indigenous people in the public sector is to increase' (p.12). The specific strategies relating to induction suggested include the development of culturally sensitive orientation and induction processes, the support for Indigenous staff in the initial stages of their employment and particular support for the 'transition to work' phase.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (n.d.) recognises that induction is critical to the retention and development of Indigenous staff. This is expressed clearly in their policy document, *Indigenous employment, education, training and small business development*. This organisation suggests that private sector businesses should 'encourage the development and implementation of structured induction training programs for Indigenous employees, with an emphasis on employee obligations and responsibilities within the workplace'.

Induction means different things in different organisations. In some, it means matching the skills and functions of a new employee to the established functions of the organisation. In others, especially those with a commitment to strategic workforce planning, it is a two-way process of changing the organisation by adding to the skills and capacities it already has, and fitting the new employee to the changing organisation as a process of enhancing the capacity of the organisation to meet changing opportunities and circumstances. In some Indigenous-controlled registered training organisations and some Indigenous units in TAFE institutes, induction is also seen as a process of enhancing long-term and evolving connections with local communities as part of community capacity-building.

Induction of all staff is recognised as an important element in the retention of staff as this helps new employees to understand both the culture and the practices of the organisation where they will be employed. Cross-cultural awareness training for Indigenous staff (not just non-Indigenous staff) which serves the purpose of inducting Indigenous employees into other ways of viewing the world has been conducted in the Northern Territory and Victoria. One respondent reiterated the value of induction training for Indigenous staff on cross-cultural awareness and employment preparation by saying:

I think there should be training that helps people to get along with one another at work, how to say 'sorry' and what to do if you are being targeted by the boss or employees.

In South Australia before induction into a position an Aboriginal Register of Prospective Employees provides training and support for prospective employees.

Informants held different opinions about the adequacy of induction procedures into their organisations. Some felt that, because the process had been customised to their specific needs, they were well prepared to begin their employment.

Mentoring

Mentoring programs are a strategic response to the need to recruit and retain Indigenous staff. In Western Australia for instance, it is recognised in policy that:

... effective career development recognises the value of employees to the organisation and the importance of developing skills and careers in line with individual aspirations and the needs of the organisation. (Government of Western Australia 2002a, p.10)

One way of assisting the implementation of this policy is through the processes of mentoring and coaching. The strategies suggested include the provision of culturally appropriate mentoring, the careful selection of mentors and coaches to work with Indigenous staff, the provision of

Indigenous mentors to work beside management, and the identification and promotion of Indigenous role models within the respective organisations (p.10). These strategies have received government-wide support and the Western Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet 'has created a service to link Indigenous employees to available mentors' (p.16).

Mentoring of Indigenous staff has become more common and more formalised in state and territory strategic plans. The expansion of the traineeship program in the South Australian education and training sectors and the accompanying mentoring initiatives have shown that mentoring is a 'key support mechanism which assists in the retention of Aboriginal trainees' (South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services 2002, p.79).

Education Queensland has established a mentoring network that links Indigenous employees to senior managers. In other states and territories, this is often accompanied by a secondment program and shadowing opportunities for Indigenous employees. In some places Indigenous staff are provided with opportunities to learn the dimensions of new and different jobs through a process of working alongside experienced members of staff. The hope is, that through support, mentoring and the experience offered by another member of staff, Indigenous employees will grow in both capacity and confidence.

As much of the policy literature reviewed in the course of this research suggests, mentoring is an extremely valuable process in building employees' confidence and competence and in assisting them to meet organisational goals. One of our survey respondents confirmed this view: 'Having an experienced mentor from inside the organisation assisted me to find my way through an otherwise confusing maze'. The qualities in a mentor most appreciated by our respondents included enthusiasm for the task, generosity, patience, overt support in taking over a new role, and an allowance for growth. In some settings, however, informants we interviewed seemed to indicate that formal mentoring processes were less frequently available than might be hoped. One respondent to the survey, dissatisfied with the mentoring they had received, said of the appointed mentor, 'He's too busy doing his own job'. Another commented that, 'I was mentored by the outgoing person to this position who appeared not to care much about whether I understood clearly about the role or not'. In other settings, mentoring was said to be available but was almost invisible, and thus (in the informant's view) ineffective in formal terms. On the other hand, in more than one Indigenous-controlled registered training organisation, much mentoring appeared to take place in the context of weekly staff meetings which were very informal but nevertheless personal, strengthening the bonds between each Indigenous employee and other participants in the staff meeting, and between individual employees and the organisation. As one informant commented, 'All individuals are different. Some people do mentoring because they're told to, others do it for choice, and others wish to be seen doing it as a social obligation.'

The qualitative data collected in the survey, as well as data from interviews and consultations, make it clear that mentoring differs according to the employment status of employees. Permanent staff are more likely to receive mentoring than contract or sessional staff, and full-time staff are more likely to receive mentoring than part-time or casual staff. As one survey respondent replied to the questions on the availability and effectiveness of mentoring: 'Only here two days—cannot make a comment'. Another part-time teacher responded by saying, 'As we have limited time we find it hard to attend sessions'.

About a quarter (22.9%) of respondents to the survey of Indigenous employees in VET reported that they had received regular mentoring, and another (34.4%) that they had received some mentoring (so 57.3% had received mentoring; table 28 in appendix 2). We might thus reasonably conclude that mentoring is widely, although not uniformly, available for Indigenous staff in VET. However, 42.7% reported that they had not received mentoring. It may be the case, of course, that many Indigenous staff have no particular need of mentoring, and that many are undoubtedly mentors themselves (a question the researchers omitted to ask).

Mentoring was rated as 'very effective' by 40.4% of respondents to the survey, and as 'somewhat effective' by a further 42.3% of respondents. Therefore 82.7% of respondents regarded mentoring as (very or somewhat) effective. A further 11.5% regarded their mentoring as 'not really effective', and 5.8% as 'not at all effective' (that is, a total of 17.3% regarded their mentoring as not effective) (table 29 in appendix 2).

Over a quarter (27.8%) of those for whom mentoring was available had Indigenous mentors; about two-thirds (68.5%) had non-Indigenous mentors; and a small number (two cases, 3.7%) had both Indigenous and non-Indigenous mentors (table 30).

Where Indigenous staff responding to the survey had Indigenous mentors, they were more likely to rate the mentoring as 'very effective', although the combined proportion of 'very effective' and 'somewhat effective' ratings was about the same for Indigenous and non-Indigenous mentors. Although no Indigenous staff rated mentoring from Indigenous staff as 'not at all effective', there were a few (three cases, 8.1%) who rated mentoring from non-Indigenous staff in this way (table 31).

The qualitative data indicate that the 'effectiveness' of the mentoring process is understood in different ways. As one respondent commented:

Mentoring is of major benefit due to its ability to share workplace and personal experiences with like-minded Indigenous colleagues. Mentoring enables skills transference to assist in the solving of problems at work. Examples include: working through problems with work cultures and commitment to community and family.

Monitoring, reviewing and managing performance

The policy documents reviewed in the course of this study are relatively silent on this set of issues. Perhaps it is the case that these practices are implicit to other policies and strategies, or perhaps it is the relative youth of these practices that account for their absence. However, performance management in particular can produce a systematic and sensitive set of professional goals that can be facilitated by the organisation and is a valuable tool when used judiciously and capably. In South Australia:

All public sector agencies are encouraged to implement a documented performance management system to ensure that good performance is acknowledged and unsatisfactory performance is resolved.

(South Australian Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment 2003a, p.33)

However, it remains unclear whether this set of practices does indeed intersect with career guidance, mentoring and the tailored selection of professional development activities, and permeates to the lower levels of employment in the public sector.

Of concern was that one in four respondents (to the Workforce Perspective Survey) have never had a performance development discussion with their manager, and that fewer than half the respondents had had a performance management discussion with their manager within the last 12 months.

(South Australian Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment 2003a, p.34)

The Wal-Meta strategy in Queensland has as one of its aspirations a move towards greater performance management for continuous improvement. As one respondent said:

These measures include client feedback, annual program reviews and other methods of quality assurance. However, we have not as yet benchmarked the units of performance against any external formal mechanism.

Monitoring, reviewing and managing the performance of employees may be regarded in some organisations as principally a matter of performance accountability—seeing that the employee is fulfilling the requirements of their job satisfactorily. In other organisations, it is seen as a process of building the confidence and capacity of the employee and the organisation simultaneously. This is more characteristic of the view of performance review adopted in the formal Indigenous employment policies and strategies in some jurisdictions and organisations. In some Indigenous-

controlled registered training organisations and units, however, this process may be ‘submerged’ in a much more informal and ‘organic’ network of relationships, so that monitoring, managing and reviewing the performance of employees becomes part of the process that produces a sense of ‘belonging’ to the organisation, and ‘ownership’ of its goals and strategies.

In one Indigenous-controlled cultural centre, where the training and the professional extension of staff is clearly articulated in policies related to the centre’s purposes, monitoring, reviewing and managing performance are integral to the centre’s operation. Appropriate, personally targeted and monitored training meets the operational objectives of the organisation and supports staff in their personal development and employment aspirations. Each staff member has an annual workplace plan that is measured in a way that is individually meaningful to each person. Having a ‘good time’ completing the program is emphasised as important. There is a strong emphasis on personal responsibility mixed with sensitive support and mentoring. ‘Growth for development’ and ‘workplace innovation’ are promoted as a means of practising this ethos.

Many respondents reported quite different experiences of performance management practices in their organisations. Some maintained that it simply did not exist for them, or if it did, it was culturally skewed against them. Others questioned the relevance of these procedures. One participant commented:

We have no incentive to go outside the Indigenous unit. We are so locked into survival that we have no eyes for career development. We have little white career commitment and less white interest in things like performance management. This must just hold us back.

This view, if replicated widely in the VET sector, represents a profound challenge to anyone who takes the view that Indigenous career and professional development currently opens pathways to promotion and development within the sector as a whole.

Professional development

Professional development is a crucial component of any strategic workforce planning process. Professional development activities for staff should be based on an analysis of the current skills and competencies of the individual staff members matched against a well-informed projection of progress within an organisation. Professional development intersects with career planning, induction and orientation into an organisation, and mentoring, with each part of the cycle informing and nurturing the others. Careful and sensitive selection of professional development activities and the existence of a process which makes professional development responsive to the needs of staff would ensure that some of the identified barriers to the career progression of Indigenous staff in VET are dismantled.

One example of a concerted approach to the provision of professional development for Indigenous staff is captured in the Wal-Meta strategy in Queensland that grew out of the *Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act 1992*. Initiatives such as the Moving into Management Program, the Senior Management Program, the Stepping Stones Program and the Job Search database are directed towards recruiting, training and retaining Indigenous people (Queensland Department of Employment and Training 2002).

The report on the Stepping Stones Program (Parter 2002) focused specifically on the identification of issues that restrict career development and progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (p.5). The evaluation identified, through literature, interview and survey, that, while the training needs of staff in the public sector could be clearly articulated, there were significant barriers to their professional development and consequent career progression. These factors included issues such as time management, no support from management, a lack of confidence, little commitment to the role of performance management, lack of funding, the organisation’s low record in training, and issues relating to self-commitment (p.17).

Wur-cum barra, the Victorian public sector Indigenous employment strategy (2002) aims to increase the number of Indigenous people employed in the public sector. It is a whole-of-government strategic framework that requires:

... all Victorian Public Sector organisations to develop and implement Indigenous Employment Plans at an organisational and workplace level. The Wur-cum barra Strategy provides organisations a template for developing and monitoring plans through its Key Result Areas and Performance Indicator Frameworks and timelines for implementation.

(Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment 2002, overview)

Within this comprehensive strategy, career development is one of the six key result areas. Professional development opportunities are seen as critical if Indigenous staff are to develop skills and capabilities to progress, and thus influence the organisations they work in. The strategy particularly focuses on the creation of opportunities for Indigenous staff working in identified positions to map their possible career pathways not only within the confines of specifically designed Indigenous units, but beyond, and to extend their plans for advancement into the mainstream. For these reasons, professional development activities need to be implemented to encourage Indigenous employees to act in higher-level roles; to provide chances for staff to participate in mainstream programs; and to offer staff in Indigenous positions the chance to work in non-Indigenous-specific work within the respective organisations (Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment 2002, p.25).

These strategies are responses to observable and documented problems, but become increasingly difficult to implement, even with technology, when distance and remoteness of Indigenous staff are factored into the policy equation. Using a complex research methodology to evaluate the effectiveness of relevant policies, the Northern Territory Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment *Review of the Northern Territory public sector Aboriginal employment and career development strategy 1995–2000* (2000) noted that, at that time, ‘only fifty-five per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees considered the training they had received to be adequate’ (p.32). Employees felt that the training needed to be more appropriate both culturally and organisationally, and that distance and lack of access were significantly influencing the quality and the quantity of training that they received.

Issues such as remoteness, lack of available staff to backfill and budgetary constraints are all factors that were perceived to limit training opportunities for employees. Employees felt strongly that these issues contributed to the ongoing challenges faced within communities, and contributed to the high turnover, particularly with the traditional hard-to-fill positions in these communities.

(Northern Territory Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment 2000, p.32)

As a result of this extensive review, the *Northern Territory public sector Indigenous employment and career development strategy 2002–2006* was developed. A number of strategies and actions were developed to specifically address these problems. These included: establishing personal learning and development plans for Indigenous employees; work exchange programs; a tertiary study assistance program; and the development of tailored short courses for Indigenous employees (Northern Territory Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment 2003a, p.10).

In Tasmania, the Indigenous VET strategy includes as one of its actions the funding of professional development activities for Indigenous staff delivering VET at a rate ‘proportional to the employment of Aboriginal staff to enable appropriate professional development for Aboriginal staff’ (Tasmanian Department of Education 2002, p.18).

There appears to be a range of approaches to professional development of Indigenous employees across the VET sector. In some places, professional development has a kind of ‘compensatory’ character, where employees are trained to fill skill gaps in their own and their organisation’s profiles. In other places, professional development is regarded as routine ‘upskilling’ for the individual concerned and for the organisation. In many places, it is regarded as significantly

developmental, again for both the employee concerned and for the organisation, and as ‘opening up a future’. In many Indigenous registered training organisations and units, professional development may be seen as a simultaneous process of personal, professional, organisational and community development, and as one of nurturing and building commitment to Indigenous people and communities. In some places, this last set of processes is consciously understood, not only in terms of community-building, but also, and explicitly, as contributing to cultural recovery.

The opportunities for professional development in any organisation are a reflection of the commitment to the welfare and growth of its employees. In some states, mentors and Indigenous employees design individual Indigenous employment plans collaboratively. In the best instances this activity should intersect with career counselling and thereby encourage informed choices about the kinds of professional development to be made.

Work exchange and mobility programs to allow Indigenous staff to expand their employment horizons within an organisation are initiatives that have government support both in the Northern Territory and South Australia. In New South Wales, Aboriginal staff in the Department of Education and Training, for example, have priority access to professional development in areas that support departmental policies and potentially satisfy employment needs. In one TAFE system the employer pays the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) fees for any Indigenous member of staff who enrolls in any university degree and also provides them with release time for study. In another system, this same benefit is available, but the university degree must be in education. These practices are in sharp contrast with those in another state where there is only ‘a very informal implementation of professional development plans’, as one informant put it. Another informant suggested that support was necessary for Indigenous staff if they are to choose professional development activities relevant to their present and future roles:

Training is available to Indigenous staff, but somehow we can’t see it. Most of us don’t know about these programs availability. This is where we Indigenous staff need some help, support and encouragement to apply. The other thing is approval of the application. What do we have to do to get Professional Development to say yes?

The opportunities and relevance of professional development activities were contested issues for our informants. In one TAFE Indigenous unit, the responses were favourable and justifiably so. The institute makes an allocation to each staff member and there are a variety of internal and external courses available. Since the unit places a high priority on the professional development of staff, particularly in the areas of flexible delivery and teaching skills, the needs of staff are matched against the possible activities available. Professional development and the measurement of its success are also focus areas for the unit. Student satisfaction surveys, module completion rates and the realisation of strategic and action plans demonstrate success. The manager of the unit or the senior staff also meets with unit students fortnightly to ‘chew the fat’, as the Indigenous staff put it, on issues related to subjects, courses, resources, attendance and teaching and learning. Professional development is an integral part of the effective functioning of the staff and the achievement of outcomes for students. Articulation between the activities becomes a mutually supporting spiral. In some cases, the opportunities to negotiate professional development priorities for Indigenous staff occur inside the performance management process.

In one Indigenous-controlled registered training organisation, professional development and career planning for the current Indigenous staff members (11 in total) is conducted within fortnightly ‘all Aboriginal staff meetings’. These formally constituted, although informally conducted, meetings provide managers with the chance to reflect on the community and professional development hopes of the Indigenous staff. Questions ‘about what they want to do’, not just within the confines of the paid work but beyond in their community, are the topics of conversation. The managers then incorporate these goals into both work and training plans for the staff. This map for individual progress located within the registered training organisation and the community is a measure of the registered training organisation’s commitment to the upward mobility, self-determination and identity of its Indigenous teachers. The registered training organisation takes seriously its role as an

‘employment and professional stepping stone’, by providing the opportunity for its teachers to gain new skills, in much the same way as its students do, and then move on to other forms of employment in the VET sector and beyond.

It is sometimes said that participation in professional development increases employees’ job satisfaction. Nearly half (44.9%) of Indigenous employees responding to this question in our survey said professional development activities specifically for Indigenous staff were available, and that they had participated in them; 15.3% said that they were available but that they hadn’t participated; 30.6% said they were not available; and 9.2% said they didn’t know (table 32 in appendix 2).

Over half (59.1%) the Indigenous staff participating in Indigenous-specific professional development activities rated as very effective; a further 31.8% rated as somewhat effective; 9.1% of participating Indigenous staff rated it as not very effective or not at all effective (table 33).

Indigenous staff in VET also participated in general professional development activities. A substantial majority of respondents (70.1%) reported that such activities were available and that they had participated in them; a further 18.6% reported that the activities were available but that they hadn’t participated; and 11.3% said either that they were not available or that they didn’t know whether they were available (table 34). One respondent commented on the level of frustration and disappointment about not being included in professional development activities: ‘Ever since I was employed full-time I have filled in two forms requesting more training and to complete my Business certificate while I’m working. I was very interested and excited to join this training program. However I got no reply, nothing.’

Career counselling and career development planning

Career counselling, planning and development are critical features of Indigenous employment strategies. The need to ‘create opportunities for public service employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people ... and improve career development opportunities’ (Australian Capital Territory Public Service n.d., p.3) is a recurring theme in policy documents. Consultations in the states and territories prior to the introduction or revision of employment policies identified strategies to support career development. These include such initiatives as:

- ✧ cultural awareness training
- ✧ the Graduate Administrative Assistance program
- ✧ a Traineeship program
- ✧ a leaders of the future program
- ✧ study assistance
- ✧ career advancement. (Australian Capital Territory Public Service n.d., p.8)

Indigenous people in the public sector, and VET is no exception, tend to be employed in lower-level positions or Indigenous specific positions.

As a result many Indigenous staff feel locked in Indigenous roles and that their skills are undervalued in mainstream areas of government. Strategies are needed which build the professional skill base within the Public Sectors Indigenous staff base ... Where organisations employ staff in identified Indigenous positions and work units, strategies are needed to link these positions with career development pathways and advancement in the mainstream areas of operation. (Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment 2002, p.25)

The strategies mandated in this policy intersect with those related to the provision of professional development activities for Indigenous staff.

Career counselling offers employees the chance to map their future prospects and to identify the kinds of support for study and experience that are necessary, and perhaps available to them, to achieve their working-life goals. For instance, the Early Careers Framework in the Northern Territory aims ‘to provide a diverse range of options for agencies to engage and develop staff. It provides a

mechanism for agencies that have skills shortages to nurture and grow their own staff and to increase the available pool of people in certain disciplines in the Territory' (Northern Territory Office for the Commissioner of Public Employment 2003b, p.50). In South Australia, also, according to the state's Indigenous employment policy, all identified Indigenous staff will be supported in the realisation of their career goals (South Australian Office for the Commissioner for Public Employment 2003b, p.23). Similarly, career planning initiatives for Indigenous VET employees have been implemented in other jurisdictions, including Queensland and Western Australia.

Historically, Indigenous staff have been separated from the mainstream, working primarily in Indigenous organisations or Indigenous units within a large VET provider. As one respondent said, 'we are still living with the mentality of "here's your money, now go away"'. Or as another said, 'We are comfortably quarantined'. One of the consequences of this separation has been that some of the best organisational practices relating to career counselling have not applied to Indigenous staff. There is definitely a case for 'the organisation working more closely with us, and us working more closely with them', as another put it. If a closer link can be developed between the Indigenous staff and those managing the organisation's goals and practices, as is the case in a number of instances, then career counselling and career development planning can be highly effective. This requires a shift in attitude on the part of employers away from the notion of 'holding on to its own staff' and a move towards a more generous and long-sighted view of the development of the individual across a lifetime of careers.

The support described above is in sharp contrast to the response from another respondent who maintained that the devolution within the TAFE system in his state and the creation of separate 'fiefdoms of authority' meant that career development for Indigenous staff 'was at the whim of the College manager'. This attitude raises questions about who has access to this kind of support, who is a legitimate contender, and, most importantly, where the interests of the part-time and casual staff members sit in relation to the provision of career support and development.

Indigenous staff responding to the survey were asked whether their current employer offered career development planning specifically for Indigenous staff. Of those responding to this item, 13.5% indicated that this kind of support was available and that they had participated in it, while 15.6% said it was available but that they had not participated. Thus, a cumulative total of 29.2% of these staff indicated that career development planning was available for Indigenous staff. On the other hand, 52.1% of Indigenous staff responded that career development planning specifically for Indigenous staff was not available to them, and a further 18.8% that they didn't know whether it was available (a cumulative total of 70.9%; table 35).

Of the small number (13 cases) of Indigenous staff who reported that they had participated in career development planning offered specifically for Indigenous staff, nearly two-thirds (61.5%, eight cases) rated it as 'very effective', nearly a third (30.8%, four cases) rated it as 'somewhat effective', and 7.7% (one case) rated it as 'not really effective'. These figures suggest, even though they do not directly imply, that Indigenous staff value career development planning tailored to their particular backgrounds, circumstances and needs (table 36).

Exit strategies—moving up and moving on

Exit strategies seem to have attracted relatively little attention in the documents used in this audit. However exit interviews have been used in a number of states to identify the barriers to retention of Indigenous staff.

Succession planning

The current profile of the VET professional has the following age characteristics:

- ✧ low numbers of VET full-time teachers under thirty years of age
- ✧ with the exception of the Northern Territory, nearly half of the permanent teaching positions occupied by people in the fifty to fifty-nine-year age bracket

- ✧ contract and temporary staff clustered in the forty to forty-nine-year age bracket
- ✧ sessional and casual staff concentrated in the forty to forty-nine-year age group.

(NCVER 2004, p.20)

Succession planning, particularly for Indigenous staff, is critical under these conditions. The data reported by NCVER (2004) highlight the imminent departure of a large number of VET teaching staff and the small number of emerging full-time teachers available to step up to higher positions within organisations. Partly in response to the predicted shortfall in VET staff, a variety of initiatives arising from policy have been used to attract younger Indigenous staff and to provide them with professional development and other types of support. The establishment of an Aboriginal Employment Register in South Australia and the recruitment of Aboriginal trainees were seen as strategies to 'assist in diversifying and rejuvenating the workforce as well as contributing to succession planning' (South Australian Office for the Commissioner for Public Employment 2003b, p.6).

Succession planning is difficult in a context of casualisation and with a preponderance of part-time and non-permanent staff. The greater the level of dispersement through casualisation, part-time employment and short-term contracts, the more difficult succession planning becomes, especially at the lower levels of the organisational hierarchy.

The Western Australian Office of Equal Employment Opportunity has suggested that possible strategies to realise this policy goal of succession planning are intrinsically linked to management and leadership. 'Recognising and developing Indigenous leaders will also provide role models that will assist in improving the distribution and development of Indigenous employees at all levels of the workforce' (2002, p.14). The possible strategies listed under the key result areas against which public sector agencies must report include: identifying and developing potential Indigenous employees who can move into leadership positions in the future; encouraging Indigenous staff to apply for mainstream promotions positions; and secondments of Indigenous staff to leadership positions in other agencies or sections of the public sector organisation (pp.141–5). These intentions and actions also exist in the Northern Territory, where the Early Careers Framework (Northern Territory Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment 2003b, p.50) encourages public sector agencies to map and predict their future workforce needs and to develop their staff profiles on this basis (p.50).

In the examples provided from the qualitative data collected for this report it is clear that, if employment strategies are to work effectively, a number of commitments need to be made by the organisation to its Indigenous staff. Firstly, time has to be allocated to core activities that encourage Indigenous people to apply for jobs, provide induction for them, retain them and develop them. As one highly respected Indigenous commentator interviewed in the course of this study commented:

The nuts and bolts have taken over and our philosophical assumptions have been overwhelmed by operational details. 25% of our work time should be occupied with thinking about capacity-building. People have to have time to hang around and to reach agreements about study and upgrading and then time to monitor it and to push our people. We need to set targets to grow out of. This can only be done if we plan to have time.

In one Indigenous unit, staff performance and unit performance are regarded as co-dependent. The apparent success of staff and unit performance has led the unit to consider matters related to the unit's continuation and expansion, specifically, the issue of succession planning. The unit manager is intending to retire at about the time of the next contract cycle and has begun the task of 'growing' or mentoring key staff into the role. Practices such as this do not, however, appear to be commonplace and often the departure of one key person leads to a dishevelled response to the new situation.

Conclusion: Strategic workforce planning and community ‘ownership’ of Indigenous units and services

As this section has shown, the most recent policy statements from state/territory public sector employment departments and those responsible for VET reflect a deep commitment to strategic workforce planning as a means for addressing imbalances in the proportion of Indigenous staff as a proportion of Indigenous people in their jurisdictions, and sometimes to the proportion of Indigenous clients served by their organisations. Strategic workforce planning aims to identify the future needs of an organisation and to position the organisation for its preferred future operation through strategically sensitive recruitment and retention of staff; that is, by strategic capacity-building in the organisation.

One way of viewing strategic capacity-building is in terms of the desirable future *functions* of the organisation; for example, if an organisation proposes to shift from one mode of production or education to another. Another way is to view strategic capacity-building in terms of *equity* and perhaps targets for equity groups in the workforce. Over the last 20 years or so, the latter approach has been profoundly important in shifting assumptions about equal opportunity for women. It has been increasingly significant in more recent years for other equity target groups, including Indigenous people and people with special needs. On this view, many organisations have set targets for Indigenous employment, or Indigenous employment strategies and policies have been established to re-align their workforce profile to match the profile of representation of target groups in the general population.

There is an increasing recognition among employer representatives interviewed for this study that both the ‘desirable future functions’ rationale and the ‘equity’ rationale are significant when it comes to the employment of Indigenous people in an organisation’s workforce. To reach and serve Indigenous clients, Indigenous staff are needed. Indigenous staff are more likely to understand the needs and to relate better to Indigenous clients. If the organisation wants to serve Indigenous clients more effectively, it must offer appropriate services and appropriate role models in its teaching and other staff. It must be seen as an ‘Indigenous-friendly’ organisation.

At the same time, many organisations are recognising that they are vulnerable to challenge on equity grounds if they do not employ a proportion of Indigenous staff roughly equivalent to the proportion of Indigenous people in their jurisdiction or catchment. This is a kind of ‘embarrassment factor’ that may propel some organisations, without much enthusiasm, towards employing more Indigenous staff. The evidence of recent employment policies, however, is that this may not be the primary factor encouraging organisations towards increasing the number of Indigenous staff they employ. There is an increasing recognition that they can only succeed in Indigenous services if they draw upon the backgrounds, resources, experience and expertise of appropriate Indigenous staff.

In VET, where in some jurisdictions Indigenous clients participate at twice or more than the proportion of Indigenous people in the state or territory population, there is a strong argument to have Indigenous staffing levels *not* at the level of the representation of Indigenous people in the population but at a level proportionate to their representation among the organisation’s clientele. On this basis, organisations in the sector will need even greater proportions of Indigenous staff than they currently aim to employ.

To achieve this aim, as the policy documents attest, they are adopting strategic workforce planning approaches. In table 14, we contrast this approach with a more bureaucratic approach to workforce planning at each stage of the employment cycle. We also contrast the strategic workforce planning approach with that observed in a number of Indigenous units in TAFE and Indigenous registered training organisations—an approach we have labelled the ‘Indigenous community development approach’. Our interpretation of the evidence collected in the course of this study—from the views of informants in consultations, interviews and case studies—is that these three contrasting

approaches were being employed by different organisations or sections within organisations. Different employment practices are implied by each approach, as table 14 suggests.

Table 14: Three approaches to workforce planning

Stages in the employment cycle	Bureaucratic approach	Strategic human resources approach	Indigenous community development approach
Strategic workforce planning and establishing the need for a position	Fixed definition of the organisation and its staffing structure. New staff come to replace old, or to extend existing staff structures and functions.	The organisation analyses its current and future needs strategically, to position itself in relation to changing circumstances and emerging opportunities, identifies gaps between current profile and the staffing profile it needs for a sustainable future.	The organisation is a creature of the community and exists to build capacity to meet emerging individual and community social, economic, cultural and environmental needs and opportunities.
Defining and describing positions and employment criteria (taking affirmative action)	Existing structure and functions define the work of the organisation. Existing HR procedures define the limits of possibility in staffing.	Structures and functions are viewed as evolving in response to strategic constraints and possibilities. Each new staff appointment is regarded as a major investment for the organisation's future. New positions are justified on strategic grounds, and the organisation is proactive in defining roles and responsibilities of new staff against strategic intentions.	The need for new staff is seen both in replacement terms (maintaining viability and effectiveness of services) and in proactive terms—as contributing to personal and community capacity-building. Positions are defined in relation to both potential (e.g. the potential of prospective employees) and need.
Recruitment and selection (formal and informal)	Recruitment follows standardised procedures, emphasises bureaucratic fairness and (sometimes assimilationist) universalistic conceptions of equity.	Emphasises finding the 'right' people for (emerging) organisational needs and opportunities—and sometimes making the 'right' job for the 'right' person (who fits organisational goals and strategies).	Embraces the organisation as part of the community—to be sustained and strengthened as part of community life-cycles and development. Sees recruitment as a process of identifying, building and sustaining individual and collective capacity.
Induction	Seen as a process of fitting the new employee to the organisation (especially in procedural, role and functional terms).	Seen as a two-way process of building commitment and capacity for the organisation and for the new employee—fitting each to the other as part of strategic organisational evolution and development.	May begin long before the new appointee joins the organisation—developing familiarity between potential and prospective employees as a process of identifying and targeting people to contribute to the organisation and the community.
Mentoring	May be limited (whether formal or informal), aimed at fitting the employee to existing procedures, roles, functions. Emphasis on 'getting it right' in procedural and functional terms.	Seen as an instrument of individual and collective capacity-building in the organisation. Emphasis on 'getting it right' in strategic terms for organisational goals and individual career possibilities.	Seen as a pervasive, often informal but essential expression of belonging—individuals belonging to the organisation and the community, and the organisation belonging to the community and its members.
Monitoring, reviewing and managing performance	Performance monitoring and review as management tools to ensure compliance with organisational roles, rules and functions.	Performance monitoring and review seen as formal moments which are part of more extended processes of performance management matching individual employees and units to organisational strategies and <i>vice versa</i> . Emphasis on leadership rather than management.	Monitoring and review are often informal (sometimes formal) processes in building and sustaining individual and collective capacity. Management is often through teams and groups; leaders rarely give direct instructions, and tend to maintain focus on the meaning of the organisation for individuals and the community.

Stages in the employment cycle	Bureaucratic approach	Strategic human resources approach	Indigenous community development approach
Professional development	May be seen as a limited process, linked to promotion and sometimes preparing individuals for promotion.	Seen as a pervasive strategic necessity for the organisation if it is to be able to evolve and determine its own future success and sustainability. Professional development may sometimes lead the organisation in unexpected directions, towards unanticipated but strategically valued goals.	Seen as part of the pervasive process of life-cycles, with more senior members of the organisation (as in the community) needing developed skills and experience and an enhanced sense of responsibility for the long-term wellbeing and sustainability of the organisation and the community.
Career counselling, planning and development	Not necessarily provided, although usually offered informally through personal advice to promising staff.	Routinely offered, often in the context of performance management, to make visible how individual careers are essential to organisational development and evolution.	Often offered informally, often in group settings, to help staff identify their current and possible future locations in the life-cycles of the community and the organisation.
Retention	Seen as necessary to avoid costs of recruiting new staff, and for maintaining compliance of staff to imperatives of the organisation.	Seen as desirable and valuable in terms of investment in staff development, but also as optional in the sense that good staff may be expected to go elsewhere if better opportunities arise. Some loss of staff may be recognised as creating opportunities for organisational change and development, although there is also a need to retain experience and values-based leadership.	Seen as desirable in the context of community membership, although not as incompatible with moves away to develop expertise that may some day return to the community (the principal value) and (secondarily) the organisation.
Exit strategies—moving up and moving on	Apart from orderly retirement, may be regarded as necessary in the HR department to assist the separation of unwanted or difficult staff.	Seen as part of the process of organisational change and evolution, as sometimes creating new opportunities for development, and as part of the dynamic environment within the organisation (people moving 'up' in careers and 'on' to other opportunities).	Perhaps regarded somewhat more passively—it is expected that some people will move 'up' in the organisation as their capacities and experience warrant, that some people will move 'out' because of changing circumstances or opportunities.
Succession planning	May be little considered except for very senior staff (to preserve the interests of the organisation and its existing senior staff profile).	Seen as part of the life-cycle of the organisation, and as a means not only to sustain the organisation but also to secure strategic opportunities.	Seen as analogous to the life-cycle and evolution of the community—as part of long-term maintenance of the organisation as part of maintaining the community.

It is clear from the findings of this research study that employing organisations in the VET sector must adopt at least the strategic workforce planning approach described in this conceptual framework. More particularly, in cooperation with Indigenous organisations at Commonwealth, state/territory and institutional levels and Indigenous communities at the local level, they may be well advised to consider adopting, or further supporting, the community development approach successfully adopted by many Indigenous registered training organisations and many Indigenous units in TAFE institutes. In our view, the approach as shown in table 14 could be regarded as providing guidelines for good practice in Indigenous employment in VET.

Especially in a context of likely increasing Indigenous unemployment, increasing efforts in VET for Indigenous people are needed, as is increased commitment to Indigenous employment in VET, particularly at the local level. In the light of our findings, we believe that it is necessary for this commitment to be much more widespread, and that it needs to be communicated through TAFE institutes and through the sector as an urgent task for all VET authorities and providers.

Conclusions and implications

Context

The strength, quality and employment conditions of the VET workforce are acknowledged as crucial to the long-term economic growth and wellbeing of the society and its participants (NCVER 2004). However, the lack of reliable information about the composition and employment status of the TAFE workforce (the largest employer of VET staff) seriously compromises the ability to engage in the necessary processes of workforce planning if the viability of this sector is to be ensured and high-quality outcomes are to be achieved by its students.

It is possible to claim that the number of part-time and casual staff in TAFE is ‘much higher than is found in the workforce as a whole’ (NCVER 2004, p.6). The workforce is ageing, and there are ‘mixed messages on the qualifications of the VET workforce’ (NCVER 2004, p.6)

These issues relating to the adequacy of national data collection, the inability to engage in rational workforce planning and the profile of the existing TAFE staff impact directly on a study of Indigenous staff in VET. This is the context in which any discussion of Indigenous staffing must be placed.

An increase in the Indigenous staff levels in the VET sector has been central to two major policy initiatives since 2000: *Partners in a learning culture* and *Shaping our future: Australia’s national strategy for VET 2004–2010*. In spite of these, there has been a decline in the number and proportion of Indigenous staff in VET over the last four years. This decline comes at a time of high Indigenous enrolments in VET programs. The disparity between the particular and documented needs of the Indigenous students and the availability of Indigenous teachers is a serious and escalating problem. Indigenous employment in the VET sector is also part of a much wider, controversial and very disturbing set of discussions, as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2003), ABS and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2003) data document.

Improving the stability of funding for Indigenous employment in VET

The *National report to parliament on Indigenous education and training* (2003) summarises the progress of Indigenous students and staff. This report acknowledges some progress, but also notes that: ‘Whilst these improvements offer hope to those who work towards educational equality for Indigenous people across Australia, the report shows that there remain unacceptable disadvantages across key indicators’ (Department of Education, Science and Training 2003, p.iii).

The funding models that support the implementation of policy initiatives in the VET sector vary across Australia. The most significant targeted funding pool, which is partly responsible for the realisation of the goal of employing and retaining more Indigenous people in the VET sector, is the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program. The 2003 staffing figures from this program showed how fragile those gains were, with the national 2003 data showing a decrease from 2002 in Indigenous staffing in VET.

It should also be noted that this program is intended to provide ‘supplementary funding to government and non-government providers in the pre-school, school and vocational education and training sectors’ (Department of Education, Science and Training 2002, p.xiv). The balance between state and territory funds and nationally generated funds to support Indigenous employment in VET is variable across Australia. The reliance of some jurisdictions on strategic initiatives program funding to support Indigenous programs is a contested and sore point amongst Indigenous staff in VET. In those jurisdictions, the report (Department of Education, Science and Training 2003, p.xv) cautiously notes: ‘There appears to be a continuing reliance on IESIP funding support the employment of Indigenous staff’.

The reliance on this funding to employ, develop and retain Indigenous staff brings its own set of problems. Perhaps the most significant of these is the relatively short-term nature of many programs, and this creates a sense of unpredictability about employment. Too great a reliance on Commonwealth funding by state and territory VET systems appears to have obstructed long-term planning, particularly in relation to the employment of staff. An atmosphere of forced mobility and multi-skilling to meet the demands of changing job descriptions is not the precondition for stability and staff development, career development and the provision of well-matched professional development.

Many respondents in this study maintained that the over-reliance on Commonwealth funding significantly impeded the ability of systems and organisations to implement, nationally, longer-term workforce planning to address the problems of Indigenous staffing in the VET sector. Contingent employment conditions created hard jobs with soft money.

Many jurisdictions are responding to this challenge by securing more Indigenous positions as part of their operating budgets—separate from strategic initiatives program funding. The same can be said of some independent VET providers, but with less certainty. Informants consulted in the course of this study indicated that greater stability was needed in employment conditions for Indigenous staff in both public and private providers of VET. They also indicated that more attention needed to be devoted to achieving Indigenous employment targets in ‘mainstream’ VET; that is, in positions outside Indigenous units and courses. In a climate of increasing competition for qualified Indigenous staff, initiatives of these kinds must become urgent priorities for VET systems and providers.

Improved national Indigenous employment databases

Reviews of Indigenous employment strategies conducted for Commonwealth, state and territory governments and departments have repeatedly identified a number of common problems in relation to the consistency of information on which decisions about improvement strategies could be made. They include the following.

- ✧ Indigenous employment is difficult to measure.
- ✧ Indigenous employment is highly inconsistent across agencies and areas.
- ✧ There are significant difficulties in measuring outcomes and comparing Indigenous employment across time, places, portfolios and types of employment.
- ✧ There are ongoing difficulties and controversies about data maintenance, reporting and monitoring in Indigenous affairs generally, and in Indigenous education and training.
- ✧ Payroll data are often used, a data collection method not consistent across agencies.
- ✧ There are some issues about Indigenous identification, especially when employees do or do not self-nominate as Indigenous.

All but the last of these problems are also endemic to the collection of information about the national TAFE workforce.

The quality of the data that have been collected in the past has seriously interfered with the effective monitoring of the success or otherwise of various employment strategies. This view was powerfully confirmed in consultations with staff monitoring the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program in the Department of Education, Science and Training (conducted as part of the present study), who noted that the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs had agreed some years ago on a standard set of categories for reporting on staffing nationally, but that most jurisdictions continued to maintain their existing and incompatible methods and categories for collecting the relevant data.

If the levels and conditions of Indigenous staff in VET are to improve, as the policy directions imply, relevant data need to be collected, not just globally, but at each stage of the employment cycle, so that the barriers to Indigenous employment can begin to be addressed; for example, data providing comparable information on permanency, employment type, age and gender for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees in VET. Working towards the comprehensive national implementation of a common workforce database to allow comparisons over time and across jurisdictions and organisations is an urgent need for employing organisations in VET. It is also an urgent need for state and territory VET systems and for Australian governments that are jointly concerned, through the Council of Australian Governments, about ‘Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage’, as its reports are titled, and for Indigenous people and communities.

Barriers to Indigenous employment

This study identified significant barriers to the increasing employment of Indigenous staff in VET. These include:

- ✧ interview processes that do not accept and value the particular skills and ways of being that Indigenous people have
- ✧ the absence of customised pathways into and through employment that match the skills and life values of Indigenous people
- ✧ the design of programs, policies and projects without significant Indigenous input
- ✧ structural barriers that make navigation through the employment system difficult and discouraging
- ✧ difficulties in gaining access to professional and career development programs, particularly for part-time or contract staff
- ✧ institutional and covert racism.

Certainly the environment is rich with policies and strategies. However, the degree of commitment to these will need re-invigoration if the current trend of decline in Indigenous staff numbers is to be reversed.

From the evidence reviewed for the study, we also conclude that different organisations have adopted different perspectives of Indigenous employment across the whole employment cycle. We described these as a ‘bureaucratic’ approach, a strategic workforce planning approach (characteristic of most national and state policies concerning Indigenous staffing), and a community development approach, an approach which appeared to underpin staffing in successful Indigenous-controlled registered training organisations. In our view, VET providers appointing Indigenous staff would be well advised to consider the merits of the community development approach as a way to build and strengthen connections with the Indigenous communities they serve—in the vocational education and training of Indigenous people, in preparing members of communities for employment, and in the employment of community members as staff.

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Appendix 1:

Research questions 5 and 6

Research question 5: What roles do Indigenous people have in decision-making in the sector, especially concerning the range of matters relevant to Indigenous employment through the whole employment cycle?

The mid-term review of *Partners in a learning culture* (Kemmis et al. 2004) reported on the extent to which partner agencies (the 54 signatories to the strategy and its blueprint for implementation) had achieved Objective 1 of the national strategy, to ‘increase involvement of Indigenous people in decision-making about policy, planning, resources and delivery’ in VET. In general, it was noted that almost all partner agencies had established formal structures to receive Indigenous advice (although it was not clear whether these bodies had responsibility for actually making the decisions in question, or the extent to which Indigenous advice was respected in decision-making). It was also noted that the existence of formal decision-making bodies did not guarantee that relevant Indigenous *communities’* views were heard and implemented. These were sources of frustration to some participants in some Indigenous advisory bodies in the sector.

Partners in a learning culture binds all signatory agencies to establishing Indigenous advisory structures. As we have seen, at the level of *jurisdictions*, states and territories give expressions of this intention in their Indigenous employment plans and strategies. As suggested in earlier sections of this report, there are many expressions of commitment to the objective of Indigenous involvement in decision-making in relation to Indigenous employment in the sector. That is, there is a commitment to the objective in policy. This has been mirrored in operational and procedural guidelines and suggestions about Indigenous employment, devised with Indigenous input and advice in almost all jurisdictions. In some cases, jurisdictions have developed quite detailed, culturally sensitive employment procedures referring to all stages of the employment cycle (for example, South Australian Department of Education and Children’s Services [2002] *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2003–2008*). That is, jurisdictions have moved from policy to suggested procedures for Indigenous employment. The question then arises, are these policies and procedures actually implemented in the employment practices of employing organisations in the sector?

The Phase 1 researchers for the mid-term review noted that 60% of the required actions towards implementation of the blueprint were in progress or completed, so that Indigenous involvement was being achieved through the establishment of advisory structures. On the other hand, they remarked, ‘this optimistic picture has not translated into a significant rate of Indigenous employment in the sector’ (quoted in Kemmis et al. 2004, p.33). This observation seems even more warranted in the light of the overall decline in Indigenous employment in the VET government sector between 2002 and 2003 than in 2002, when the Phase 1 researchers wrote those words.

From the evidence already reviewed, it is clear that many VET employers, especially in the public sector, are taking action to implement the objective of involving Indigenous people in decision-making, through the establishment of Indigenous advisory bodies. These bodies rarely have a direct role in employing Indigenous staff, however, and may have little or no role (beyond commenting) on organisations’ budgets and their allocation, let alone decisions about individual positions and

appointments. The mid-term review of *Partners in a learning culture* suggested that implementation of the national strategy was 'patchy', varying between organisations, and between levels within organisations. The same might be said with respect to decision-making about employment in the VET sector, where some jurisdictions seem to be implementing Indigenous employment policy more vigorously than others, and where some organisations (and departments or sections within organisations) are more proactive than others in involving Indigenous people in decision-making about Indigenous employment.

Data collected from informants for this study, particularly in (employer and employee) interviews and case studies, confirmed this view. Indigenous registered training organisations and Indigenous units in TAFE, routinely and almost universally, involve Indigenous people in decisions about the identification of positions to be offered, about recruitment and selection, about induction and professional and career development, about succession planning and about the evaluation of employment processes. Other public sector employers, particularly TAFE colleges or institutes, are more likely to involve or consult with Indigenous people at an organisational level, but (with the obvious exception of Indigenous units in TAFE colleges) less systematically at the level of individual departments or sections. According to data collected for this study and for Stage 2 of the mid-term review of *Partners in a learning culture* (Kemmis et al. 2004), however, the situation is much more variable in the case of non-government, non-Indigenous registered training organisations (and group training companies), where staffing decisions may not take particular account of Indigenous clients or the value of Indigenous staff in addressing equity objectives and the ideal of cultural diversity in the workforce. Clearly, there are many particular examples to the contrary, where departments and non-government, non-Indigenous registered training organisations are proactive about Indigenous employment, but the generalisation holds across much of Australian VET.

In the mid-term review of *Partners in a learning culture*, the authors quoted the case of Victoria's Wurreker strategy as a powerful model of involvement of Indigenous people in decision-making.

The Victorian Wurreker Strategy (2000) is a reaffirmation of the commitment of the Victorian Government and the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) to improving educational, economic and social outcomes for Koorie people. The development of the Strategy was underpinned by the concept of equivalent partnerships between community, TAFE and other government agencies. Wurreker aims to focus energy, attention and resources on a 'birth-to-death philosophy of education' that places the 'student at the centre of education policy and decision-making'. In order to implement the Strategy, Wurreker committees have been set up in eight regional areas. These groups identify the education and training needs that are most relevant to their jurisdictions. They also provide advice on expected and realistic outcomes for Indigenous participants, appropriate delivery strategies and resource allocation. Linkages between communities and other agencies are facilitated by local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups. Protocols for the operation of the Wurreker committees and their relationships with Government agencies and TAFE have been agreed to at both state and local levels. These protocols reflect the cooperative sentiments of the Strategy and clarify the roles of the various partners. Wurreker is an example of how partnerships in decision-making, when negotiated with sensitivity and respect for the contributions that each partner can make, can be culturally inclusive and responsive to the needs of Indigenous students and their communities. It is also a powerful example of how one state Aboriginal education consultative group has negotiated a substantial role in decision-making about education and training. Through Wurreker, the Victorian AECG has a vital say in decisions about VET, and its relations to Indigenous community and economic development in their regions. (Kemmis et al. 2004, p.37)

The report of the mid-term review quotes the case of one city council which has taken a very proactive approach to Indigenous employment:

The city council is committed to the implementation of an Indigenous employment strategy, and with an annual turnover of \$1.5 billion the council has become an incubator for the present 60 Indigenous employees. The council employs 20 people in its employment services

team and has an Indigenous employment program consultant. The employment strategy for Indigenous people takes a variety of forms. Young people are targeted through the provision of traineeships, apprenticeships, vacation employment, work experience opportunities and structured work placements within the council. Young Indigenous people who have been identified as being 'at risk' because of substance abuse are accepted into the 'Youth in Recovery' program and given a 'second chance' through traineeships, or through employment. The team environment, and the formal and informal support provided to employees, are thought to be crucial factors in the success of this initiative. The Employment Services section of the council is proactive in seeking out potential Indigenous employees, recognising that Indigenous people are often reluctant to apply for many jobs in the face of the significant barriers they have encountered in the past. Applicants for jobs are interviewed and placed using a case management approach, thereby ensuring that Indigenous people are not lost in the system. The council also makes the most of its email network to recruit Indigenous staff and lodges all applications and enquiries in a database for future matching. Once employed, Indigenous people are able to move within the organisation through a process of internal application and this, accompanied by an assertive and accredited training program for all employees, places them on a 'footpath to a career'. The opportunities for Indigenous employees are further improved by access to internally provided courses in areas such as 'addressing job criteria' and 'job applications'. Elders attend all council meetings and provide advice and staff for the cross-cultural awareness programs that are run through the council. The council would also like to develop closer links with CDEP programs, and this is an initiative for the newly appointed Indigenous Program Manager. The emphasis within the council is on the integration of employment and training programs, and the need to provide good-quality career advice to its Indigenous employees. The council makes a clear and practically supported distinction between 'employment' and 'career'. It recognises the importance of providing appropriately delivered training, matched to the aspirations and skills of the participants, and mixed with thoughtful mentoring in the workplace. The success of its Indigenous employment strategy is tangible proof that if 'you only get one chance with our people', that chance can be enough. (Kemmis et al. 2004, p.46)

These examples demonstrate how Indigenous involvement in decision-making in relation to employment can occur. In Indigenous registered training organisations and in many Indigenous units in TAFE colleges or institutes, such processes are more commonplace than across the VET sector as a whole, particularly in the non-government, non-Indigenous sector, and more commonplace than in other departments and sections of TAFE colleges and institutes. The policy mandate for Indigenous involvement is clear across the sector and across jurisdictions, but operational practice at the organisational level is yet to realise the aspirations of policy uniformly across the sector.

Addressing the issue of the ubiquity of policy and the patchiness of practice in the involvement of Indigenous people in decisions about Indigenous employment in VET, one Indigenous informant to this study suggested that the problem was one about the very nature of proceeding from policy as imposed on the sector and superimposed on the existing employment practices of organisations, rather than embraced by people within the sector. He suggested that what was needed was 'policy dialogue', not just policy.

Research question 6: What do Indigenous staff in VET think about the adequacy and appropriateness of VET provision for Indigenous people and communities?

A number of Indigenous informants contacted in the course of this research believed that the employment conditions of Indigenous staff had a positive impact on the quality of provision of VET to Indigenous people. One Indigenous teacher commented that: 'As for me, the employment

conditions are good, there is a high level of training being delivered which is well supported by staff, so there is a low impact factor'. Another teacher stated: 'I believe [employment conditions have] a major impact because when these conditions are made available to Indigenous staff they are made aware of their capabilities, their successes and their effectiveness as course delivers within the workplace'. A student support officer drew attention to the changing employment conditions available in the sector: 'I think the conditions for Aboriginal staff are improving all the time. More field staff (Aboriginal Student Support Officers, Coordinators etc.) would vastly improve the effectiveness of delivery'. One gave their TAFE employer this ringing endorsement: 'The conditions are great and TAFE in general is super supportive'.

Some of those answering that employment conditions had a positive impact on provision of VET seemed to be emphasising the value of the *employment* of Indigenous VET professionals rather than their *employment conditions* in particular. One student support officer remarked: 'If respect is there for Indigenous staff by Indigenous staff, then people tend to work together for the same goals and this in turn has an impact on our students, [who] also feel good about education and training within a comfortable environment'. Another said: 'I think it is extremely important. Having Aboriginal staff strongly imbedded in supporting mainstream and access programs and students allows for greater inclusion of Aboriginal learning styles and continual recognition of the issues that impact on Aboriginal students'.

A small number of other staff believed that, as their employment conditions were the same as for non-Indigenous staff, employment conditions *per se* had little impact on the quality of provision.

On the other hand, a large number of the Indigenous staff contacted in the course of this study believed that the employment conditions under which they worked had a negative impact—or a potentially negative impact—on the quality of provision of VET for Indigenous people. Of these, the greatest number drew attention to the short-term nature of their employment contracts and the resultant insecurity about their positions. It was telling that one staff member contacted for the survey responded: 'Only here 2 days, so cannot make comment'. More pointed was the comment from one student support officer: 'Currently I'm contracted on the basis of 3 months and then extended when advised. There is no sustainability for me and I'm sure there will be no sustainability in our projects for Indigenous clients because of the uncertainty of my role'. The general case for greater job security for Indigenous staff was put by several informants:

Most Indigenous identified positions are of a temporary funded nature or not a full-time position. As an example all identified positions within ... TAFE are 0.5 of half load (except the Aboriginal Development Manager).
(Teacher)

[Employment conditions have a] major impact. I don't think Indigenous staff (or any staff under the same conditions) would give their all if their employer doesn't value them enough to secure their tenure, especially if staff think that they may be out of the job in a month or two.
(Administrator)

Fixed-term contracts affect morale and the perception Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff have of the department's commitment to and valuing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
(Administrator)

There tends to be high turnover in positions. My mainstream employer doesn't offer much support for federally funded positions.
(Administrator)

Employment conditions have a high impact. If the conditions are not good or enticing, you will get lack of support.
(Administrator)

The current employment conditions are somewhat disempowering. Quite a number of Indigenous staff are employed on contracts, therefore there is limited job security.
(Student support officer)

It is vital that Aboriginal staff/people have a major role in the implementation of programs but it is impractical when they have no job security. Currently the majority by far of teaching staff are casual/part-time. They have no job security.
(Student support officer)

One teacher put the point more poignantly: 'The short-term contracts are a worry. There are other positions available and if they were teaching positions I would apply. It is difficult to make the commitment that is required from a teacher to the community'.

Some drew attention to the issue of how positions for many Indigenous VET staff are funded: 'Due to funding issues, Aboriginal staff are constantly under pressure to produce more enrolments to secure more IESIP funds to maintain their positions. This leaves little time to undertake professional development. Job security is an issue' (Student support officer).

In various ways, different informants also indicated that the commitment of VET employers and organisations to Indigenous people and communities was vital, and that lack of commitment undermined the quality of provision of VET to Indigenous people. Examples of such comments included these:

It has been highlighted by our students that there is a lack of Indigenous teachers and it would make a difference if there was a more visual presence of Indigenous staff.

(Administrator)

A supportive and progressive employer is critical to the success of Indigenous programs and staff.

(Administrator)

[In my TAFE organisation there are] no Aboriginal directors. TAFE [is] reactive and ought to be promoting and encouraging Indigenous people.

(Administrator)

I personally think that [employment conditions have] a huge impact. Indigenous staff should be encouraged and have ready access to training and professional development, as this will not only improve their educational and professional status but also the outcomes for their students.

(Student support officer)

The effect [of our employment conditions] is negative. The achievements are generally the result of commitment from Aboriginal staff and students to make the best of very little resources.

(Student support officer)

Aboriginal people are not being valued.

(Student support officer)

We have a number of workshops to come up with ideas. We come up with the same ideas each time but they are not able to be implemented. For example, implementation of VET programs in Correctional Centres need aboriginal instructors, but CCs are not willing to employ them.

(Student support officer)

I think the delivery of programs is seriously compromised in that the VET system in my area has non-Indigenous teachers delivering programs which should be delivered by indigenous teachers and I think TAFE is unwilling to recognise the consequences.

(Teacher)

And, finally, from a student support officer: '[Our employment conditions] make being Indigenous a whole lot harder'.

One administrator felt unable to comment on the issue of the impact of employment conditions on the delivery of VET, because 'I work in an Aboriginal community controlled registered training organisation that only employs Aboriginal people'. Like others working in Indigenous-controlled registered training organisations, this informant gave the impression that, despite the perennial funding concerns of these organisations, employment issues were less vexed than for many of the informants working in other VET settings, especially in larger organisations where attention to issues affecting Indigenous staff and students, although recognised as important, is all too frequently eclipsed by other operational concerns.

Appendix 2: Additional tables

Table 15: Teaching areas

Students/programs	Frequency	Percentage
Mainstream	3	10.3
Both	15	51.7
Indigenous only	11	37.9
Total valid cases	29	
Missing	70	(70.7)
Total	99	100.0

Notes: These data include information from staff whose primary job is not teaching; many Indigenous staff do some teaching in addition to their primary function. Of the three cases who nominate teaching in the mainstream only, one is a long-term trade teacher, one is a student support officer, and one is a group training contracts manager.

Table 16: Employment status

	Frequency	Percentage
Permanent	61	73.5
Contract	18	21.7
Casual	4	4.8
Missing	16	
Total	99	100.0

Table 17: Employment status

Employment status	Frequency	Percent
Full-time	75	87.2
Part-time	11	12.8
Missing	13	
Total	99	100.0

Table 18: Employment status by type of employment contract

	Permanent	Contract	Casual	Row totals
Full-time (number)	59	13	1	73
Row percentage	80.8%	17.8%	1.4%	88.0%
Column percentage	96.7%	72.2%	25%	
Part-time (number)	2	5	3	10
Row percentage	20.0%	50.0%	30.0%	12.0%
Column percentage	3.3%	27.8%	75.0%	
Column total (number)	61	18	4	83
Column total percentage	73.5%	21.7%	4.8%	100.0%

Table 19: Source of funding for the position (where known)

Source of funds	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage
Ordinary operating funds	20	20.2	40.8
Special federal grant	12	12.1	24.5
Special state grant	8	8.1	16.3
Other	9	9.1	18.4
Don't know/missing	50	50.5	
Total	99	100.0	100.0

Note: Inspection of the qualitative data provided in the survey suggests that the most likely source of funds for staff responding 'Don't know' and those who did not respond to the multiple choice item would be ordinary operating funds. We estimate from these data that around 71% of the sample are in positions funded from institutions' ordinary operating funds. We are also aware, however, that our sample over-represents two states in which a conscious attempt has been made to shift the funding of Indigenous positions to a more secure funding base.

Table 20: Whether the job is a designated position

Designated position	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	55	64.0
No	28	32.6
Unsure	3	3.5
Missing	13	
Total	99	100.0

Table 21: Funding source of designated positions

Whether designated	Ordinary funds	Federal grant	State grant	Other	Row total
Yes, designated (number)	16	11	8	9	44
Row percentage	36.4%	25%	18.2%	20.5%	89.8%
Column percentage	80.0%	91.7%	100.0%	100.0%	
Total percentage	32.7%	22.4%	16.3%	18.4%	
Not designated (number)	4	1			5
Row percentage	80.0%	20.0%			10.2%
Column percentage	20.0%	8.3.0%			
Total percentage	8.2%	2.0%			
Column total (number)	20	12	8	9	49
Total percentage	40.8%	24.5%	16.3%	18.4%	100.0%

Table 22: Employment status by funding source (where known)

Funding source	Permanent	Contract	Casual	Row totals
Ordinary (number)	17	1	1	19
Row percentage	89.5%	5.3%	5.3%	40.4%
Column percentage	51.5%	7.7%	100.0%	
Federal grant (number)	6	5		11
Row percentage	54.5%	45.5%		23.4%
Column percentage	18.2%	38.5%		
State grant (number)	5	3		8
Row percentage	62.5%	37.5%		17.0%
Column percentage	15.2%	23.1%		
Other (number)	5	4		9
Row percentage	55.6%	44.4%		19.1%
Column percentage	15.2%	30.8%		
Column total (number)	33	13	1	47
Total percentage	70.2%	27.7%	2.1%	100.0%

Table 23: Employment status by main job function

Main job function	Permanent	Contract	Casual	Row totals
Teaching (number)	8	3	1	12
Row percentage	66.7%	25%	8.3%	14.6%
Column percentage	13.1%	16.7%	33.3%	
Administration (number)	19	5		24
Row percentage	79.2%	20.8%		29.3%
Column percentage	31.1%	27.8%		
Support role (number)	13	5	1	19
Row percentage	68.4%	26.3%	5.3%	23.2%
Column percentage	21.3%	27.8%	33.3%	
Other (number)	21	5	1	27
Row percentage	77.8%	18.5%	3.7%	32.9%
Column percentage	34.4%	27.8%	33.3%	
Column total (number)	61	18	3	82
Total percentage	74.4%	22.0%	3.7%	100.0%

Table 24: Number of paid jobs in last five years

Number of jobs	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
1	31	32.3	32.3
2	22	22.9	55.2
3	25	26.0	81.3
4	8	8.3	89.6
5	5	5.2	94.8
6	2	2.1	96.9
7	2	2.1	99.0
10	1	1.0	100.0
Missing	3		
Total	99	100.0	

Table 25: Number of paid jobs in the VET sector in the last five years

Number of VET jobs	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
0	2	2.1	2.1
1	49	51.6	53.7
2	25	26.3	80
3	11	11.6	91.6
4	4	4.2	95.8
5	3	3.2	98.9
10	1	1.1	100.0
Missing	4		
Total	99	100.0	

Note: Those who answered 'none' were in Commonwealth department administrative positions.

Table 26: Length of employment in current VET job

Years employed	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Less than 1	17	20.0	20.0
1 year	23	27.1	47.1
2 years	10	11.8	58.8
3 years	10	11.8	70.6
4 years	2	2.4	72.9
5 years	1	1.2	74.1
6 years	3	3.5	77.6
7 years	2	2.4	80.0
8 years	3	3.5	83.5
9 years	4	4.7	88.2
12 years	3	3.5	91.8
13 years	2	2.4	94.1
14 years	1	1.2	95.3
15 or more	4	4.7	100.0
Missing	14		
Total	99	100.0	

Table 27: Level of satisfaction with current VET job

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Very satisfied	36	38.7	38.7
Somewhat satisfied	51	54.8	93.5
Not really satisfied	6	6.5	100.0
Missing	6		
Total	99	100.0	

Table 28: Whether mentoring is available

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Yes regular mentoring	22	22.9	22.9
Yes some mentoring	33	34.4	57.3
No mentoring	41	42.7	100.0
Missing	3		
Total	99	100.0	

Table 29: Effectiveness rating of those for whom mentoring was available

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Very effective	21	40.4	40.4
Somewhat effective	22	42.3	82.7
Not really effective	6	11.5	94.2
Not at all effective	3	5.8	100.0
Missing	5		
Total	52	100.0	

Table 30: Whether the mentor was Indigenous

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, Indigenous	15	27.8
No, not Indigenous	37	68.5
Had both	2	3.7
Total valid cases	54	100.0

Table 31: Whether the mentor was Indigenous by rating of effectiveness of mentoring

		Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not really effective	Not at all effective	Row totals
Yes, Indigenous	Count	7	4	2		13
	Row percentage	53.8%	30.8%	15.4%		25.5%
	Column percentage	33.3%	19.0%	33.3%		
No, not Indigenous	Count	14	16	4	3	37
	Row percentage	37.8%	43.2%	10.8%	8.1%	72.5%
	Column percentage	66.7%	76.2%	66.7%	100.0%	
Both	Count		1			1
	Row percentage		100%			2
	Column percentage		4.8%			
Total column count		21	21	6	3	51
Total column percentage		41.2%	41.2%	11.8%	5.9%	100.0%

Table 32: Whether the current employer has professional training and development specifically for Indigenous staff

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Yes, and have done it	44	44.9	44.9
Yes, but have not done it	15	15.3	60.2
No	30	30.6	90.8
Don't know	9	9.2	100.0
Missing	1		
Total	99	100.0	

Table 33: Rating of the effectiveness of Indigenous-specific professional training and development

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Very effective	26	59.1	59.1
Somewhat effective	14	31.8	90.9
Not really effective	3	6.8	97.7
Not at all effective	1	2.3	100.0
Total valid cases	44		

Table 34: Whether the current employer has other general professional training and development programs

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Yes, and have done it	68	70.1	70.1
Yes, but have not done it	18	18.6	88.7
No	3	3.1	91.8
Don't know	8	8.2	100.0
Missing	2		
Total	99	100.0	

Table 35: Whether the current employer has career planning specifically for Indigenous staff

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Yes, and have done it	13	13.5	13.5
Yes, but have not done it	15	15.6	29.2
No	50	52.1	81.3
Don't know	18	18.8	100.0
Missing	3		
Total	99	100.0	

Table 36: Effectiveness ratings of career planning programs specifically for Indigenous staff

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Very effective	8	61.5	61.5
Somewhat effective	4	30.8	92.3
Not really effective	1	7.7	100.0
Total valid cases	13		

Table 37: Distribution of survey respondents by age and sex

Age	Male	Female	All (row totals)
18–34 (number)	6	18	24
Row %	25.0%	75.0%	24.5%
Column %	14.6%	31.6%	
35–44 (number)	15	23	38
Row %	39.5%	60.5%	38.8%
Column %	36.6%	40.4%	
45 and over (number)	20	16	36
Row %	55.6%	44.4%	36.7%
Column %	48.8%	28.1%	
Column total (number)	41	57	98
Column total (%)	41.8%	58.2%	100%

Table 38: Whether last job was in the VET sector

Last job		Frequency	Percentage	Percentage
Last job	Yes, VET job	49	54.4	54.4
	No, not VET job	41	45.6	100.0
	Missing	9		
	Total	99	100.0	
Second last job	Yes, VET job	29	33.3	33.3
	No, not VET job	58	66.7	100.0
	Missing	12		
	Total	99	100.0	
Third last job	Yes, VET job	28	41.2	41.2
	No, not VET job	40	58.8	100.0
	Missing	31		
	Total	99	100.0	
Fourth last job	Yes, VET job	14	25.5	25.5
	No, not VET job	41	74.5	100.0
	Missing	44		
	Total	99	100.0	
Fifth last job	Yes, VET job	9	20.9	20.9
	No, not VET job	34	79.1	100.0
	Missing	56		
	Total	99	100.0	

Appendix 3:

Additional notes on methodology

The survey

The questions in the survey explored informants' current VET employment status and position (for example, full-time, part-time; continuing, program funding arrangements etc.), and past employment in VET and other occupations. Other items explored the specific knowledge, skills, formal qualifications and experience brought to the position; informants' views on issues about their own opportunities and about professional and career development in their positions; and about how a range of employment arrangements may have affected the efficient and effective delivery of programs.

A first group of potential survey respondents was identified through the consultations, the informant interviews, and the case studies. A second group was contacted directly via screening phone calls to VET organisations. A 'snowball' approach was adopted in both cases to identify respondents; that is, initial contacts were asked to identify further potential respondents. The survey instrument was distributed via email or post to contact people in the relevant organisations, and through these contacts to individual Indigenous employees. It was anticipated that the survey might generate 200 responses, but in the end generated only 99 useable returns. The size of the survey may have daunted some employees: it proved difficult to encourage responses, despite telephone follow-up with many individuals and organisations participating, and despite offering (and in some cases providing) the opportunity for respondents to complete the survey via a telephone interview. Some contacts in organisations reported that many Indigenous employees in VET, especially part-time and casual teaching staff, do not have reliable email access, or even pigeon holes for mail. The research team concluded that in a future study the expense of face-to-face interviewing would be warranted to generate a more reliable national stratified sample of Indigenous employees in VET.

It was anticipated that the snowball approach adopted for the survey would permit the researchers to contact not only current Indigenous staff in VET, but also people previously but no longer employed in the sector, and perhaps even prospective staff. In the event, these aspirations were not achieved through the surveys, although some such staff were identified in the interviews and case studies.

Analysis and interpretation

The archive of data was sorted by data sources (previous reports, consultation data, interviews, case studies and survey data) and by jurisdictions (Commonwealth, states and territories). From this archive, key themes in the data were identified, particularly around different phases in the 'employment cycle':

- ✧ the creation and advertising of positions (including 'identified' or 'designated' positions available, at least in the first instance, only to Indigenous applicants)
- ✧ the selection and appointment of staff
- ✧ terms and conditions of appointment (causal versus fixed-term versus continuing; part-time versus full-time; teaching versus non-teaching)
- ✧ professional development and career development policies and their operationalisation as experienced by individual employees

- ✧ changes from one appointment to another (from one employer to another, from one short-term position to another, or through promotion).

The qualitative data were the principal source of identification of key themes, although some additional themes (for example, the qualifications of staff in different kinds of positions in VET) emerged from the quantitative survey data. This organisation of the major key themes around which the interpretation proceeded emerged from the research questions for the study, on the one side, and, on the other, from the 'story' of Indigenous employment in VET as told by informants in interviews and the case studies. This was supplemented by qualitative comments received in the surveys (in fact, a composite reading of the different stories of Indigenous employees in different places, different types of positions, and different locations in the sector).

Appendix 4: The survey

INDIGENOUS STAFF IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

SURVEY PROTOCOL (email version)

We are asking for your assistance to participate in a survey of Indigenous teachers, trainers and administrators who are working in the Australian Vocational Education and Training (VET) system. This survey is one part of a larger project to investigate ways of improving Indigenous participation in VET. The results of the project will assist in developing policies to improve the delivery of VET to Indigenous Australians. The project is sponsored by the National Council for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), and has the support of the Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council (AITAC) of the Australian national Training Authority (ANTA).

The aim of this survey is to collect background information from a large number of individual Indigenous VET teachers, trainers and administrators about their personal experience of the VET system. This will help us build an overall picture of Indigenous participation in VET. The information provided will be entered on a computer and no individual or organisation will be able to be identified in the analysis or in the final Report.

To help us make sure we do not survey individuals more than once, please enter your name and organisation below. These will be removed when the data is entered onto the computer. **Please enter your responses for each of the questions below and return email to either Marianne Atkinson or Ros Brennan Kemmis.**

To enter a response simply use your mouse or cursor to place an X in the box or type your comments after the position marked as <<

Name<<
Organisation<<

If you have any questions about this project or the survey, please contact

Marianne Atkinson
Tel: (02) 69 33 2458
Fax (02) 69 33 2888
Email: matkinso@csu.edu.au

Or

Ros Brennan Kemmis
Tel: (02) 69 33 2745
Fax (02) 69 33 2888
Email: rbrennan@csu.edu.au

Thank you for helping us with this important project.

BACKGROUND

1. Age.

Please enter your age in years<< years

2. In what state or territory were you born (please type)

State<<

3. Sex

(Please place an X one box) Are you?

<<	Male
<<	Female

4. Residence

Where do you live at the moment? Please enter the state and postcode in the spaces below

State<<	Postcode<<
---------	------------

EDUCATION

5. In what state or territory did you finish your school education?

State<<

6. What was your highest SCHOOL qualification?

<<	Year 9
<<	Intermediate or School Certificate (Year 10)
<<	Year 11
<<	Higher School Certificate (or equivalent)
<<	Other?

7. Please enter the educational qualifications that you hold (Please enter a X for as boxes as are applicable)

<<	Trade Certificate (please enter the name)<<
<<	TAFE Certificate (or equivalent) (please enter the name)<<
<<	Diploma (please enter the name)<<
<<	Undergraduate degree (please enter the name)<<
<<	Postgraduate degree (please enter the name)<<
<<	Other qualification (please enter the name)<<

8. In what year did you receive your highest educational qualification?

Please enter 19<<

9. In what state or territory did you achieve this educational qualification?

State<<

PAID EMPLOYMENT

10 How many PAID jobs have you had in the last five (5) years? Please count ALL separate full-time, part-time jobs and casual jobs, even if these have been with the same employer

Number of PAID jobs held in the last five (5) years<<

11 How many of these PAID jobs have been in the education or VET sector?

By the education or the VET sectors we mean ANY teaching, training, administration or support jobs in TAFE, School Education or any community (such as CDEP) or other organisation that provides education or training services to children or adults.

Number of PAID jobs held in the education or VET sectors in the last five (5) years<<

12 Are you currently employed in ANY CAPACITY in the VET sector? (Please enter one box only)

<<

Yes, I am currently employed in the VET sector

<<

No, I am not currently employed in the VET sector

* If you have recently resigned, or your VET job has finished, please answer questions 13 to 22 about your MOST RECENT job in the VET sector

13 What is your current job in the VET sector?

Name or title of this VET job<<

14 How long have you been employed in your current VET job? (please enter)

Years<< Months<< -

15 Is your current VET job

<<

Full time

<<

Part-time

16 Is your current VET job

<<

A permanent position

<<

A fixed term contract position

<<

A casual position

17 Does your current VET job MAINLY involve (Please enter one box only)

<<

Teaching/Training

<<

Administration

<<

Support for Indigenous students

<<

Other (please enter)<<

18 IF your current VET job includes ANY teaching or training, do you teach in? (Please enter one box only)

- | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|
| << | Mainstream programs only |
| << | Mainstream and/or Indigenous programs |
| << | Indigenous specific programs only |

Please list ALL the modules or subjects that you teach

<<

19 Who is your current VET employer (please enter one box only)

- | | |
|----|---|
| << | TAFE |
| << | School Education |
| << | A federal government department (please enter the name)<< |
| << | A state government department (please enter the name)<< |
| << | A private company (please enter the name)<< |
| << | An Indigenous organisation (please enter the name)<< |
| << | Another organisation (please enter the name)<< |

20 Is your job an INDIGENOUS DESIGNATED POSITION?

- | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|
| << | Yes, it is a designated position |
| << | No GO TO Question 22 |
| << | Don't know GO TO Question 22 |

21 Do you know how this current VET position is funded?

- | | |
|----|--|
| << | Don't know / unsure |
| << | It is funded from the organisations ordinary operating funds |
| << | It funded by a special federal government grant |
| << | It funded by a special state/territory government grant |
| << | Other (please enter)<< |

22 How did you get your current job in the VET sector (please describe)

<<

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

23 Please give the NAME, HOW LONG YOU WERE EMPLOYED and the STATE for your last five (5) job positions. Please count ALL separate full-time, part-time jobs and casual jobs, even if these have been with the same employer

Last job held

Name of job position<<
Length of time employed in YEARS<< Months<<
What is the state in which the job was held<<

Was it a job in the VET SECTOR?

<<	Yes
<<	No

Second last job held

Name of job position<<
Length of time employed in YEARS<< Months<<
What is the state in which the job was held<<

Was it a job in the VET SECTOR?

<<	Yes
<<	No

Third last job held

Name of job position<<
Length of time employed in YEARS<< Months<<
What is the state in which the job was held<<

Was it a job in the VET SECTOR?

<<	Yes
<<	No

Fourth last job held

Name of job position<<
Length of time employed in YEARS<< Months<<
What is the state in which the job was held<<

Was it a job in the VET SECTOR?

<<	Yes
<<	No

Fifth last job held

Name of job position<<
Length of time employed in YEARS<< Months<<
What is the state in which the job was held<<

Was it a job in the VET SECTOR?

<<	Yes
<<	No

NON-PAID EMPLOYMENT OR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

24 Please list any community organisation you have belonged to or any other community work that you undertaken in the last five (5) years (eg: sporting clubs,)

Activity 1

Description of organisation and activities<<

Is it MAINLY an Indigenous organisation or activity?

<<	Yes
<<	No

Activity 2

Description of organisation and activities<<

Is it MAINLY an Indigenous organisation or activity?

<<	Yes
<<	No

Activity 3

Description of organisation and activities<<

Is it MAINLY an Indigenous organisation or activity?

<<	Yes
<<	No

GENERAL ISSUES IN INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT IN VET

25 Thinking about your main (or most recent) VET employment, how satisfied are you with the job? (Please enter one box only)

<<	Very satisfied
<<	Somewhat satisfied
<<	Not really satisfied
<<	Not at all satisfied

Please give your reasons for this answer<<

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

By Professional Training and Development we mean activities that will assist you to do your present job

26 Does your current VET employer have Professional Training and Development programs SPECIFICALLY FOR INDIGENOUS STAFF?

<<	Yes, and I have taken part in an activity
<<	Yes, but I have not taken part in an activity GO TO question 28
<<	No GO TO question 28
<<	Don't know GO TO question 28

27 If yes to question 26, how effective did you find the program? (Please enter one box only)

<<	Very effective
<<	Somewhat effective
<<	Not really effective
<<	Not at all effective

28 Does your current VET employer have other general Professional Training and Development programs?

<<	Yes, and I have participated in an activity
<<	Yes, but I have not participated in an activity
<<	No
<<	Don't know

CAREER PLANNING PROGRAMS

By Career Planning Programs we mean programs that will assist you to improve your future employment prospects in the VET sector.

29 Does your current VET employer have any Career Planning programs SPECIFICALLY FOR INDIGENOUS STAFF?

- | | |
|----|---|
| << | Yes, and I have taken part in an activity |
| << | Yes, but I have not taken part in an activity GO TO question 31 |
| << | No GO TO question 31 |
| << | Don't know GO TO question 31 |

30 If yes to question 29, how effective did you find the program? (Please enter one box only)

- | | |
|----|----------------------|
| << | Very effective |
| << | Somewhat effective |
| << | Not really effective |
| << | Not at all effective |

Please give your reasons for this answer<<

31 Does your current VET employer have other Career Planning programs?

- | | |
|----|--|
| << | Yes, and I have participated in an activity |
| << | Yes, but I have not participated in an activity |
| << | No |
| << | Don't know |

MENTORING

32 Is mentoring available to you (Please enter one box only)

- | | |
|----|---|
| << | Yes, regular mentoring |
| << | Yes some mentoring |
| << | No mentoring available GO TO question 35 |

33 How effective have you found the mentoring program? (Please enter one box only)

- | | |
|----|----------------------|
| << | Very effective |
| << | Somewhat effective |
| << | Not really effective |
| << | Not at all effective |

Please give your reasons for this answer<<

34 Is the mentor Indigenous?

<<	Yes
<<	No

YOUR REFLECTIONS

35 What do you think are the main employment problems and issues for Indigenous staff in the VET sector?

(please the mark the most important issues)

<<	Applying for a position
<<	Promotion
<<	Professional development in VET
<<	Career planning and development in VET
<<	Retaining the job
<<	The interview process
<<	The identifying process for Aboriginality
<<	Other issues (please enter)<<

36. In general, what impact do you think the employment conditions available to Indigenous staff have on the effectiveness of the delivery of, or support for, training in the VET sector?<<

37. Do you have any other comments or suggestions that will help us in this project?<<

If you wish, you can email your completed questionnaire to Ros Brennan Kemmis: rbrennan@csu.edu.au

or you can post it to Ros Brennan Kemmis, School of Education, Charles Sturt University, Locked Bag 588, Wagga Wagga NSW 2678

or you can fax it to Ros Brennan Kemmis on (02) 6933 2888

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE WITH THIS NATIONAL SURVEY



The National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation (NVETRE) Program is coordinated and managed by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, on behalf of the Australian Government and state and territory governments, with funding provided through the Department of Education, Science and Training.

This program is based upon priorities approved by ministers with responsibility for vocational education and training (VET). This research aims to improve policy and practice in the VET sector.

Research funding is awarded to organisations via a competitive grants process.

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