SUPPORT DOCUMENT

ENTERPRISES' COMMITMENT TO NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING FOR EXISTING WORKERS

Support document

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This document was produced by the author(s) based on their research for the report, *Enterprises' commitment to nationally recognised training for existing workers*, and is an added resource for further information. The report is available on NCVER's website: <http://www.ncver.edu.au>

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Appendix A

Case study reports

Introduction

This appendix contains the case study reports from the project 'Enterprises' commitment to nationally recognised training' by Erica Smith, Richard Pickersgill, Andy Smith & Peter Rushbrook. Each case study consists of an overview of the case study enterprise, a description of the research method, a summary of training activities in the enterprise, a description of the nationally recognised training used by the enterprise, and a conclusion.

The twelve case studies are as follows. (* denotes pseudonym for the enterprise name)

Accommodation Services*
Adelaide Festival Centre Trust
Australian Broadcasting Corporation
BlueScope Steel
Capital Clubs*
Centrelink Call
Foxtel
Harmonics Manufacturing*
Network TV*
Quality Chemicals*
Riverside Sports Club*
SingTel Optus

Accommodation Services

Hospitality industry; non-user of nationally recognised training

Richard Pickersgill

'Accommodation Services' was the division that provided accommodation and catering services to a multi-campus regional university. The university had four major, geographically separate, campuses, with the majority of students concentrated on its two oldest and largest campuses which were approximately three hundred kilometres apart. Each of the two main campuses retained some different cultural aspects which reflected their origin in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as Agricultural and Teachers' Colleges. The on-campus student population consisted primarily of rural and regional students with some from metropolitan areas and a small proportion of overseas students. Full board residential accommodation was available to full time students. There was a significant representation of overseas students in residential accommodation.

The division supplied the full range of services that would be expected in the lower end of the hospitality industry. This included all accommodation related services required to support full-board on-campus residential housing including laundry and cleaning, through to general catering for the residential student dining halls and catering for meetings and conferences. Canteens attached to the dining facilities also provided casual meals to the general student body. There was also a small residential conference centre at one campus that also provided casual motel accommodation to university staff travelling to that campus, and a non-residential convention centre at the other major campus. Thus there were also some minor front-of-house services. Although primarily a hospitality service provider, academic and personal pastoral care services for students were provided through a Residential Adviser service. Nearly seventy part-time advisers were employed, who were senior students. The division used some external contracting in the cleaning and laundry areas.

Services provided by the division within the university were usually based on a cost-recovery model, usually cost plus 10 percent (based on established university formulae). There had been some pressure for the catering services to expand into the external commercial market such as wedding receptions and, more importantly, both academic and industry or community based conferences and functions. On the accommodation side, conferences provided income during student vacation periods and residential schools for distance students also covered much of this 'down time', giving the division's operations a significant advantage over other universities without similar activities in vacation periods. For the commercial activities competitive pressures, commercial standards and market rates generally applied, although if the conference related to academic activities of the university the Division would not aim to make a profit. At the time of the case study the division was facing stiffer than normal competition from commercial conference operators as the latter had cut their rates to try to combat the downturn in tourism trade after the end of the Sydney Olympics (2000) and the attack on the World Trade Centre (2002). Turnover was around $13 - $14 million per annum.

The section employed around 120 - 130 full-time staff. Full-time staff were distributed approximately equally between the 'Accommodation' and 'Catering' functions. The full-time workforce was predominantly female at around 65 percent. The demographics of the workforce was representative of regional Australia. This meant that unlike house-services in the general hospitality industry, there were few permanent staff from non-English speaking backgrounds. Casual staff were mainly recruited from within the student body, in particular from the residential students. These staff included students from overseas. Employees were covered by the university's enterprise agreements for general staff and for miscellaneous

workers, which meant that wages were somewhat above equivalent jobs in the hospitality industry and conditions were superior particularly with regards to hours of work. In addition, the year-round activity pattern meant that staff did not need to be stood down in vacation periods. There was low labour turnover among the full-time staff, and little apparent union activity.

Research method

Face to face and telephone interviews across two campuses were carried out in October and November 2003. The Executive Director, the Administrative Manager, the Assistant Catering Manager and two catering staff were interviewed. Additional information was gained from internal documents.

The Director of the department had a background in restaurants and hotels and had completed a number of undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in management and hospitality. He had worked at the university for sixteen years.

Training activities

Training needs were identified through the performance management process and through management meetings. Many staff were involved independently in personal study, both in university courses and in TAFE programs. The Director's comments on training generally appeared to reflect a belief that resources available for training were greater than normal in the hospitality industry.

Despite the predominance of shift workers, arranging training around workers' shifts did not appear to be a major problem; programs were generally attended in small groups to maintain levels of service to customers.

Training activity was primarily focused on two areas, those generally relevant to the functions of the Division in servicing its clients, and those dealing specifically with operating in a university environment.

Examples of the former included the statutory and duty of care requirements in Occupational Health and Safety (which applies to all industries) and hospitality specific legislation with respect to Safe Handling of Food, Responsible Service of Alcohol and, soon to be implmented, passive smoking training. Other areas directed to improving efficiency and effectiveness included general management and supervision training. Changing expectations in the student body and competitive pressures in the external function market had also led to reviews and improved training in catering.

Examples of training related directly to the university environment included general university policies, financial and administrative procedures, the use of university Information Technology (IT) systems and the conduct of phone and video conferencing. Access to and use of IT was significant for the Division's operations across a multi-campus institution. Other university courses included looking after international students, living in the university environment, and providing good customer service. The departmental director said that his staff provided 'probably the biggest attendees of the university (in such courses) because we have got a lot of service staff'. The division also sent its management staff to university junior management and project management courses. The Director said that he was particularly keen on having staff attend university courses because

> 'one of the biggest things that I find for staff coming in from outside, is getting used to the university structure. If you come from a hotel or restaurant it is pretty easy to work out who is who and the hierarchy and there is usually one line of management. The universities are different in that you have got your line managers and you have got

university middle and senior management structure that doesn't follow a line management. You know we have got lots of people who are important to themselves and to the organisation and to us, if someone rings up who is a Head of School or say a Dean or something like that … they are very important people to us … that's why I like using internal training.'

The vast majority of training was therefore internal, with the majority organised through the university's Human Resources division. As well as 'cultural' reasons for accessing internal training there were also cost reasons. In general, internal training arranged through HR involved limited or no cost transfers. It also includes issues that are unique to university management structures. However, section managers within the Accommodation Services Division did make decisions on specific training needs. In these cases external providers such as TAFE and private organizations were accessed on a needs basis. As an example, an outside provider had been engaged to assess the work practices of the cleaning staff and provide training where it was needed. This approach replaced a previous 'one size fits all' twice-yearly training for cleaners. In addition professional staff attended relevant external courses; for example the full-time senior residential staff had attended a conference on teenage suicide prevention. The cost of travel and accommodation to attend such training made large demands on the training budget.

A final role for training, emphasised by senior managers, was to introduce cultural change. An attitude of 'it's always been done this way' combined with low labour turnover had embedded practices that did not reflect expectations in the external market. One example was provided by the Director. At a catered university function he noticed that the sandwiches 'hadn't changed for the last twenty years' and looked like 'kids' lunches'. He 'spat the dummy at the Catering Manager' and as a result a training program was developed which included buying in food from external suppliers and analysing and discussing 'how we will do ours' in the future. This was one example of a more general realisation that because the organisation had long-serving staff and because to some extent its market was captive, there was a comparatively low level of awareness of 'what is happening out in the world'. Training thus provided an opportunity for benchmarking.

Involvement with nationally recognised training

In Accommodation Services, as in the university as a whole, the use of nationally recognised training in areas other than traditional apprenticeships was minor. In catering services, it was limited to chefs and their apprentice training. The university did have its own Registered Training Organisation; however it was not used to any great extent for internal staff training. Recently however, the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment had been promoted across the university to improve internal training practices, in particular for small group and one-to-one training activities. The Division had around ten staff 'lined up' to partake in that qualification. Middle and junior managers would be put through the training primarily for the purpose of being able to analyse people's jobs and provide training in skills gaps. Rather than specifically targeting a nationally-recognised qualification for this purpose, the Division was looking round for suitable training and found out that the university was offering this qualification. The Division was also looking at the possibility of enhancing and tailoring a non-accredited up-front training program they were already offering to Residential Advisers. The manager of that section had already consulted quite extensively with the university's RTO to identify an appropriate unit of competency or alternatively to accredit a new training program. A major incentive to develop this course seemed to be to enable the course to be sold commercially elsewhere in Australia and even overseas.

External providers were used to provide courses such as Responsible Service of Alcohol, both TAFE and non-TAFE RTOs were utilised. In general where numbers were fairly large, the Division asked the provider to send a trainer on-site rather than send staff off-site. Appropriate

providers were normally found through industry contacts. Because of the unusual nature of the Division compared with the hospitality industry as a whole, and its unusual workforce, standard courses were sometimes not appropriate. As the Director put it, 'There are very few other (service) providers in our immediate area that have the sort of people that we have.'

In general the potential for an engagement with nationally recognised training was recognised within the Accommodation Services Division. The Director said, 'I believe that it is going to become increasingly important to have an accreditation for … people to be able to hold out (sic) the level of expertise that we require.'

One reason for this was so that the Division could defend itself if there was a health or safety problem. Another reason was to enhance the public reputation of the organisation, as well as a 'feel-good factor' for staff.

However, while each Division had significant autonomy a full engagement with nationally-recognised training would require a recognition at institutional and policy levels, including the Human Resource Department, of its value to the university as a whole. It was recognised that Accommodation Services was a 'slow taker-upper' compared with the rest of the industry. There were also some concerns that nationally-recognised training might not always be relevant enough to the workplace. It was thought that they might be some reluctance by employees, and in particular long-term employees, to be formally assessed. Finally it was suggested that local RTOs might not always have the expertise to provide the training and that it would be expensive to engage with metropolitan RTOs.

Conclusion

There was a wide agreement amongst management in Accommodation Services Division about the importance of training in improving the delivery of its services and there appeared to be sufficient resources to carry out or purchase what was required. Pressures for improved performance came from internal requirements for efficiency and effectiveness, changes in student expectations and increased engagement in the external catering and functions markets. A significant factor was the stated need to benchmark against the general hospitality industry rather than only against other university catering services. Particular features of the Division, including low labour turnover, secure and (relatively) well paid employment had tended in the past to produce somewhat insular and static views of service needs.

There was a general view amongst management that the adoption of nationally recognised training would benefit both employees and the Division, but little progress had been made. Some factors seemed to act as barriers to more engagement with nationally-recognised training. These included the apparent lack of familiarity of senior staff with national Training Packages, the longstanding nature of senior managers meaning there was no 'new blood' having had experience of nationally recognised training in other organisations, a view that skills to do the job were, on the whole, more important than qualifications, and a level of comfort with existing training arrangements. Moreover, since much training was accessed free of charge within the university, decisions to switch to nationally recognised training required decisions at university level, not just at a Division or section level, and needed to be integrated with the overall approach of the university to the development of its human resources.

Adelaide Festival Centre Trust

Arts/media industry; partnership with RTO

Malcolm Macintosh

The Adelaide Festival Centre Trust was established by the South Australian government in 1971 to manage activities associated with a complex of new theatres on the banks of the River Torrens adjacent to the State's Parliament House. Since that time, the Centre had become the principal operating Arts organisation in the state and managed a number of venues outside the original centre. It had expanded its work as a provider to the Arts industry through set design and stage design activities, which have become a significant export earner. The biennial Festival of Arts was also based at the Festival Centre and its staff were an essential element in planning and marketing activities for the Festivals.

From the late 1990s, the Trust was actively engaged in rebuilding its financial and organisational strength, following a period of financial difficulty. These difficulties reflected the costs of running arts activities as well as limitations to state subsidies and support following the collapse of the State's bank. The approach taken to VET training described in this paper reflects the strategic directions that emerged in the industry at large, and more particularly the Trust, at that time.

Research method

The interviews were conducted in November- December 2003 at the Festival Centre in Adelaide. Interviews were held with the following staff:

- Human Resource Manager
- Workshop Manager
- Training Manager
- Employee focus group

Workforce issues

The Adelaide Festival Centre Trust employed a total of 329 employees working in three main functions, administrative services; production and stage management; and publicity and promotion. A significant number of the positions, approximately 200, were classified as casual and are engaged in production and 'front of house' work. This work was originally carried out by full-time staff, but in the mid 1990s, changes in industrial conditions across the industry established a basis for converting permanent jobs to casual positions in areas where there was not a constant flow of work. While the changes were an important factor in reducing overhead costs of operation at the Centre, it also underlined the need for the Trust to manage its relationship with these casual staff very carefully, as their skills were often critical to their ability to stage successful events.

Managers interviewed asserted quite strongly that they regarded the casual staff as integral and vital elements in its human resources. Moreover, they were seen as qualitatively different to casuals in other industries, in that their level of skill was a critical element in the overall mission of the organisation. One of the drivers in current development of human resource policy was to ensure that these people were recognised for their skills and contribution to the organisation. As an example the Trust was exploring ways in which it could contract these workers in a way

that assures them continuity in employment whilst allowing flexible access to their services. The provision of nationally recognised training was seen as one way of acknowledging the skills of all workers, casual and permanent while providing some degree of transferable employability skills for casuals.

Another characteristic of the workforce was the attraction of the organisation to people with an interest and, often personal involvement, in the arts. Many employees were involved in artistic endeavours in their own time, and it was said that they saw employment at the Trust as a way those artistic endeavours could be supported and developed. This was not seen as a conflict with the goals of the organisation, but rather as a motivational element not found in most industries.

Human resource management activities had been given particular attention as one of the key objectives of the Trust since the late 1990s. The relevant objective commits the Trust to:

> 'Support all staff and help them achieve their potential to be skilled, creative and flexible through customer service, vocational and personal development training.'

While such objectives are not unexceptional in the corporate world the Trust's commitment had an important relationship to its overall mission and its staffing practice. The Trust was quite directly dependent on the skills and motivation of its staff for the presentation of its program, its booking systems and most importantly, the quality of its stage design and management.. A senior manager expressed the view that for such people the Trust was an employer of choice. More colourfully she explained the situation as one in which:

> 'The person serving you coffee may be a soprano, and the person doing the bookings may be a saxophonist … and we recently lost one of our parking station attendants to a major role in a film.'

The attention given to human resource issues also reflected the importance of occupational health and safety issues in the workplace. The industry at large had historically experienced relatively high incidence of workplace injuries and accidents. The nature of work in set construction and stage management were inherently hazardous, and the Trust undertook considerable efforts, with significant success, in reducing the incident of injuries. This involved the development of more systematic approaches to the management of hazards, as well as substantial training for the managers and staff most exposed to hazards.

Training at the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust

After the appointment of the current chief executive officer, in 1998, there was a strong emphasis on building the staff's professionalism and skills. To some extent the need for skills development was dictated by developments in ticketing, marketing and the continuing problem of OHS in the industry. However what emerged was a broad-based approach to human resource management in which skills development was a central element in a systematic approach, which the Manager of Organisational Development (OD) described as that of a learning organisation. This manager was appointed in 2002, and her role covered existing human resource management activities and as well as responsibility for ongoing change and development of the organisation. The role was a wider one than the position of Human Resource Manager it replaced, reflecting the Board's wish to move away from an administrative view of the organisation to one which more actively engaged with the changes in its operating environment. These external changes were dictating a closer examination of both the costs and overall competence of the organisation.

The new manager sought from the outset to pursue a more systematic and coherent approach to human resource management systems. This included the use of national competency standards in a wider range of human resource management activities, such as performance

management, as well as careful attention to workforce flexibility through appropriate industrial arrangements; the promotion of continuous improvement processes throughout the organisation; an active approach to managing OH&S; and the systematic development of management skills throughout the organisation. While many of these activities existed before her appointment, the active approach to OH&S being notable in that regard, she brought a more integrated approach to them. The new manager also had considerable previous experience in developing and using national competency standards, and she led the integration of nationally recognised training and its underpinning competencies into the Trust's training program.

Drivers of training decisions

The overall commitment to training at the Trust was driven by several considerations. First, as an organisation reliant on public subsidies, there was an imperative to making the most productive use of all resources. Productivity and efficiency were important organisational goals and training was seen as a mechanism for improving organisational effectiveness through the enhancement of individual competence. This was a central objective of the management development program that was aligned with the requirements of nationally recognised training during 2002. The Trust also saw development of the management skills of existing staff as a way of avoiding costly external recruitment.

Second, the Trust acknowledged the problem of retaining the unique skills of its staff. The problem extended from the marketing and promotional activities to the design and construction of sets. In the latter area, the skills of staff had traditionally been obtained through on-the-job learning, but the maintenance of the unique and critically important kills of such workers has demanded a more systematic approach to the provision and recognition of skills. It was noteworthy that the issue of skills in that area extends to contract part-time employees whose contribution to major events is no less important that the core staff of full time employees. Pursuit of this objective through use of nationally recognised training had the advantage of giving staff a credible and externally recognised qualification, and one likely to enhance their own self-esteem.

Finally training was an important element in the reduction of OH&S incidents and their associated cost and personal distress. The cost of injuries accidents and rehabilitation is one that has commonly driven change in OHS practices throughout the business community. The financial constraints on the Trust, and its public ownership created a situation where the issue was given very high priority. Systematic attention to OH&S was initiated under the Chief Executive appointed in the late 1998 and continued with marked success from that time.

The Trust's expenditure on training was consistent over several years, with training budgets fixed at 1.5% of payroll. This figure was adopted from the Australian Training Guarantee Levy scheme that ceased to operate in the late 1990s. However the maintenance of the levy amount as a budgetary device enabled managers to plan and develop skills development activities on a consistent basis over time. The availability of subsidies for nationally recognised training in recent years had further enabled expansion of the training effort.

The use of nationally recognised training

This issue embraces two separate considerations. There are firstly the use of Training Packages and the associated qualifications, and secondly the use of competency based training (CBT) using the standards embedded in Training Packages. The Trust's commitment to training preceded the advent of nationally recognised training, but had changed qualitatively since the availability of competency standards in Training Packages.

The availability of nationally recognised training had made substantial and qualitative differences to the training program, though it had not become the only form of training used at the time of the case study. By late 2003 about 40% of training was associated with nationally recognised

training, while OH&S training accounted for approximately 30% of the training budget. The remaining training consisted of short courses in a variety of areas including financial management, budgeting, project management and team building. This training like that in the OH&S area was not presented as part of a national qualification, and was not related to the competency standards in any Training Package. This was a consequence of the level of the Trust's commitment to improvements and new systems in the OH&S area. It was undertaken by specialists in the OH&S area, and was regarded as exceeding the requirements of competency statements in Training Packages.

The Training Manager explained the use of other non-accredited short courses as reflecting specific needs rather than being related to a longer-term developmental program. However, a long-term plan for the development of staff, using a TAFE Institute, had been in place for some years, and it appeared that a range of changes had taken place to management development after the appointment of the Manager, Organisational Development in 2001. In early 2002, at her suggestion the supervisory training based on nationally recognised training was aligned with the competency standards contained in the Business Services Training Package. Several participants in a focus group attested to the conversion of the existing training course 'mid-stream'. The training program prior to her appointment had not been explicitly focused on nationally recognised training, or more specifically the competency standards provided in Training Packages.

Participants in the supervision training course also commented that training in the past had been 'top down', reflecting the views of senior managers as to the skills required of first line supervisors. From 1992 this situation had changed with a personal training needs survey being undertaken through by the trainer through interviews with supervisors. The content and orientation of the program therefore reflected areas in which they each felt a need for development. The incorporation of competency assessments had subsequently meant some additional modification to the program. The supervision trainees also commented that prior to 2002 the training had tended to 'come in waves' rather than being part of a systematic and steady program of activities. This suggests that although the Trust had maintained a significant investment in training the coincidence of a new senior manager and the availability of competency standards was facilitating an approach to skills development more closely aligned with organisational development.

The Trust used a range of Training Packages in its training programs, including:

- ✧ The Business Training Package for supervisory training, administration traineeships, and assessor training;
- ✧ The Arts & Entertainment Training Package for administrative staff;
- ✧ The Electrical & Electro-technology Training Package relating to electrical work in the production areas; and
- ✧ The Telecommunications Training Package relating to Call Centre Operation.

The choice of these packages was dictated largely by the work involved. However the Trust and its partnering RTOs had experienced some difficulties in finding appropriate qualifications or standards for some work areas. The Training Manager expressed frustration over the difficulty being experienced in launching a traineeship in CAD/CAM design for one of the production staff. The OD Manager suggested that the Trust could, in the longer term, seek the development of a Training Package more specific to its range of occupations, and bringing together standards from a range of other areas.

All managers interviewed affirmed that the availability of competency standards had been critically important in their desire to recognise existing skills and knowledge of staff, particularly those in the production area. Not only did these standards provide an objective and

nationally recognised basis for accreditation, but the standards also facilitated the recognition of process of skills recognition for existing workers through RPL/RCC processes. These processes were used extensively for the full-time and casual staff engaged in set design and construction and in stage management. It was clear from staff statements in the focus group interview that the staff themselves valued the recognition of their prior learning. As indicated the availability of standards also provided the OD Manager with a credible basis for other human resource functions, including performance management processes, which were being developed at the time of the case study.

The Training Manager explained the continuation of short courses as partly related to the absence of appropriate nationally recognised training standards in these areas. This comment underlined the way competency based training had facilitated a more systematic approach to training, but it also suggested that the ability to use competency standards was seen in a narrow sense in which a specific provision for a particular area of skill was sought. There did not appear to be an appreciation that the development of (say) budget management competence could be assessed against a more general standard dealing with the use of management systems. She explained that over the long term the Trust was seeking to move towards more general use of national standards in all areas of training, but that this had proven difficult in areas such as financial planning, project management or budgeting.

While Training Package qualifications and standards were used to evaluate and record skills outcomes, it was suggested by the trainer and the Training Manager that the training given in many areas went beyond the immediate requirements of qualifications contained in Training Packages. As indicated above, OH&S was one of those areas. In that area systems specific training was likely to have gone beyond the basic OH&S units in Training Packages. However, there was no indication that a more extensive search had been made to identify higher-level OH&S units in other Training Packages. On the other hand there is no single location for OH&S standards in Training Packages.

The supervisory program was developed from the needs of supervisors rather than from the requirements of a qualification contained in the relevant Training Package. As a result the program had addressed some issues which the trainer suggests are beyond the qualification level being assessed, while other issues had needed to be incorporated. He also suggested that some of the outcomes of the training could not be readily assessed as they were more 'qualitative'. While this issue could not be explored in detail (this would have entailed a detailed examination of the relevant Package) it did appear that both the Trust staff and the trainer were seeking a literal match between the area of skill and a competency standard. At another level there may have been failure to see 'underpinning knowledge' as an area which covered some of what were seem as deficiencies.

According to the OD Manager the use of Packages was dictated primarily by the skills needs of the staff in question. The objective was to undertake training that met organisational objectives for skill rather than pursue a qualification for its own sake. Nevertheless, qualifications were issued and used as a means of acknowledging the attainment's of staff, and contributed to strategies designed to retain those staff with special skills and abilities. In the longer term the Trust might consider the development of an organisationally based qualification built around competency statements drawn from a variety of Packages, with the objective of providing a more organisationally specific context to the attainment of qualifications.

Training partnerships

The Trust had used a variety of training providers over the years, some of them consultants delivering specific training modules unconnected to the National Training Framework. They have used a number of RTOs including three TAFE colleges. In general the experience had been that TAFE colleges found it more difficult to meet the special requirements of the Trust

in terms of time and place of delivery. The Training Manager acknowledged that these Colleges had significant resources that made them reliable training partners. However, a relatively small community based RTO had also proven to be successful in providing an Administration Traineeship program. In the latter case the community based organisation as one oriented to the Arts industry, and had a direct interest in the outcomes.

While the Adelaide Festival Centre had used many providers it had one very stable and well established partnership arrangement with the Arts unit at the Adelaide Institute of TAFE. This group, known as AIT Arts, was the only TAFE provider that had consistently focused on the needs of the industry. The partnership had mutual benefits. The Trust provided its facilities and some of its more experienced staff as lecturers in AIT Arts programs. The ability to use the Festival Centre and its facilities in training was an important asset for AIT Arts, and Centre staff complemented the work of the full-time staff of the Institute in its overall educational program. For the Trust, AIT Arts provided a reliable and flexible delivery of training matched to its needs. While the Trust has the ability to source training outside the partnership this usually took place in areas which are not within the overall capability of AIT Arts. The relationship went beyond formal contracting to a much broader range of cooperation and interaction. The Trust's Production coordinator, for example, was a member of the AIT Arts advisory board.

The OD Manager acknowledged that the virtual monopoly enjoyed by AIT Arts had some dangers, but she also commented on the difficulty of finding RTOs with a knowledge and appreciation of the needs of the arts industry. An attempt to build a national training partnership in concert with the Sydney Opera House had foundered some years earlier, and the partnership developed with AIT Arts represented the need to develop local expertise and knowledge related to the industry.

The importance of funding

While the training undertaken was an essential element of the Trust's human resource management strategy the availability of government subsidies provided a justification for the maintenance of a relatively high level of training activity. The Trust budget, explained above provided a significant guarantee for skills development programs. The 2003 Annual Report showed that 72,778 training hours were provided to staff in 23 training programs. The Trust provided 25 traineeships though the bulk of its training was focused on existing employees. RPL activities were used extensively to recognise job based skills learnt over time. External funding in this environment was related to offsetting some of the costs of the program rather than providing the sole basis for training activities. The pursuit of traineeships for school leavers and some new employees was thus more likely to reflect more strategic concerns relating to workplace competence.

Conclusions

The Adelaide Festival Centre Trust was part of an industry that relies heavily on government subsidy as well as private sponsorship and endowments. Its success was very directly related to the skills of its staff. The use of nationally recognised training at the AFCT reflected a strong organisational commitment to skills recognition and development based on the need to improve the overall effectiveness of the organisation. These improvements were seen to be intimately associated with the skills of staff. The program has included training using nationally recognised training and training related to specific needs.

The development of nationally recognised training with the incorporation of competency-based assessment coincided with a more systematic approach to the development of human resource management within the organisation. Competency standards were identified as an important resource in the management of people, while the opportunity to recognise and reward existing skills was given a central place in the training program. Nationally recognised

training thus gained an important role in the further development of the Trust's skills development program, and in its human resource management. Over time, nationally recognised training was expected to account for a more significant proportion of training hours. However there could be limitations on its use. While it was seen as important in recognising existing skills, development may be more limited.

The complexity and multiplicity of Training Packages appeared to have inhibited efforts to source appropriate standards in several areas, ranging from management skills, to CAD/CAM design. There also appeared to be some confusion in the use of nationally recognised training standards to achieve the training required. This reflects on the relatively sophisticated design of competency standards as against the more easily understood training modules that preceded them. For example, training staff were seeking, and did not find, literal matches between units of competency and the training they wanted to deliver, and some criticism of Training Packages seemed to arise from a lack of understanding of the detail of packages such as underpinning knowledge in units. These considerations raise questions as to whether the users of Training Packages can be expected to assimilate the sophistication of competency based training in the short term.

The cost and availability of training was of importance to the Trust because of the nature of its financing. Subsidies for individual training programs had been less important that the internal provision of a budget equivalent to a fixed proportion of payroll expenditure. This provision, adopted by the Trust over a decade ago had been the basis of its ability to plan for long term improvements in skills, most obviously notable in the improvements made to the OH&S experiences. Subsidies were important in maintaining affordable training however, as the Trust was in an industry with specialist training needs and for which there are relatively few training providers. The cost of fully funding the acquisition of industry specific expertise effectively dictated the partnership arrangement with AIT Arts.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Arts/Media industry; enterprise RTO

Andy Smith

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) was Australia's leading public broadcaster and nation's largest broadcasting organisation. It employed nearly 5,000 people, mostly in Australia.. Founded in 1932, the ABC was fully funded by the federal government, although it was involved in a number of commercial ventures such as the ABC Shops. During its history the ABC had been through a number of technological changes that have added to the organisation's broadcast capabilities. These have included the introduction of television in 1956, the introduction of colour television in 1975, the introduction of 'ABC Online' in 1995 and, most recently, the introduction of digital broadcasting in 2001. The ABC broadcast through four national radio networks, nine metropolitan radio networks, 50 regional radio networks, an international radio network, a national television network, an international television and online service to Asia and the Pacific and an international television service. At the time of the research, ABC On-Line hosted more than 1,268,300 pages of content and also operated 38 ABC shops nationally.

As the national, government funded broadcaster, the ABC had a complex set of accountabilities to both the Federal government, the Australian Parliament and to the Australian people. The ABC was an independent statutory body that operated under the Australian Broadcasting Corporations Act (1983). A critical expression of the ABC's mission is found in the ABC Charter that defined the Corporation's accountabilities and responsibilities. The duties of the ABC under the charter included:

- To provide high quality, innovative and comprehensive programming that contributes to a sense of national identity, to inform, educate and entertain and reflect the cultural diversity of the Australian community;
- To transmit to countries outside of Australia, news, current affairs and entertainment and culturally enriching programs which encourage awareness of Australia and an international understanding of Australian attitudes on world affairs and enable Australians outside the country to obtain information about Australian affairs and attitudes;
- To encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia.

The ABC was organised into Content and Operations structures. The Content group included those Divisions that control the creative aspect of the ABC's activities including Radio, TV, News and Current Affairs and New Media and Digital Services. The Operations group was the service component of the organisation and included Finance, Human Resources, Corporate Affairs and the Enterprises Divisions(including ABC Retail).

Method

The focus for this case study was both on the corporate training function based at Ultimo, Sydney NSW, and on the Radio Division. The latter Division had most fully embraced nationally recognised training at the ABC. Interviews were carried out face-to-face with corporate training staff and on the telephone with staff of the Radio Division - due to the geographically scattered nature of this Division. The following staff were interviewed:

- Director of Human Resources
- Head of Training
- Manager, Development Programs

- ✧ Manager, Accredited Training
- ✧ State Training Co-coordinator (WA)
- ✧ Training Adviser, Radio
- ✧ Head of a Local Radio Station
- ✧ 2 Radio Division employees

Training at the ABC

The training function in the ABC was located as a department within the Human Resources (HR) Division. The HR function included a number of specialist central areas such as Workplace Relations, Organisation Design and Employment Services, with an HR Manager in each State and Territory. The Training Department was organised on similar lines. At the time of this study the Training Department Executive team comprised of a number of specialist central training staff including the Manager Development Programs, the Manager Accredited Training and the Manager International Training. A Training Adviser was attached to each major Division within the ABC and a Training Co-ordinator was responsible each State and Territory. In all, the ABC Training function comprised about 20 people . In addition to the HR Training service, individual Divisions provided training experts and workplace trainers and assessors for training delivery.

The current training function was a very different structure from that which existed up to about 2000. At this period, the ABC had long been recognised in the media industry as the training leader. Many of the leading figures in the Australian media industry were trained at the ABC and the Corporation continued to exert a very high degree of influence on standards in broadcasting and on the training arrangements that pertain to the media industry. The traditional position of the ABC as the industry leader in training had led to the development of quite a traditional in-house training function.

Prior to 2000, about 65 staff were employed in the central training function that ran a large number of in-house training courses for staff. Staff were encouraged to attend as many courses as were relevant to their positions in the organisation. Much work of the training function had been to create and deliver customised, in-house training programs. However, by the late 1990s this very conventional approach to training at the ABC had become increasingly unsustainable.

The Corporation was undergoing a major physical relocation of the Television Division in NSW from its older headquarters at Gore Hill to the newly refurbished centre at Ultimo, and was also facing the move into digital broadcasting technology. It was not clear that the Corporation's traditional approach to training would enable it to make the transition to the new technology without encountering the industrial disruption that had accompanied the move of the radio Division to Ultimo some years earlier.

At this time, the ABC was also under cost pressure to reduce budgets where possible. Two drivers, the need to improve the quality and to increase the efficiency of the training service led to the move to adopt nationally recognised training and to establish the ABC as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). In 2000, the ABC restructured the former training department and registered as an RTO. The philosophy was to embrace nationally recognised training where appropriate to meet most of the training needs of the organisation. The new training function was staffed by training professionals recruited both internally and from outside the ABC. The accessibility of further external funds for the RTO, whilst not critical in the ABC's decision to move to a new approach to training, played an important role in persuading other senior managers that there would be a greater return for their investment than had been the case under the old approach.

The new Head of Training drove this process. This manager had a VET and industry training background having worked for NSW TAFE and the (then) Commonwealth Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET). She felt strongly that the ABC should re-establish itself as the industry leader in training by adopting the new approach based on nationally recognised training. The VET system background of the new ABC Head of Training was critical for the successful implementation of the RTO. However, the Head of Training was clear that knowledge and understanding of the VET system was not as important as being able to build the business case for the ABC to move towards becoming an RTO and invest in nationally recognised training. For the Head of Training, the adoption of nationally recognised training provided a sound basis for the Corporation to increase the quality of the training offered to employees.

Despite the difficulties associated with the move to a new approach to training at the ABC, the Corporation maintained and increased its commitment to training during this period. Expenditure on training as a percentage of payroll rose from 1.4 per cent in 2000 to 2.0 per cent in 2003. In 2001/02 the ABC reported that around 76 per cent of staff had participated in structured training. During the same period, the ABC delivered over 73,000 student contact hours of training to 5,400 participants through a raft of accredited and non-accredited training courses.

The training provided by the ABC fell into five major categories.

Entry level training. All new staff were given a structured induction in their home State or Territory. The ABC has a long tradition of cadetships in the New and Current Affairs Division and about 20 journalism cadets were recruited each year. The ABC had not used New Apprenticeships widely although there may be more traineeship opportunities in the future.

Career development and succession planning. This is where nationally recognised training through the RTO played a major role. The ABC also funded a number of scholarships for certain groups of employees to get experience overseas.

Management development. The Certificate IV and Diploma in Business (Frontline Management) qualifications have been adopted as the standard entry level training for managers in the ABC with the move to nationally recognised training. About 300 managers had gone through this program at the time of the research in 2003. Beyond this initiative, the ABC was developing a new Executive Development program which was being ushered in together with a new Senior Executive Performance Management System. The Corporation was also developing a Leadership Capability Framework which will enable individualised executive development to take place using a range of external and internally delivered programs.

Technical training. There had been a major push in the area of technical training with the introduction of digital broadcast technology. This involved a number of technical training courses supported by extensive on the job development.

International and external training. The ABC, as part of its charter obligations, also provided training in broadcasting to many Asian and Pacific broadcasting organisations in countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. The ABC also had plans to increase its training provision to the wider Australian media industry in generic digital technology.

Training was linked closely into the strategy process for the ABC. Each Division within the Corporation produced its own strategic business plan, which was based on the Corporate Plan. Part of the divisional business plan was a divisional training plan. The divisional training plans were produced with the assistance of the Divisional Training Advisers. The training planning system was designed to dovetail with the new ABC Performance Management system, enabling line managers to review all employees and their work teams. The training needs identified through this process were aligned with the divisional training plans and actioned through the Divisional Training Advisers.

Nationally recognised training at the ABC

In its successful application to the Australian National Training Authority for recognition as ANTA Employer of the Year in 2002, the ABC outlined the advantages of implementing nationally recognised training:

- Training and assessment are quality assured. Rigorous, equitable assessment and well planned and comprehensive programs are a benefit of accredited training, and in turn, a benefit to the ABC;
- Practical, hands-on skills. Many employees come to the ABC with excellent academic backgrounds, including tertiary communications degrees, but lack a good grounding in hands-on skills. Accredited, competency-based training is an ideal complement to their other educational achievements;
- Accredited training provides a good investment return on the ABC training dollar and other public funds;
- A link to performance management is another benefit: under the ABC system, the job planning process highlights training required to meet competencies necessary for the job, and accredited training provides an easily described route to develop these competencies;
- It is also a significant benefit to have a benchmark for skills across industry – and training packages supply this.
- Government funding is available to support accredited training, which can further assist the delivery of a quality training system for the Corporation and for the wider industry.[1]

Most of the nationally recognised training undertaken by the ABC was offered to existing workers. There were very few New Apprentices in the organisation. This however was beginning to change at the time of research, with the recruitment of trainees into some technical and administration areas. The traditional focus of the ABC had been on the recruitment of experienced workers into the technical areas, and graduate cadets into the journalism areas. The ABC RTO had on its registration mainly qualifications from the Film, Television, Radio and Multimedia Training Package, the Business Services Training Package and the Retail Training Package. These included:

- Certificate II and III in Broadcasting (Television)
- Advanced Diploma in Broadcasting
- Diploma in Broadcasting
- Certificate IV in Broadcasting (Radio)
- Certificate II, III and Diploma in Screen
- Certificate III, IV and Diploma in Business Administration
- Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training
- Certificate II in Retail Operations.

The penetration of nationally recognised training in the ABC varied significantly from one Division to another. Some Divisions such as Radio and Enterprises (ie. the ABC Shops) had embraced nationally recognised training with some vigour. Built into their Divisional Plans was the goal that most, if not all, staff would complete the requisite qualifications for their professions. Other Divisions had been more circumspect in their adoption of nationally recognised training. The degree of adoption depended on the views of the Divisional Directors, and the extent to which they were persuaded that nationally recognised training

[1] ABC Nomination for ANTA Employer of the Year Award 2002. ABC, mimeograph.

could offer them an enhanced skills base. Thus, despite the radical changes to the nature of training function at the ABC, most of the training offered to staff at the time of research remained unaccredited. The Human Resources Division, however, had set a target of 50 per cent of training to be nationally recognised over the following five years, which the Corporation was on track to achieve.

One of the most successful applications of nationally recognised training was in the Radio Division. The Radio Division made the decision to put all Radio employees through the Certificate IV in Broadcasting (Radio). This covered both presenters and producers, and was designed to enhance the multiskilling that occurs in the ABC Radio Stations as a matter of course. The program was particularly successful in the regional Radio Stations, where large numbers of employees completed the qualification. Although initially sceptical, Radio Station employees, particularly the newer, younger recruits found the training very beneficial.

The Certificate IV training process involved two weeks off-the-job training up-front, usually held in one of the capital cities. After this period, participants returned to their radio stations and further training was delivered on-the-job. Station Managers played a role in structuring the work environment so that participants got experience in all the major units of competence in the qualification. An ABC Radio Workplace Assessor, employed outside the radio station, visited each participant on-the-job every three months. During the assessment process, participants produced evidence to demonstrate that they had met the required competencies. For the participants, the process of gathering and presenting evidence sometimes felt a bit artificial. To some staff who have been with the ABC for a number of years, and who remember the old system of off-the-job courses, this new approach did not always feel like 'training'. Nevertheless, the reaction amongst participants to accredited training was widely positive. From the point of view of Station Managers, the Certificate IV met a minimum requirement but was felt to be relevant to the needs of the changing work requirements of the radio stations.

Another area of success for nationally recognised training in the ABC was through the roll out of Frontline Management training. Under this program, a total of 300 middle and junior managers were scheduled to complete the Certificate IV and Diploma in Business (Frontline Management) qualifications. This program was delivered in partnership with a number of different RTOs in each of the States and Territories. The ABC contracted a mix of private and public providers for the delivery of the program. The delivery of the qualification tended to vary from one State and Territory to another with the variation in providers. In general, the program involved a limited number of face-to-face sessions covering the underpinning knowledge, followed up with more extended sessions with assessors that covered the evidence gathering on-the-job. In some cases, the assessment sessions provided managers with the opportunity to reflect on their work and to clarify their role as a manager in a way that was not usually possible in a traditional off-the-job training environment.

The third major area of success for nationally recognised training was the retail area within the Enterprises Division and the roll out of the Certificate II in Retail for employees in the 38 ABC shops. This was championed by the General Manager of ABC Retail. The project started with a consultancy by the Manager of Development Programs to help ABC Retail develop its training materials. Gradually, the Retail General Manager became convinced of the need to go further and to provide employees in the shops with a portable, nationally recognised qualification. A 'Reframing the Future' grant[2] helped the Division to plan how the Certificate II could be used to meet the needs of the ABC Shops and how it might be implemented. A presentation at the annual conference of ABC Shop Managers helped to launch the planning project, and the Reframing the Future grant provided some resources to aid in the planning.

[2] 'Reframing the Future is a national VET-sector staff development program funded by ANTA.

Despite the fact that the ABC had made a corporate decision to move training towards the use of nationally recognised training and restructured the training function to accommodate this new approach, the diffusion of the new regime in training was somewhat slower than might be expected. This reflected the nature of management within the ABC in which a significant amount of power was invested in the Divisional Directors and in which professional autonomy is still highly prized. This meant that a new approach to training could not be mandated throughout the organisation, and that the training function in effect advocated for the new approach and had to persuade the powerful Divisional Directors to implement the new form of training.

In some areas the roll-out of nationally recognised training had proceeded quite quickly, particularly where national qualifications could be seen to have immediate and direct relevance to the jobs in the Division. In other Divisions, traditional approaches to training remained strong. Nevertheless, the more that Divisions adopted nationally recognised training and realised its benefits, the more other Divisions were also considering the advantages that the new approach might hold for them.

Conclusion

The ABC presented an interesting case study in the implementation of nationally recognised training at the enterprise level. The Corporation had been acknowledged as the industry leader in training for many years but this position had begun to erode as new sets of nationally recognised qualifications began to set new standards for training in the industry. This is not to say that the ABC did not participate in the development of training within the media industry. The ABC was represented on all the major State, Territory and National ITABs, and as the key employer in the media industry, played a significant role in the development of the Film, Television, Radio and Multimedia Training Package. But the Corporation as a whole had been slow to take up the new qualifications.

The decision to move into nationally recognised training and establish an RTO was a radical alternative to the traditional approach to training at the ABC, and emerged from a number of strategic factors impacting on the Corporation. The organisation was under pressure to reduce expenditure on non-core activities. The move towards a more streamlined training function that could bring in government funding played an important role in the ABC's decision to change its approach to training and introduce nationally recognised qualifications. Internally, the Corporation faced the prospect of a major technological shift to digital broadcasting, and this required the up-skilling of existing employees on a large scale. Nationally recognised training provided a means of achieving such upskilling with the emphasis on workplace delivery.

The diffusion of nationally recognised training at the ABC, however, relied on persuasion and advocacy rather than management fiat. The professional autonomy of the ABC's Divisions meant that Divisional Directors needed to be persuaded individually of the benefits of nationally recognised training before they would commit their resources to supporting the new approach to training. In this situation, some Divisions embraced nationally recognised training more quickly than others.

The success of the new approach to training in the Radio and Enterprises (Retail) Divisions provided exemplars for other parts of the ABC to study and emulate. Spurred by effective advocacy by training staff well versed in the VET sector, there was every sign that nationally recognised training would become the standard for most training at the ABC in the near future.

BlueScope Steel

Manufacturing/process manufacturing industry; partnership with RTO

Andy Smith

BlueScope Steel, formerly BHP Steel, was formed when BHP Billiton divested its steel interests in 2002. BlueScope Steel had its roots in the consolidation of the Australian iron ad steel industry in the mod 20th century. The main steel-making plants of the BHP group were established at Newcastle and at Port Kembla in the early 20th century. Situated near the coalfields of the Hunter valley and the Illawarra, the Newcastle and Prot Kembla works became the backbone of Australia's highly integrated and technologically advanced steel industry during the 1930s. During and especially after the Second World War, the steel industry underwent significant expansion. BHP opened steel making plants at Whyalla in the late 1930s and considerably extended its operations at both Newcastle and Port Kembla. The company also diversified its product range, particularly in sheet steel to supply the booming construction and automotive industries. BHP employed many tens of thousands of workers at its plants, many of them migrants from Europe after the Second World War. In the 1960s and 70s, BHP extended its operations into natural gas and oil and became one of the largest resource companies in the world and Australia's largest employer. In 1978, BHP opened a new hot strip mill at Western Port in Victoria marking the limits of the expansion of its iron and steel business.

In the 1980s, the steel industry worldwide went into severe recession and contracted quickly. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, BHP Steel underwent significant downsizing, reducing its workforce by more than two thirds and adopting a raft of new steel making technologies. This construction had a marked impact on the regional economies of the Newcastle and Port Kembla/Wollongong areas, which had become dependent ton the employment provided by BHP Steel. By the late 1990s BHP had taken the strategic decision to move out of the iron and tell industry altogether and focus its operations on its gas and oil businesses. In 2001, BHP merged with the large South African mining company, Billiton to form BHP Billiton and in 2002 BHP Steel was spun off into a new company, BlueScope Steel, which was listed on the Australian Stock Exchange on 15 July 2002.

During the post-war period, BHP invested significant amounts into research and development and developed a number of innovative steel products such as Colorbond in 1966 and Zincalume in 1976. These products quickly became staples of the Australian construction industry and formed a major part of BlueScope Steel's production at the time of the case study. BlueScope Steel was divided into four major business units:

Industrial markets. This business supplied semi-finished steel products to the Australian construction industry and export markets. The distribution was based at the Port Kembla steel works and also owns steel ills in the USA and New Zealand.

Australian building and manufacturing markets. This business supplied coated and painted steel such as Colorbond and Zincalume to the Australian construction industry. The division operated the Western Port steel mill and a number of packaging and service centres throughout Australia.

Asian building and manufacturing markets. This business operated BlueScope Steel plants in Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia and 12 other steel roll forming plants in Asia and the Pacific islands.

Market and logistics solutions. This business included BlueScope Steel's Australian rollforming plants, sales offices in most states, export operations and the transport and logistics businesses.

Method

The case study was based at the Port Kembla steel mill in BlueScope Steel's industrial markets business. Interviews were carried out in the Apprentice Training School at the Port Kembla works with:

- ✧ Divisional Human Resources Manager – Technology and Environment
- ✧ Training and Development Consultant
- ✧ Apprentice Training Program Manager
- ✧ Two training instructors
- ✧ Training consultant to the Warehousing Training Program

BlueScope Steel had entered into a partnership arrangement with the University of Ballarat to provide technical training services to the company. The staff interviewed who worked on the training programs were all employees of the University of Ballarat, which had taken over responsibility for operating the Apprentices Training School. They had all been formerly employees of BlueScope Steel.

Training at BlueScope Steel Port Kembla Works

The Port Kembla plant had undergone a sweeping series of downsizing exercise during the 1990s as BHP restructured its iron and steel operations to deal with the prolonged recession in the world steel industry. At its zenith in the early 1980s, the Port Kembla works had employed over 20,000 people. At the time of the interviews 5,000 people were employed at Port Kembla. Port Kembla was the largest manufacturing plant in BlueScope Steel. The company employed 12,000 people world wide, 8,000 in Australia. Thus, Port Kembla accounted for the majority of the company's Australian employees.

Traditionally training at Port Kembla had been based on a very large apprenticeship program the Port Kembla works would engage hundreds of apprentices every year in all thew major industrial trades. As such, Port Kembla provided most of the industrial and trades training for the Illawarra region and worked closely with Illawarra TAFE which provided the off-the-job company of the large training programs operated by the plant. Until the late 1980s, this apprenticeship based training continued. The Port Kembla plant supported a very large training department to service the program and a large apprentice training centre. Apprentices underwent their first year of training in the apprenticeship training centre where they learned the basic theory and practice of their trades. They had only a little contact with the shop floor in the plant during this period. After the first year, the apprentices moved out into the plant where they went through a series of job placements and attended TAFE a day release basis until, they had completed their apprenticeship. There was little technical training carried out for the non-trades workforce. At this time, the workforce comprised many people from a non-English speaking background who had emigrated to Australia during the 1960s and 1970s and got jobs with BHP at Port Kembla and Newcastle. Skills in the plant were developed in an on-the-job environment and were specific to BHP.

Training was a major casualty of the period of downsizing. The apprentice intake was reduced to zero in the early to mid 1990s. At this time, the function of training at Port Kembla found a different focus. The company felt that, to ameliorate the impact of the downsizing programs, the largely unqualified workforces should be given training that would enable them to leave the company with a qualification. Thus, BHP Steel became an accredited training provider (and subsequently an RTO) and used its large training resources to undertake a broad sweeping training program for employees that were leaving the company and would benefit form having a qualification to find alternative work. As the Training Manager explained it:

> 'When you are reducing numbers and you want to reduce the amount of heartache, if you said 'we're going to outsource this security' and none of these guys had the opportunity of getting a job because they haven't got a qualification……. But if you've given the people the skills and the accreditation, it makes it that much easier for them to be able to go pout there and get themselves a job, either with the company you're outsourcing to with somebody else.'

However, reducing the personal impact of outsourcing was mot the only reason for the company becoming an RTO. The unions at BHP also wanted to improve the qualifications and, in a climate of downsizing, the opportunities for their members to find alternative jobs in the industry. As the HR Manager put it:

> 'We got into a big bind when the government came along with all this about the portability of skills and all that sort of stuff. I don't believe that portability was a big issue to our people but the unions thought it was. So we had to do something and an RTO was the cheapest and most efficient way of doing that.'

In the late 1990s, BHP Steel did not continue as an RTO. An exception was the Westernport plant in Victoria. Westernport was a relatively new plant compared to Port Kembla and Newcastle and had recruited staff as a greenfield operation. many of the staff at Western Port came form a rural background and had no experience or skills in the steel making business. From the start, pay rates at Western Port were tied to skills rather than jobs as had been the case at the older BHP Steel plants. In this environment, qualifications became very important to workers. As the HR Manager, who had previously been HR Manager at Western Port explained:

> 'So fundamentally a training system had to be provided. It had to be good class, it had to be good quality and when I was there as HR Manager I was really struggling to get the help I wanted out of the various institutions that were around the. So the easiest thing for me to do is to become an RTO, write my own courses, accredit my own courses and do what I want to do.'

In the late 1990s, as the company began to recover from the prolonged steel industry recession and the impact of the restructure had passed through the business, senior management once again began to look to training to deliver the new skills that the company required at a variety of levels from shop floor, operators to management by this time, BHP Steel had come under the influence of the its new American senior management team. This team, brought with them an emphasis on management training and on outsourcing all HR activities including training. However, by this stage the training department at BHP Steel had shrunk form around 65 people at its height to less than five full time staff. The company responded by appointing Training Co-ordinators in each of the major business divisions of the company and using workplace trainers for whom training was only part of their job. The company also looked to outsource training to other providers. In the first instance, the company's view was to outsource all its training needs to a single provider, but this created too much inflexibility and the company began to use a variety of training providers to meet its diverse training needs.

Nationally recognised training at BlueScope Steel

The principal use of nationally recognised training at BlueScope Steel was for apprentices. Nationally recognised training was used only on a small scale for existing workers. In large part this was a result of the lack of a steel training package. The iron and steel industry, led by BHP Steel had resisted the introduction of steel, training package despite pressure from government and other industry players such as the ITAB, in the late 1990s. According to the company, the main reason that the industry did not introduce a steel training package was that there was little employee demand for portability. The steel industry is highly concentrated in two or three companies, with BlueScope Steel the largest producer by far, and that the plants tend to be

scattered geographically. This means that the incidence of labour moving from one employer to another within the industry is very low. the industry also did not want to get locked into a pay for skills situation such as had prevailed at Western Port. The other companies in the industry took their cue from BHP Steel. As the Training Manager, who had been closely involved in the negotiations over a steel training package, said:

> 'Essentially there's only three steel companies in the country, BHP Steel, Smorgons and One Steel. We are the steel industry in Australia and I was the representative on the ITAB. There was just so much pressure… We just said, "Leave us to do what we want to do, we've got structures in place, we're paying people for picking up skills, we don't want accredited training". The unions were on the same wavelength as us.'

For apprentice training, BlueScope Steel forged a partnership arrangement with the University of Ballarat's TAFE division. Under this arrangement, Ballarat took over the former apprentice training school with its employees. The school then operated as a part of the University of Ballarat. In most respects this had meant very little practical change to the operation of the school. The choice of the University of Ballarat to deliver the first year of off-the-job training was interesting given the close nature of the relationship between BlueScope Steel and the local TAFE Institute over many decades. According to the company, the university of Ballarat put together the best submission for the tender:

> 'The decision was quite firm with the leadership that we were not in the business of apprentice training. There was a strong view that we'd be better buying an alliance partner. We were looking for potential tenderers and we put out some tenders… the local TAFE was going through is own issues of redesign around its engineering department. So, in my view is that TAFE, whilst it wanted to support us in the skilled development of our people – and it still does in many other aspects – didn't see its role in managing and running this training centre…I think what the Uni of Ballarat showed was an absolute hunger to win this type of work and show their capacity to work with business.'

Working with a partner such as Ballarat enabled BlueScope Steel to re-enter the VET network and benefit from any funding deals that could be arranged through the university's TAFE Division. As the Training Manager explained, 'If you weren't in the loop, you just didn't get it (funding), you know. So to be able to go to a Ballarat, you can actually use them because they've got the links.'

From the point of view of the staff of the training centre, the switch to employment by Ballarat also gave them opportunities for their own development which they did not have as part of BlueScope Steel. As one of the instructors said:

> 'I've done a couple of things on lubrication. Shortly, we are getting somebody up from the university to run through some type of PowerPoint presentation package. So there is actually scope to develop.'

The partnership with the University of Ballarat, however, only covered the operation of the first year training centre. Once the apprentices had finished their first year and are on the job, they resumed their formal training with the local TAFE Institute on a day release basis.

Ballarat had also become involved in some nationally recognised training for a group of existing workers at BlueScope Steel. This was in the transport and logistics area. The HR Manager for this division of the business recognised the need to improve the perception of the transport group who largely relied on private contactors to drive their trucks. As the Training and Development Consultant explained:

> 'The transport and logistics team is a fairly big element in this business, but a lot of those trucks are not actually owned by us, so a lot of this is working with contractors to improve their image, their skills, their capabilities. The thinking is that we need a much more

skilled workforce around theses deliverables for the ongoing success of transport and logistics.'

So the University of Ballarat was delivering the Certificate III in Transport and Distribution to all the employees in the transport areas of the business, delivered as an on-the-job traineeship. Both the warehousing and the administration strands were delivered so that all employees could be covered by a program. This involved around 70 people, most of whom are based at Port Kembla but it was also planned to deliver the qualification to other transport and logistics centres in the future. The co-ordination of the program was managed by a consultant, another former BlueScope Steel training employee, and was delivered on the job. Some elements of the program were delivered off the job such as quality system and emergency procedures, but the delivery was primarily on the job. The traineeship lasted for two years, although the training consultant acknowledged that the certificate could be delivered in 12-18 months, especially with the level of RPL that could be given to many of the employees.

BlueScope Steel had also used nationally recognised training in other, well-defined situations. An example of this was the delivery of the Certificate III in Security for the security guards at the Port Kembla plant in advance of the outsourcing of the function. The training was delivered by a Newcastle-based security firm that was also an RTO.

Conclusion

Although BlueScope Steel did not use nationally accredited training for its existing workforce on a very large scale, it presented an interesting case study in the impact of accredited training on enterprises. The company had moved form a traditional, large scale in-house training operation based on skilled trades training to a niche user of nationally recognised training in partnership with other RTOs. This transition involved the gaining of RTO status which facilitated both the downsizing of the company during the late 1908s and early 1990s and the training required for the pay for skills industrial relations system adopted at the Western Port plant. However, the steel industry, led by BHP Steel strongly resisted the development of national qualifications for steel workers that would have been embodied in a steel training package, preferring to keep training under the complete control of the company. The later partnership arrangements were characterised by the drive to outsourcing which completely remoulded the company's HR function in the mid to late 1990s. This was likely to shape the future of skills development in BlueScope Steel in the foreseeable future.

Capital Clubs

Hospitality industry; partnership with RTO

Erica Smith

Capital Clubs was a group of four clubs (with a fifth about to join) in Canberra. The group had begun almost 25 years previously, and, with over 30,000 members, had around one-fifth of the club market in Canberra. The clubs provided gaming and hospitality services at the site of rugby union and other sporting clubs. The sporting and catering activities on each site were separate organisations; the Capital Clubs component of each site covered the gaming, front of house and bar operations only. While the organisation was thriving, it expected a drop of about 20% in business when smoking bans were introduced in ACT clubs; this event was due to happen in 2006. Like most clubs, Capital was owned by its members and was non-profit making. The group was engaged with many community activities and made substantial donations to local groups (over $2 million in 2002/3).

There were around 250 staff, of whom six had been recruited through an employment service for people with disabilities, reflecting the group's commitment to the community. As with all hospitality organisations, the workforce was predominantly young; almost half of the staff were casual. Males outnumbered females slightly. Many university students were included among the casual workforce. However the organisation was 'heading towards an older age group in (its) casuals' because of the greater reliability of older staff. In many cases people worked as casuals as a second job. However permanent full-time staff were generally young as it was not seen as in industry that combined well with family life. It was common for permanent staff to be recruited from the casual pool. The organisation never needed to advertise for staff as there was a steady stream of enquiries from staff wishing to work at the clubs; only management jobs were advertised. A new enterprise agreement had just been signed but there was not a close relationship with the union. A Staff Council meeting once a month enabled staff to have a regular voice with management.

Research method

Interviews were held during November 2003 at three sites: Capital Clubs head office, Newtown Club (adjacent to the head office), and Oldtown Club, in a nearby suburb.

Location	Name	Position
Head office	Dave	HR manager
Newtown	Emma	Operations manager
Newtown focus group	Sue	Functions co-ordinator
	George	Bar supervisor
	Kim	Administrative officer in head office
Oldtown	Brad	Club manager and organisation-wide responsibility for managing induction training

In addition, information was gained from the Group's 2003 nomination for the ACT Training Awards Employer of the Year award and from the documentation associated with the contract with the partnering RTO. At the two clubs, observations were made in the gaming and bar areas, which were spacious and well-appointed.

Dave and Brad were both young men who had begun working in the hospitality industry part-time while studying at university. Brad had a particular interest in OH&S and risk management,

and had undertaken several courses in this area; he saw effective training as a good way to minimise risk in the industry. Emma had had ten years' experience in retail management (during which time she was also a part-time TAFE teacher working on retail traineeships) and had been in hospitality for about eight years, the past year in her current role. The operations manager role included responsibility for staffing and for equipment in the building, including that utilised by the contractors. Among the focus group, George and Sue had careers of twenty years behind them in a range of industries, while Kim was in her early twenties having left university after a year and having previously worked in retail and child care.

Training activities

The nature of the workforce led to high staff turnover and there was a constant need for induction training (80 new staff commenced in 2002) as well as for non-Training Package but accredited training courses in Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA), Responsible Conduct of Gaming (RCG), and Occupational Health and Safety. Around 4% (around 1% in direct costs and 3% in indirect costs) of a wages bill of close to $10 million was spent on training. Induction training, run every six weeks, lasted for two days and included an orientation to the company as well as RSA, OH&S and RCG segments. In addition staff attended a range of higher-level industry courses run by various providers, and the customer service managers (junior managers) ran a range of in-house training sessions in the different clubs, on topics such as tab, keno, cocktails and customer service. Some of these were 'special interest' courses which people would not necessarily use in their current jobs but could attend out of interest. New staff were primarily trained through a 'buddy' system. Staff working for the catering contractors attended a food safety course and were invited to attend RSA and RCG training. Staff had a performance appraisal every twelve months and training needs were among the topics discussed.

The 'special needs' staff at Newtown had customised training programs, learning new skills little by little and working through specially designed workbooks which included recording of assessment. This was a special program at Newtown only and was Emma's initiative; it had won a special Prime Minister's Award in 2001 and was again nominated in 2003.

Arranging the more formal training events was always difficult because of the part-time shift-work environment and it was clear that managers thought training activities were somewhat more haphazard than they would have liked and could be better organised. In particular there was a desire and a movement to standardise training across the four (soon to be five) sites so that staff could move between sites and managers could rely on certain skills being present. Despite these misgivings staff perceived that there were plenty of training opportunities and that management would pay for any external training if staff could make a case that such training was useful. Funding and time release for external staff to undertake work-related study was included in the enterprise agreement. Emma, for example, was currently undertaking a commercial course on gaming development involving attending classes in Sydney once a month, and Sue had been funded to learn Auslan at TAFE to assist with deaf customers. In addition the organisation was beginning to develop a 'work and win' scheme along 'frequent flier' lines: staff earned training points for every hour they worked which could be 'cashed in' for external training courses.

In a period without an HR Manager before the appointment of Dave eighteen months prior to the date of the visit, the operations managers from the different sites had taken it upon themselves to organise training sessions open to staff from all clubs. These 'Tuesday training' sessions had taken place every week and rotated between the four clubs. It was clear that there was a strong training culture in the organisation and that it was linked to a general principle of better-than-average pay and working conditions. On the day of the case study visit, for example, Brad had taken his staff paint-balling as a team-building exercise. Commitment to employee

development was also illustrated by a new annual Staff Awards night held at the Canberra Convention Centre, with substantial prizes in each category.

There was also a recognition that training increased staff motivation and therefore reduced undesirable turnover. Induction alone was costed at $300 per staff member. Dave said:

> 'When they are learning something and they are challenging themselves ... they seem to improve and their attitude improves.'

This contrasted to simply offering better pay and working conditions, about which he said:

> 'They always want more, and it doesn't matter how much you give them; (with) conditions they get used to it and they put their hand out when they want something.'

Involvement with nationally recognised training

Dave had been involved with traineeships when managing a group of pubs in Tasmania. He noted that at that time (and perhaps in that context a traineeship 'wasn't as intense then; the staff found out quickly that if they crossed their t's and dotted their I's then they were going to pass and then they lost interest.' When recruited to Capital as the HR manager, although he did not have a specific mandate to introduce nationally-recognised training, he knew that the Board was committed to training although unsure how to proceed.

Interestingly Capital Group appeared to have been an accredited training provider around five or 6 years previously although there appeared to be little corporate memory of that event. Emma talked about this, as did an HR Manager at one of the other Canberra case study organisations. It seems that there had been a substantial involvement in VET in schools type activities at that time as well as the offering of training on a commercial basis to staff of other organisations. The HR Manager wanted Capital to become an RTO eventually and the partnering arrangement recently brokered was in a sense a trial for this.

In conjunction with a non-TAFE RTO a plan was worked out to provide qualifications from the Hospitality and Business Services Training Packages to around 45 existing staff including three at Diploma level. Emma, for example, had about half of her staff of her full-time staff of twelve enrolled in qualifications. The large numbers of staff involved, it was hoped, would be able to 'bounce (ideas) off each other'. The enrolments in qualifications were as follows:

Cert III in Business Administration: 9

Cert III in Hospitality Operations: 11

Cert IV in Hospitality Supervision: 12

Cert IV in Frontline Management: 5

Cert IV in Business Administration: 1

Cert IV in Assessment & Workplace Training: 6

In addition a small number of staff were enrolled in Diplomas. In the future, new full-time staff would all be taken on as trainees.

The qualifications were mapped against the job levels in the organisation and staff were going to be steered towards electives that would enable them to apply for higher-level jobs when they became vacant. Electives relating to front-line management and HR skills were seen as important. The customisation of the qualifications was negotiated between the RTO and Dave; members of line management were not involved. Staff were selected for the first round of nationally recognised training on the basis of training needs in relation to their current and future job roles and also on the basis of whether 'they needed a bit of a push' or encouragement to develop.

Capital had used the new program as the base of their nomination for ACT Employer of the Year Award 2003. They reached the final round in this award, and had also received the Staff Development & Training Award at the 2003 Clubs ACT Awards for Excellence.

Dave thought that nationally recognised training was important to improve productivity against the expected drop in revenue from the forthcoming smoking ban. One way to improve productivity was to increase the capacity for multi-skilling. Nationally recognised training was seen as a way of integrating current training activities into a more structured program, of attracting higher quality staff, of decreasing labour turnover, of adding interest to work for those staff that might not progress further, and of offering career pathways for those who might.

Brad thought that:

> 'If we're seen as an employer that provides career options, we're probably more likely in the long run to attract a better type of person.'

There appeared to be general support from staff for the idea. Emma said:

> 'I know they are very keen to do it and I know that because it is nationally recognised that it's better for them too, for when or if they ever leave this industry that is going to help them. You know some people think that you are going to train them in nationally recognised training and then they will go off and get a job elsewhere (but) in the long run it might make them stay as well.'

Sue said that she was:

> 'excited; I am looking forward to it… this training will open new fields that I haven't learnt. So this will give me a different outlook on how to do my work better.'

Kim, perhaps because of her previous experience as a full-time university student, appreciated the fact that she could study and continue working.

Staff understood that higher level jobs within the company would henceforth only be available to those who undertook appropriate training first. As Sue put it:

> 'From now on you can't go into supervisor until you have done some sort of course proving that … you are capable of filling that position. So they are aiming at educating people more into wanting to learn tertiary before they can move up a step.'

It was also hoped that the acquisition of qualifications would encourage and enable more senior staff to move on, both creating a throughflow of staff and providing a buffer against the expected downturn in trade with the smoking ban. Dave said 'to be honest with you, a lot of the people getting high wages, their skill level doesn't justify that wage level in this industry.'

Managers felt that nationally recognised training would provide the staff with more confidence in their abilities and give them a benchmark against other companies. It might also help to standardise procedures and standards across the sites and give people from the different sites added insights into operations at their own workplace. Emma said:

> 'They know that whatever they learn from this training they can bring it back into this organisation, but it's not specific to this organisation. They (will) know what is happening out there in the industry and I think that is really important as well, (that) they know what the standards are and what the expectations are in their role outside of this organisation.'

She thought that nationally recognised training would help keep the organisation 'one step ahead of everyone else', both in terms of staff conditions and in service to the patrons. Importantly, she also thought that staff would 'recognise that they (were) doing things right.' The structured approach of nationally recognised training would enable, Emma believed, staff to see their jobs in a broader context. It 'puts a title on what they are doing.' As hospitality was not an

industry where many people had tertiary qualifications, the experience of understanding a field of practice would be new to many.

Brad said that one advantage of nationally recognised training was that it took care of much of 'preparing of the content and the actual delivery of training'. Managers would no longer have to think about what was needed to be taught; and, because the involvement of an RTO, would not have to undertake the delivery either.

Relationships with the RTO

At the time of the visit the plan was only just being implemented, with the 'sign-ups' to traineeships having taken place the day before. The RTO was planning to come on-site once a month for seminars with staff undertaking self-paced activities in between visits. Capital had negotiated the provision of a monthly seminar as they were determined to make the training effective because it was planned to extend the system to all staff: 'we can't afford to take any short cuts'.

The RTO had provided Capital with a financial summary of the traineeships involving cross-subsidisation of training from qualifications and staff that attracted user choice funding to those that did not; Commonwealth employment incentives were added into the equation. A document headed 'proposed income from traineeships/training' was prepared by the RTO. The document clearly stated the Commonwealth incentives, the amount to be invoiced to the RTO at commencement and completion and the Club's 'total bottom line'. With 152 traineeships there would be an 'actual bottom line' on completion of them all of a little over a quarter of a million dollars.

Capital shopped around before selecting the RTO and the HR Manager felt a little inexpert in this area. He was keen to establish networks with other RTOs using nationally recognised training to increase his knowledge, which had primarily been gained from his one experience with traineeships, from HR magazines, and from talking to HR managers in other organisations such as Woolworths. Although the organisation was accustomed to buying in training from a range of training providers, such a large-scale investment in a partnership was new to Capital. He had received some advice from a NAC before selecting the RTO, and was also guided by a poor experience with another RTO whom he had tried to engage to deliver Certificate III in computing; after some time spent on negotiations the RTO had said they could not deliver as Capital did not have appropriately qualified people on staff.

Six staff - the HR Manager and the five club managers - were studying for the Certificate IV in Assessment & Workplace Training. This appeared to have been a decision based partly upon the future plans to become an RTO.

Challenges associated with the use of nationally recognised training

The operations managers were unsure how the recently-established weekly training sessions, to rotate between the clubs, would be affected by the new nationally recognised training system. The move to nationally recognised training was viewed in the clubs as being part of a 'reclaiming' of training by the central HR function and the imposition of structure upon training. Brad said that he thought the middle and junior managers might feel bad about losing their training role to HR and to the external RTO, and, concomitantly, losing the training skills that came with practice.

> 'The supervisors and duty managers (customer service managers) do miss out on a small valuable part of something that they should really know about, which is the correct way to deliver training. Because, in a small way, they do it every day anyway, when they teach someone to pull a beer, or just the way they explain things to people, or just so they see

> the value in good training… supervisors might never pick that skill up, or by the time they get up in the organisation they might not see the great value of good training. In previous jobs I have that experience and the other club managers, I'm sure, have (also) seen the difference between someone you provided good training to and how they go, to someone who's just been … chucked in at the deep end or trained poorly – even worse – with the wrong ideas.'

On the other hand the removal of an explicit training role would free the line managers more for operational issues and so there would be 'no confusion of priorities'.

There were also some misgivings about how the induction training would work when it was part of the nationally recognised training. It was felt that outside providers might not be able to give company-specific information. This was already in evidence with the outside providers that delivered, for example, OH&S training. However Emma said:

> 'I think that the staff will just have to understand that it's a different type of training that is not going to be Capital specific and what they learn **they** need to bring that back in and make it Capital specific. (emphasis added). So what they learn they need to adapt into (their) own environment and I think that might be something new for some staff, because some staff they see things very black and white.'

While staff were generally keen to undertake the qualifications, one or two were rather cynical and, of the three focus group members, only one seemed to have any clear understanding of the new system. One staff member was mentioned as having refused to undertake any training or RPL as she felt she already had all the required skills and did not want a qualification. It was reported that she had said 'No bit of paper's going to make me a better barperson'. One of the managers suggested that staff with tertiary qualifications might resist the training although there had been no reported instance of this.

However Sue voiced strong support for the system. When asked about her understanding, it was evident that she had clearly listened very carefully to the explanations that had been given at the signing-up day, saying:

> 'That we will be doing nationally recognised training and that the company are paying for everything. It can go anywhere from three months up to two years depending on how you go within your level. We have our own mentors and there will be training on site at the administration building and they will come in and assess how you are going, and if they feel that you are competent in that then they will move you up a level. So you can advance till as high as you go, and if you want to go higher then you can go to Dave and then he will get (you) up to a higher level. So they are more than willing to move us up to a higher level. And if they train us then it is a benefit to them and us. And it is nationally recognised and should we only stay for a couple of months during the course then (that) will be recognised and will be able to … take the balance of that course and go somewhere else and continue training with it.'

Conclusion

Capital Clubs was embarking on a large-scale involvement with nationally-recognised training. After an earlier involvement as a training provider before the advent of the Australian Quality Training Framework, it was now partnering with an RTO as a prelude to considering becoming an RTO itself. Over 150 staff were expected to undertake traineeships in the near future, with 45 existing workers being signed up initially.

The organisation's wish to be involved with nationally recognised training appeared to stem from its view of itself as a 'good employer' which naturally involved a high commitment to training. nationally recognised training was expected to add structure to the training that was

already taking place, and to offer the employees the chance to acquire qualifications, in an industry where qualifications were still relatively rare. It was also hoped that nationally recognised training would improve motivation and reduce undesirable labour turnover, while skilling up longer-serving staff to the level of their appointments so that they had the option to leave should they wish. Progression through the ranks would henceforth be available only to those that had completed appropriate training. In addition nationally recognised training was seen as a way to standardise training across the company's different sites and to offer a competitive edge both in staff recruitment and in service to patrons.

Staff appeared on the whole keen to become involved although the level of understanding of the new system was somewhat limited. There were some concerns about whether an external provider would be able to tailor training closely enough to the Capital environment and also about how other training initiatives, often introduced as a result of a great deal of work by line managers, would mesh with the new development. A concern was also expressed that nationally recognised training offered in conjunction with an external provider might lead to the loss of training skills among managers and supervisors and a lack of appreciation of the importance of training in the business.

Centrelink Call

Call centre industry; Partnership with RTO

Erica Smith

Centrelink Call operated the telephone enquiry service for Centrelink, the government department offering social security services across Australia. Centrelink had been formed in 1997 following the restructuring of social security and employment services and the call centre had existed under the Department of Social Security since 1992. Centrelink Call had been continuously expanding its operations (1000 staff a year were recruited during the 2002-2003 financial year); as well as its core business it undertook what were called 'boutique lines' where it handled other government services with low traffic and enquiry services for national disasters and other sudden events of national significance.

There were 4500 staff employed by Centrelink Call at 26 offices (of whom 3500 were Customer Service Officers) at the time of the case study, and conditions of service were governed by an enterprise agreement that was most recently ratified earlier in 2003. Around 30% of staff were thought to be unionised, through the CPSU. Centrelink Call employed a high proportion of NESB staff, whose language skills were in high demand at specialised offices, but who were also scattered throughout the organisation. Individual offices operated quite independently, recruiting and training their own staff, and making decisions about whether to recruit full-time or part-time staff. Centrelink Call was generally seen as offering higher wages, better working hours, and generally better conditions than other call centres, especially as staff were not required to make sales. Staff however said that they were busier than friends who worked in other call centres, and the work could be quite stressful, especially when dealing with stressed clients or those who had been bereaved. While staff attrition was fairly high, people generally left for other jobs within Centrelink.

Within each office, staff specialised in a 'queue' (for example Family Assistance or Employment Services). Over the previous few years, staff had been able to add one extra queue to their skills base while still remaining in their 'home' teams. The queues operated nationally so calls could be routed to any office and the current waiting time was displayed prominently in the office. Managers and Team Leaders could see on-screen at any time which operators were on the phone and for how long they had been talking, and also when they were engaged in follow-up work associated with a call; it was recognised that some calls might be very time-consuming but on average calls were expected to take between five and a half and six minutes. A minimum of ten seconds was allowed between calls, which was said to be unusual in the call centre industry. Staff could be 'dual-headsetted' for training and monitoring purposes, by their Team Leader, with notice. Technical Support Officers, operators who had undertaken extra training, were rostered on for half a day a week each. They assisted operators with complex queries and also performed checks on staff's work. This role was seen as a 'bit of a carrot' for operators.

Staff were organised into teams of fifteen to twenty, each with a Team Leader. Scheduling was managed five to six weeks in advance depending on national forecasts of calls expected and was undertaken in fifteen-minute blocks. Training needed to be organised around forecast call demand.

Research method

Interviews were held during November and December 2003 at the national Learning and Development unit in Canberra and at Moreland Call Centre, Melbourne. It should be noted that there were 26 call centres in the network and Moreland might not necessarily be representative

of all call centres in the network. Thus it must be remembered that any reference to the viewpoints of call centre staff relates only to those staff interviewed at Moreland.

Location	Name	Position
Canberra	Jane	Learning & Development Business Manager
	Sophie (interviewed with Jane)	Co-ordinator, Cert IV in Customer Contact program
Moreland	Rachel	Deputy manager; Portfolio for learning & development
	Susan	Team Leader
	Jennifer	Team Leader and Cert IV co-ordinator
	Brendan & Annette (interviewed together)	Customer Service Officers and Technical Support Officers

In addition, the following documentation relating to the delivery of the Certificate IV in Telecommunications (Call Centre) was inspected:

- ✧ a presentation for staff about the delivery method,
- ✧ a copy of the timetable of workshops
- ✧ a summary of feedback from Team Leaders and assessors covering forms and resources used in delivery

A full tour of the call centre, which was open plan and situated on one floor of an office block, was given by the Deputy Manager. Moreland centre recruited only full-time staff although existing staff were allowed to apply for part-time status for family or other reasons. The centre seated 230 staff but was not fully staffed at the time of the visit.

Training activities

As with other public service organisations, Centrelink Call placed high priority on training. 'Developing staff and supporting our people' was one of five planks in Centrelink's 'Future Directions' statement. In the enterprise agreement, training featured prominently: it was described by Jane and Sophie as 'the backbone' and 'a fairly substantial spine' of the agreement. Because the call centre industry required a high level of skills, there was an intensive up-front five-week skills development course known as the National Induction Program, which staff undertook before being able to take calls. This course was the same for staff who had come from other call centres as for inexperienced staff, and a large part of it related to 'technical knowledge' which meant the various regulations about government payments and eligibility which callers would need to know about. Operators' progression to various pay points depended on certain levels of skills and independence being achieved. After a certain point, at which a Procedure & Accuracy Test was passed, only 5% of their activities were checked, whereas before this, 100% were checked. As Jane said, this was a 'big ticket item' for the organisation because of the risk involved. The check involved monitoring of activities for ten working days. The staff member concerned, if successful, achieved 'POCDM' (Point Of Contact Decision Maker') status.

Centrelink itself was an RTO, operating as the Centrelink Virtual College, which had quite a degree of prominence in the national VET scene. Centrelink Call had always operated somewhat differently, and the training offered by Centrelink Call Learning & Development accordingly differed. Thus Centrelink Call did not utilise the training materials developed by the College for customer service officers. Up to 2000, for example, CSOs had undertaken the Certificate IV in Business along with CSOs working in face-to-face Centrelink officers, but it was found that this qualification was not especially relevant to call centre operatives. However certain HR and training features were held in common with Centrelink as a whole. These included the linking of paypoints to qualifications and an allowance of 10 hours Learning &

Development (L&D) time per four weeks which could be spent on structured training events or on accessing self-paced learning through the Centrelink Call intranet. Staff met with their supervisors once every four weeks for coaching, and the use made of L&D time was one of the issues discussed. Training was also offered when there were changes to legislation or policy which affected Centrelink customers. At Moreland they had decided to put all of their training facilitators through the unit of competency Train Small Groups (from the Training Package in Assessment and Workplace Training). This was offered in partnership with a local TAFE college.

Involvement with nationally recognised training

Since 2001 all staff had been enrolled in the Certificate IV in Telecommunications within three months of recruitment, and existing staff were able to enrol as 'voluntaries'. The program at Moreland was delivered through workshops delivered by the RTO and self-paced modules. The use of self-paced modules was the standard format and was a model derived from the Centrelink Virtual College. Moreland had added workshops, at about the twelve-month stage, because staff seemed to need them. If staff joined from another call centre they might already have the Certificate III in Telecommunications and that would allow for some credit transfer into the qualification; also some staff applied for RPL for some units on the basis of previous working experience; a common RPL application was for self management components. However the staff interviewed appeared to think that to get RPL it was necessary to have 'things to say you'd done a course or something rather than just that you had the skills'.

According to the Moreland staff, however, the program was not popular and one bone of contention was that the qualification was not really related to the skills needed to do the job; it was separate from the up-front skills training and dealt with 'wishy washy' subjects like self-management. They also found it odd that the RTO staff did not appear to have the 'technical' knowledge to assess many of the questions. As Annette put it:

> 'I just found it odd that they were assessing work because one particular module was 'What would you do if a customer rang and blah-blah-blah?' So I thought it was odd that they were assessing it not having any knowledge of how our work went.'

Another complaint was that completing the workbooks was a chore and did not involve any new learning. For management and the Certificate IV co-ordinator it was quite a chore to try to motivate staff to complete the workbooks. Team Leaders needed to work with co-ordinators on who was 'falling behind' and the scheduler needed to be asked to arrange staff's learning and development time to allow for blocks of time to work through workbooks or to sit down with a training facilitator for coaching. Team Leaders had to 'sign off' on workbooks before they went to the RTO to be assessed; while this was extra work for them it did enable them to monitor staff members' progress.

The organisation was at the time of the study switching over to the Cert IV in Customer Contact, a new qualification in the revised Telecommunications Training Package. A Centrelink Call staff member had been heavily involved in the review of the Training Package. Certain electives within the Cert IV were specified centrally by Centrelink Call and case study scenarios were developed for assessment that related to the different queues within the call centre. While the Moreland staff did not know a great deal about the new qualification, the central Canberra staff explained that it embedded the skills training within it. They also explained that the way in which the qualification was delivered associated the assessment with real work tasks and with the points of assessment required for pay progression. For example the first seven entry level units were to be completed during the first six months of duty and, aside from the up-front induction program, the evidence for assessment was gathered through the normal course of duties. As Sophie said, 'You can't do a lot in a call centre without it being recorded somewhere.'

After the six month probationary review the staff member would meet with an RTO staff member and check the evidence, and then formulate a plan for the remaining eight units of the qualification. These units were divided into three topic areas reflecting the work for the CSO: *delivering customer service*, *working in teams*, and *using technology*. In such a context the partnering RTOs assessed the evidence, which was gathered under these three topics, and an evidence guide was provided by Centrelink Call that outlined Centrelink-specific measures to assist in the assessment decision. For this new qualification, workbooks were not required to be completed, as the learning undertaken was to be embedded within normal work (which however would include events such as team meetings, workshops and one-to-one coaching). The program would conclude after eighteen months of employment with a final interview with the RTO assessor where 'big picture' issues were addressed and when the assessor was confident that the CSO had demonstrated the ability to work consistently at the level required both by the qualification and by Centrelink. The process was planned so that there would not be a lot of additional work outside normal activities for a CSO to undertake to prove their competence in these eight units.

A comprehensive recognition of prior learning process had been developed for staff. Sophie said:

> '(for) someone who's quite experienced … it's never **no** work, but they should be able to go to their file, get out their bits and pieces, put it together nicely, have an interview for an hour or so, and be competent. And receive their certificate. So we were very conscious when we developed the resources that we needed to cater for those people, and we needed to make it as simple and as easy as possible.'

Other qualifications such as the Diploma of Business (Frontline Management) (FLM) were offered by Centrelink Call. However not all staff could apply to do this qualification as it was only available to Team Leaders. The latest version of the Diploma had just been piloted and it incorporated some elements of two commercial packages marketed by American companies, the Incoming Calls Management Institute and the Customer Operations Performance Centre. This FLM program was offered in partnership with TAFE Tasmania. A previous version of the Diploma had been delivered via blocks of off-the-job training. According to Susan, who had completed this qualification:

> 'The best thing about it was the networking because it was from other call centres within Centrelink as well, so sharing ideas, that was really valuable.'

Some initial Team Leader training was available to staff who wanted to, as Brendan put it, 'sit on Team Leader Boulevard' to see whether they were going to be suitable for promotion and the full program.

The use of nationally recognised training was supported by the availability of government funding. User choice funding for the RTOs was available in some States. In all cases Commonwealth incentives were available unless the staff already had higher level qualifications. The funds received were distributed across the whole Centrelink organisation.

Relationships with RTOs

Although the arrangements for the qualifications were managed centrally, the offices each had to make their own partnership arrangements with a local RTO. There was a difference depending on whether user choice funding was available or not. Where user choice funding was available, call centres negotiated their own arrangements with RTOs. If 'fee for service' arrangements needed to be made, offices purchased assessment-only services from an RTO that was on a centrally-organised panel.

About 20 RTOs were currently involved and the central learning and development staff provided assistance with managing such contracts, since local co-ordinators did not necessarily

have high levels of expertise in navigating the VET system. One issue for the central staff was motivating the local offices to work effectively with their RTOs, as there was a perception that the offices did all the 'signing off' on the technical correctness of staff's work and the RTOs then merely 'rubber stamped' the decision. There were also other challenges with RTOs from time to time. A current problem was that for AQTF compliance and also to meet State user choice rules, RTOs were sometimes seeking more contact with trainees than the local offices would have liked. For example:

> 'In Victoria ... user choice agreements like to have three hours non-routine work activity, they call it, which basically means that … our 300 participants in Victoria (have) to keep a log of activity that they might do that's not routine, to equal up to three hours at the end of every week … but, you know, that's not what competency-based training is about, this is our argument.. competency-based training is about what you do on the job. So there's a contradiction there. There's also a lot of stuff about contact – RTOs having to prove regular contact. So they would want to do things like "Well if you just give us the e-mail address (of staff) .. we'll e-mail them all a question, they'll answer it and then pop it back to us. And (we said) like, well, you're not doing that for any assessment, you're just doing it as a record-keeping (activity), so we've actually taken that up with the State Training Authority.'

At Moreland this problem appeared to be solved by having the staff keep a journal:

> 'It's like a diary and some of them write in it every day – we expect an entry every couple of weeks – about certain calls they've had or about their coaching, what they've learnt with their job, and the RTO request that it's e-mailed to them.'

The staff said that they did not have much contact with the RTO: just in the initial workshops and then they received letters in the post when their workbooks had been assessed. On completion of the qualification an RTO staff member came out to present certificate.

Another issue with RTOs was servicing the the contractual relationships. Jane said that she needed to ensure that the local offices:

> 'don't get the wool pulled over their eyes … they understand what the RTO is required to deliver and those sorts of things… (they need to have) the nous to raise it to my level if they're not comfortable or something's going wrong. I think some RTOs have probably, you know, maybe taken advantage of people who didn't fully understand what was in the contract. So (we try to) build that skill in themselves. '

A new panel of RTOs was shortly to be sought through advertisement, and Centrelink Call was seeking a lower cost this time from its RTOs, expecting particularly that RTOs operating across several states would be able to meet these lower costs.

At one stage Centrelink Call had trained its own assessors but had then decided that assessment was not its core business and hence had moved to an outsourced model. In general they found non-TAFE providers more flexible than TAFE providers although Jane gave an example of a TAFE Institute which had been very flexible in delivery and assessment of the Diploma in FLM. Flexibility meant that 'not being fussed about having to have a task that matches every competency and element and performance criteria, (but) taking a more holistic approach' as Jane put it. To some extent there needed to be match between the RTO's approach and the approach of the Certificate IV co-ordinator in the local office. Some co-ordinators were 'flexible' while others preferred a more structured approach. Either was acceptable to the organisation but problems arose if the RTO and the co-ordinator had 'their heads in different spaces' as Sophie put it.

As well as relationships with RTOs, the local offices needed to establish links with New Apprenticeship Centres (NACs) and initially this also created challenges. However at Moreland, for example, they now had established procedures so that, for example, the NAC and RTO were

both invited to the induction day to meet the staff and complete appropriate paperwork. The local co-ordinators were responsible for arranging for the signing-up of staff and for negotiating appropriate incentives with the NACs.

Challenges associated with the use of nationally recognised training

Besides the difficulties associated with relationships with RTOs and meeting STA and AQTF requirements, it was clear that the process of using nationally recognised training had other challenges. While some staff were pleased to have a nationally recognised qualification, others did not value it and only persevered because a pay rise was attached to completion of the Certificate IV. In fact a few staff elected not to undertake or to complete it. Rachel said that in her office 'a lot of staff think it's a waste of time and I'm not too sure why'. In some cases staff resisted the qualification because they already had degrees; as Jennifer said:

> 'Where some people will say "A nationally recognised qualification; how fantastic, I don't have one," these people (with degrees) say "Oh God, it's just a Certificate IV, why do I have to do it, I have a degree in this, this, this and this.'

Although staff had their learning and development time available to work on their Cert IV, they still seemed to find it hard to motivate themselves. Susan had tried to alleviate this problem by booking her staff a room together for ninety minutes so they could work together on their workbooks. There was also a view that some staff like to use their learning and development time to 'socialise' and did not like having to complete set work.

There seemed a lack of consensus about whether the use of the Cert IV had actually improved the training that staff received. This was in part because at around the same time that the Cert IV had been introduced a new 'induction' (up-front skills training) package had been introduced, so it was difficult to know to what to attribute the improved performance which was seen to occur. There was a feeling among some staff that the skills in the Cert IV were a little higher than was needed to perform the job; as Susan put it 'it's sort of heading them into a senior role or a Team Leader type of role, it's aimed quite high.' She thought that a Certificate II would be adequate in terms of ability to do the job. Brendan said 'There was nothing that you learned from the Certificate IV that was going to help you workwise here in knowing like the legislation or anything like that, or our systems.' Annette agreed:

> 'You wouldn't be able to not perform your job to an adequate standard by not doing Certificate IV; it wasn't like it was instructional, and this is how you go from this point to this point and do this activity, that's all learn outside. Certificate IV was more about the business and its structure and its focus.'

Some staff certainly reacted favourably and there was a general belief that it was good for staff to have a qualification as 'they've got it for life and they take it with them'. However generally at the local office it seemed that people were at best lukewarm about the qualification and one Team Leader said that if the program was finished tomorrow 'the staff would jump up and down for joy.' Annette and Brendan agreed that it was better to have the Certificate than not to have it, but as Annette put it:

> 'I've got fifteen years working experience and then I have one year here and got the Certificate IV. I didn't know how that one year is more valuable than the previous fifteen.'

Staff that were enthusiastic in fact created a new set of problems because they were looking for further training but the FLM qualification was only available to Team Leaders or, perhaps, those designated to become Team Leaders.

The large-scale use of nationally recognised training had been introduced under the Centrelink Enterprise Agreement and at that time there had been time pressures to qualify staff because of

the associated pay rises. The local office in the case study appeared to have struggled somewhat with establishing appropriate infrastructure and processes, and installing a culture that valued the gaining of the qualifications. As Rachel said, 'Probably as an organisation we probably didn't do it as well initially as I would have hoped.' At Moreland, with eighty staff to put through the qualification initially (one hundred and thirty were studying at the peak time, with only thirty-five in progress at the time of the visit), they had taken the initiative seriously and to assist the Team Leaders with their task of motivating their staff they had put the Team Leaders through the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. A further issue mentioned by the local office was that the hasty development of the workbooks (by central staff) 'almost as we were trying to deliver them' because of the swift changeover from the former Cert IV in Business Administration to the Cert IV in Telecommunications. While the workbooks were generally viewed as adequate, they were seen by some to be rather low-level and repetitive. In fact the staff seemed to think it was impossible to fail. However it was acknowledged that staff with little or no working experience might find them more challenging. It was also mentioned that workbooks 'got passed around the office a fair bit.'

There were clearly some problems with the delivery mode which were perhaps being addressed through the move to the new qualification. Local staff appeared to prefer more face to face training rather than the self-paced model and it remained to be seen whether the new model would be preferred. The new model appeared to be championed by Sophie who had had a great deal of experience in previous jobs with on-the-job traineeships and hence was comfortable with a model which was primarily assessment-based. It was possible that unions and/or individual staff might not find congenial the new model where assessment of learning was closely tied to performance management. A comment by Sophie underlined the approach of the organisation to the use of nationally recognised training:

> 'That's why you have quals, isn't it? To recognise those skills that you do get on the job.'

Conclusion

In a rapidly expanding environment, entry-level nationally recognised training through the Certificate IV was used for the training of all new staff and was also available on request to longer-serving existing workers. Higher level qualifications were available to staff who had completed the Certificate IV but only where there were positions available that required the higher-level qualifications.

In general there was a feeling that the structured nature of nationally recognised training suited the highly structured nature of call centres very well. nationally recognised training was also seen as highly suited to the environment where large numbers of people were doing similar work (although in different queues) and were mostly working in a similar setting, ie in large offices with heavy staff recruitment. It was also suited to an environment where the CSOs were working in a scheduled environment where outcomes could be clearly monitored. The fact that nationally recognised training could be delivered on the job and assessed through normal performance management measures was a big advantage, as it negated the need to 'send people off to courses'. As Sophie said, the expertise for training staff was 'located in house, it's not about pulling people out.' Government funding for the training through traineeship payments and, in some States, user choice funding, provided resourcing for the program.

The advantages of nationally recognised training were summed up by Jane who said,

> 'We are able to use the structure of the VET system and then actually integrate it to the greatest possible extent with our business. So it's no longer like this add on thing that it probably started out as… now it's coming together really well.'

The central learning and development staff saw themselves as something of a flag-ship in their use of nationally recognised training, both within Centrelink as a whole, and also to some extent

to the wider business community. However there seemed to be less satisfaction with the use of nationally recognised training at the local level, with some doubts about whether the introduction of the Cert IV qualification had actually led to better staff performance, and a less than enthusiastic reception from the staff. It needs to be stressed, however, that the interviews at Moreland were necessarily based on staff's experience with the 'old' qualification, not the new qualification that was about to be introduced.

While central staff valued the integration of the qualification with work, staff in the local office appeared to prefer face-to-face training, at least when discussing the 'old' qualification. They seemed to hold a view that nationally recognised training was not 'real training' unless they were learning something different from what they needed to do their daily work. In a similar vein they were also not fully conversant with RPL processes, perhaps as those interviewed had been in the workforce for many years without gaining any other qualifications. Somewhat paradoxically, they also viewed the Certificate IV as something 'other' than the skills training they needed to perform the job, which may partly have been a result of the way that the system was explained to them. It seemed that, at least at the office visited in the case study, a full cultural shift to the potential of nationally recognised training had not yet taken place.

Foxtel

Call Centre industry; Partnership with RTO

Malcolm Macintosh

Foxtel began transmission of subscription television services in 1995. It was originally established as a partnership of Telstra and the News Corporation. In 1997 The Australian media group Consolidated Press became a partner. In 2002 there was a further consolidation of the industry with the second major subscriber television provider, Optus, entering into a Content Supply Agreement that allowed subscribers of both services to share the same content. Foxtel has, since this Agreement, became the principal programming provider for subscription television services in Australia. Subscriptions were offered either directly through Foxtel or through Telstra or Optus. Each of these latter organisations offer bundled packages of their telephony and cable services.

From the outset a national Customer Service Centre was at the core of the marketing and service support activities of the company. The Centre was located at Foxtel's Moonee Ponds offices in Melbourne. It operated 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Until the latter part of 2003 the Centre was divided functionally into two units. One group, the larger of the two, dealt with sales inquiries from prospective and existing customers, while the other group dealt with field contractors, customers and Foxtel staff in technical installations. A review of the Centre's organisation was undertaken late in 2003 as a result of increased queuing of telephone callers at that time. The review led to a re-grouping of staff into a number of 'targeted' caller groups. The new organisation, known as 'skills based routing' allowed the main groups of customer inquiries to be targeted to call centre staff with skills and knowledge appropriate to the inquiry. At the time of the research these groups included groups specialising in new subscriptions and billing; customers seeking upgrades of services, another group specialising in customers seeking to downgrade services, as well as groups dealing with routine service problems and advanced service issues.

There were approximately 600 people working in the Customer Service Centre, working over three shifts daily. About 60% of the staff were full-time while the rest were part-time, working 20 hours or more each week. Over two thirds of these staff were involved with sales related inquiries, and the rest were employed on technical installation related inquiries. Prior to the review there were approximately 43 Team Leaders, but their numbers increased with the adoption of the more targeted 'skills based routing' introduced late in 2003. The Centre had experienced relatively high levels of labour turnover, approaching 40% according to the managers interviewed, although a union representative claimed the turnover was higher.

The Centre was managed by a National Customer Service Centre Manager in Sydney while call centre staff were all located in Melbourne. Each group of about ten call centre operators was managed by a Team Leader, who in turn reported to a Senior Team Leader. Senior Team Leaders each reported to one of the Sales and Service Managers, who were responsible to the Customer Centre Manager. The hierarchical arrangement of authority was based on the achievement of specific sales related outcomes at each level. The role of the operator was to achieve specific performance targets as measured by Key Performance Indicators, which included both qualitative and quantitative measures of performance. These were designed to ensure a positive experience for the caller and good turnaround times for each call. The inclusion of qualitative measures of operator performance reflected the need to ensure that service centre operators adopted an appropriate manner and approach to customers. At an organisational level the adoption of the skills based routing system in 2003 was an acknowledgement of the importance of ensuring that operators were accessible and competent in dealing with the enquiry.

Research method

The research was undertaken in the period November 2003 to March 2004. Interviews were undertaken with the three Foxtel employees, the Human Resource Manager, the Manager Learning and Development and the Technical Centre Manager. At the time of the research the company was undertaking a review of its call centre operations following considerable difficulties in the third quarter of 2003 with queuing. It was also planning the introduction of its digital subscription service the first wholly new product platform since the company's establishment. As a result there was considerable pressure on training and call centre staff. Therefore it was not possible to access call centre operators. Discussion were also undertaken with the Australian Service Union's organiser responsible for private sector call centres. Those discussion provided considerable background to the information provided by company representatives.

As well as the interviews, additional information was garnered from the Foxtel web site: *http://www.foxtel.com.au/about/overview.jsp*

Work environment

The Centre was clean, well lit and open-plan in nature. The focus for operators was the computer screen and telephone system immediately in front of them. Work was closely supervised with very clear performance expectations measured on a continual basis through qualitative and qualitative measures, such as call completion rate and telephone manner. Personal movement was relatively restricted, and the layout of the Centre diminished opportunities for group interaction during working hours. The continual pressure of calls and the problem of queuing during sales campaigns, or for other reasons, placed a degree of stress on the operators. These conditions helped to explain the relatively high turnover of staff. There had been attempts to unionise the workforce but the human resource manager suggested that the level of unionisation was no more than 10% of the workforce. The newness of the industry, the relatively high proportion of females and students in the workforce, the high labour turnover, and the proportion of part-time workers in the workforce were all factors that act as barriers to unionisation. The level of unionisation may therefore be seen as more significant than the actual proportion of unionists would suggest. The union official suggested that the actual level was nearer 15%, and that the management had failed to appreciate the underlying dissatisfaction of staff who regarded the queuing and workload problems as resulting from management inefficiencies.

Training

The company's overall approach to training appeared to reflect the general philosophy of meeting customer needs in an efficient, timely and cost effective manner. The Human Resource Manager expressed the view that the company's commitment to training for new employees could be seen as a means of attracting and retaining employees. This was borne out, it was said, in comments made by resigning staff at exit interviews. While some new recruits brought existing call centre experience to the job, Foxtel provided an initial training program designed to provide a common orientation to the company, its products and the call centre environment. New employees come from a variety of backgrounds, and included students, women returning to work after rearing families, and people displaced from other areas of employment. The Union official suggested that many Call Centre team leaders, and managers in levels above them were recruited directly and often without call centre experience. Company interviewees suggested only that some people with external experience were recruited to leadership positions.

Until late in 2003, initial training was spread over three weeks, during which time operators would spend some time in simulated call centre work, or observing and participating in basic call centre operations. This three-week training was followed by a transitional period of three weeks learning 'on the job' in a training team. The changes undertaken in 2003 shortened the initial orientation to one week after which operators were assigned to a call group, based on their overall level of skill. The one week program provided for company orientation, product knowledge and basic skills in the operation of call centre equipment. At the end of this period an assessment, known in the company as the first assessment book, was made and the recruit assigned to a work group consistent with the skill demonstrated at that time. The one week program, termed a streamlined program by the Teaching and Learning Manager, was based on a careful assessment of the skills needs of operators across the organisation, and the assessment of the specific skills needs for selected groups of callers. It allowed new recruits to enter the workforce earlier in a fully operational role. This clearly reduced the initial cost of training and recruitment, though it placed much heavier pressure on performance management and continuing development of individual operators.

All recruits were expected to undertake training on a continuing basis, and most training was based on competency standards contained in the Telecommunications Training Package for customer service and leading to a Certificate III in Customer Service (ICT02). The company budgeted three hours training per week for each employee, and for a full-time employee this training provided the opportunity for attainment of a Certificate III over approximately 18 months. The actual training undertaken in this period was based on the training needs of the employee. It therefore included new product knowledge as well as training to overcome any performance difficulties identified in the regular performance reviews undergone by employees. The training was undertaken by any one of several people, such as the Team Leader, a company trainer or the RTO, depending on the area in which training was required. Most of it was on-the-job, though some of the marketing information required attendance at workshops.

Training for the staff in the installation call centre was more complex, in that they were expected to understand some of the more technical issues associated with installations. Their responsibilities entailed dealing with service contractors, as well as Foxtel staff and customers, and they were effectively managers of the installation process. Operators in that area were normally recruited by moving experienced operators from the main call centre, or by recruiting people with relevant prior experience. Training for this group extended to Certificate IV in the Package.

For operators undertaking this more complex work coordinating contractors and Foxtel staff, the training requirements placed emphasis on developing a relatively high level of ability in conflict resolution and communication. Some of the skills required were similar to those exercised by Team Leaders. This training was not normally undertaken against standards in the Telecommunications Package, but was based on internal standards similar to Front Line Management competencies. The company had avoided qualifications related training for these and for supervisory and management skills in order to minimise expectations amongst those undergoing training that it should lead to a promotion.

Drivers of training decisions

There were two principal reasons for the company's commitment to training. The first related quite directly to business requirements. In both sides of the Customer Service Centre the skills of staff in dealing with customers, was a critical element in the overall marketing strategy. While field staff regularly door-knocked to promote business, the call centre operators also sought sign-up or upgrade business. Call Centre staff dealing with technical service issues had a more specialised job in that they were responsible for liaising with internal and external groups to arrange installation of the product.

A second element in training policy related to the cost of recruitment and labour turnover. The human resource manager explained that training, and importantly the provision of accredited training, was seen by the company as leading to a reduction in labour turnover and a more stable workforce. However, the continuing levels of high labour turnover suggested that the management of training was in fact more successful at ensuring that staff recruited could contribute to the call centre operation quickly and efficiently rather than at reducing staff turnover. The adoption of external training standards for core training, and the subcontracting of training to an external RTO, were means by which Foxtel controlled costs and quality of training outcomes. The underlying need for continuous training in a changing marketing environment had made it possible for the company to promote its commitment to training as a benefit for prospective employees.

The importance of nationally recognised training

As indicated above staff were normally recruited to operator positions requiring minimal training. In part the recruitment strategy was one designed to ensure incoming operators were effective in the Foxtel environment as distinct from the product environment of other call centres. All recruits underwent training on a continuing basis, and most training was based on the standards contained in the Telecommunications Training Package for customer contact. This training incorporated an induction program originally developed by Foxtel for its employees several years previously, but the program had been mapped to the appropriate standards in the National Telecommunications Package. The RTO, Kangan- Batman TAFE, which had two staff members based at Foxtel was responsible for recording and undertaking assessments. They also contributed to areas of the basic training which were less company specific. The alignment of company training needs with the ability of the employee to attain a Certificate III had two advantages. Firstly, it provided a consistent set of standards for general call centre and customer service skills development. Secondly, it was promoted to new employees as one of the advantages of working for Foxtel. As indicated employees responded positively to this idea. Taken together these considerations underline the value of nationally recognised training in providing structure to human resource management practices.

As indicated elsewhere the Foxtel program went beyond the standards of the Training Package in several areas. One of these related to product knowledge where there were relatively frequent briefings and training sessions in changed products and packages. The other area in which nationally recognised training was not used was the in the development of management skills. Team Leaders were given additional training in management skills. While this embraced some competencies covered in Front Line Management (FLM) qualifications, the company was reluctant to use the FLM qualification explicitly as it is seen as giving a false career expectation to call centre staff. As a consequence the training did not articulate to national standards.

Relationships with RTOs

The first association with nationally accredited training had been with a private training provider whose work proved to be unsatisfactory. Their approach was described by the HR Manager as 'sale-oriented' with considerable disputation over contract management issues. Foxtel entered into a contract with Kangan-Batman TAFE early in 2003. Kangan-Batman's approach to the training contract was seen as more professional, with a clearer separation of administration and training activities. Transfer of the two dedicated training staff employed by the private provider to Kangan Batman facilitated a smooth contract transfer, and underlines the failure of the management of the private provider. The contract was for a three-year renewable term, and at the time of the research was being subjected to quarterly reviews. The contract provided for the placement of a specific number of RTO staff at Foxtel to undertake assessment services and provide elements of the training program. There were two RTO employed trainers on site from the outset, and this was expected to increase as with increases in staffing.

To a large degree the satisfaction expressed by Foxtel managers in the training partnership reflects the experience and resources of the RTO. Kangan Batman TAFE had an organisational structure which allowed the overheads of training and contract administration to be separated from the day to day training staff. This allowed the trainers to devote their activities to ensuring the learning outcomes sought by their client were met. A call centre manager commented that their presence in the organisation was not seen by anyone as intrusive, and that were relatively indistinguishable from other staff. While the contractual arrangement was not unusual in formal terms it was more organic than contractual at the operational level.

The organisation's view of nationally recognised training

The company expressed considerable confidence in nationally recognised training. Its main strength was seen to be in the provision of objective and nationally accredited standards. As managers suggested, the system provided the company with an assurance that training used under the framework would be consistent and reliable. The company also gave some attention to the system at the centre of its recruitment practices.

The main weakness of the nationally recognised training system related to the difficulties in getting relatively routine information about the number and status of employees under traineeships. The collection of this data was a function of New Apprenticeship Centres (NACs) and RTOs. However the information collected by these bodies was used essentially for reporting to government and ANTA, rather than to meet the quite distinct management requirements of the client. It appears to have been a difficulty not appreciated by the RTO and suggests that the customer orientation found in the delivery of training might not be reproduced at the level of contract administration.

The only other difficulty experienced by the company related to the performance of the private RTO that had been previously used. The Human Resource Manager emphasised that the RTO in question may have overextended its capability and its resources in the Foxtel contract, and that it had seen the contract as a marketing tool rather than an end in itself. She did not regard them as typical of all RTOs.

The importance of training subsidies

The HR Manager believed that Foxtel would continue to undertake the present training program with or without subsidies, as it was essential to its core business. Nevertheless she argued that the subsidies did make it easier for the company to commit itself to nationally recognised training. As suggested above the company had found positive reasons to use the nationally recognised training, in its ability to provide a standardised training product, and integrate many or most of their organisation specific needs in that framework. However, the attachment of new employees to a program of training leading to Certificate III suggested that the subsidy had some importance in underwriting the company's commitment to regular training. While product specific training was a normal expectation in sales oriented organisations, the commitment of 3 hours per week represents an important formal commitment to the overall development of the employee. Government subsidies would go some way to offsetting that regular cost. It is perhaps significant that the company had not sought to have its employees assessed for outcomes at Certificate II level. That might be attained within a much shorter period, possibly six months. The Certificate III outcome was thus a means of sustaining a commitment to employee development over a longer period with the costs amortised over that period.

Conclusions

Call centres pose many problems for the management of people reflecting the nature of the work and the close supervision which normally takes place over that work. Foxtel's business was quite strongly dependent on the performance of its CSC, and recognised the need for on-going and consistent training for its front line operators as a means of improving the ability of its employees to operate effectively, and as a means of improving their commitment to Foxtel. The company's adoption of nationally recognised training for its entire entry-level staff reflected faith in the reliability, flexibility and consistency of the national training system. The provision of national standards, the ability to contract external trainers to oversight the quality of outcomes, and the availability of government subsidies to assist in amortising the costs of training underpinned the company's commitment to on-going training based around nationally recognised training.

Nevertheless the company was more critical of the administration of the traineeship system, and particularly its inability to provide timely and relevant data on traineeships for their own management purposes. It also expressed some reservations over the limitations of the National Telecommunications Training Package for the technical aspects of its technical call centre operations. The company had not adopted nationally recognised training for its management and supervisory training at the time of the research, reflecting a cautious approach to developing management expectations amongst call centre staff. The unsatisfactory experience with the first RTO Foxtel used suggests that in a competitive market for training provision some participants will not act in a purely client centred fashion, but might direct their attention to building market share or even profit taking in the short term. In this case the purchasing company appears to have acted decisively in moving to a more appropriate arrangement.

References:

Foxtel company information, *http://www.foxtel.com.au/about/overview.jsp*

Harmonics Manufacturing

Manufacturing/Process Manufacturing industry; non-user of nationally recognised training

Richard Pickersgill

Brief description of enterprise

Harmonics was a private company based in regional New South Wales. It manufactured a range of new and rebuilt engine components (engine pulleys and harmonic balancers) for the automotive industry. The company had been in existence for 25 years, but had expanded production rapidly over the last five years. Turnover had increased from around $4.5 million in the mid 1990's to around $13 million in 2002/3. Employment had approximately doubled over the same period and at the time of the case study, the firm had approximately 80 full-time employees.

The company's rapid growth had been accompanied by significant new investment in capital equipment. There had been particular attention to upgrading computer numerically controlled (CNC) machining equipment and its integration with 'state of the art' Manufacturing Resource Planning (MRP) software. The investment in capital equipment had been accompanied by changes in production processes and work organisation, which in turn had led to major reviews of its traditional training and skill development practices.

The occupations and skills were generally those of the metal industry. However, employment was under the state Motor Vehicle Industry award, rather than the Metal Industry Award. The historical reason is that the firm grew out of the motor vehicle repair industry, rather than manufacturing industry. It was apparent that management did not wish to be involved in, or drawn into the industrial relations environment or classification structures of the metal industry. Management had not pursued an enterprise agreement because it considered that coverage by the MVI award gave adequate flexibility. 'Shop floor' employees were either trade qualified fitter/machinists or 'second class' machinists. A core of trade qualified (and skilled) machinists and tool setters set up and monitored production processes and new batch runs. The firm had developed its own skill-based classification and pay structure based on its own audit of its production needs, and a performance appraisal/review system introduced for all wage and salaried employees. There was a consultative committee of six employees elected from each of the production areas and three management representatives (General Manager, training manager and personnel/HR). Unionisation is not encouraged.

The firm's core products were replacement parts for a range of engine types which are produced to Original Equipment Manufacture (OEM) standards. These were catalogued to the original part numbers specified by the manufacturer. The specifications, machining instructions and any relevant special toolings were held in a library/data base. The firm is therefore able to manufacture and supply any item held in its catalogue. The production process primarily involved small or large run batch machining, assembly and finishing of rough castings, supplied by metropolitan foundries to the firms specifications. Other components such as rubber seals, bearings and electronic sensors were externally sourced. The firm had developed strong relationships with its key suppliers and distributors, with whom it would undertake joint product development activities as required.

The firm was originally founded to supply the local Australian spare parts or 'after-market' sales industry, rather than as a manufacturer in its own right. Small scale batch processing of components to supply a relatively large range of Australian built and imported vehicles/engine types meant that the firm was flexible and well regarded for its engineering, but vulnerable in terms of the unit cost of components. However, in addition to the traditional local market, the

company had gradually expanded into supplying automotive after-market suppliers in both the USA and UK, and with growing links to Europe. This export orientation has meant that there has been a recent rationalisation of product range and a concentration on accessories for 'world vehicles/engines'. In local terms this meant that Harmonics was concentrating on General Motors Holden four cylinder and Commodore V6 engines rather than the Australian designed and built Ford Falcon engine. The primary market remained in the Original Equipment replacement market (around 80 percent of sales) and refurbishment (around 15 percent). However the company has also developed a 'flagship' line of performance equipment which accounted for around five percent of sales. A jobbing capacity with strong engineering expertise (ie; the manufacture of 'one-off' or very small runs of components for specific purposes) had also been retained and the firm was particularly proud of its involvement with successful motor racing teams.

Research method

Interviews were held over two visits in October and November 2003 at the Harmonics site. Interviewees were as follows:

Name	Position	Other roles
Darryl	General Manager	Company media spokesperson, production planning
Paul	Training Manager/supervisor	Personnel, performance appraisal, training needs analysis
Five staff (whiteboard Planning meeting)	Production cell members	

Additional information was gained from internal documents and a site tour.

Training activities

Formalisation of training activities had complemented the recent investments in capital equipment. The firm recognised that it needed to develop and maintain skills relevant to its production processes and to underpin changed work organisation practices. It has addressed its skills needs in two broad ways. A more selective initial recruitment of new staff has been adopted, and in-house training based on an internally developed skills matrix introduced.

Entry level apprenticeship had been traditionally encouraged, but the recruitment and retention of skilled adult staff had been an historical problem. Management stated that labour turnover 'a few years back' had been as high as twenty to twenty-five percent per annum. A review of the costs of labour turnover and apprentice supervision led to a decision to outsource the employment of entry level apprentices and the recruitment of adult staff to a local group training/labour hire company. The company gave specific criteria to the Group Training company which screened applicants. Final recruitment and the offer of an employment contract was made by Harmonics. Management stated that the combination of more careful recruitment and changes to internal human resource practices has seen labour turnover drop to less than five percent.

A second critical area was the linkage of classification to a skills matrix. Job functions were mapped against this matrix, as were the performance appraisals of individual job incumbents. For the shop floor, a three level classification system based on 'skill points' was used. Appraisal was by a combination of self-rating, peer review and supervisor rating. This provided a training needs analysis at both individual and team level. It was stressed that the appraisal was not really intended as an absolute rating of individual skill. Rather the intention was to ensure that the trend line of each form of appraisal was consistent in order to validate any skill gaps identified.

Involvement with nationally recognised training

The skills matrix and individual skill profiles were internally generated documents (and recorded on a simple EXCEL spreadsheet) and were related to the specific production processes used at Harmonics. However they actually incorporated as their core a select range of skills similar or identical to those specified in national metals training modules/Training Package. The firm had good relations with the local TAFE college and was aware of the developments in nationally recognised training. However they had not proceeded to use nationally recognised training, as for Harmonics the key issue was, as they put it, that the firm retained the flexibility to internally recognise and reward competence at what it considers appropriate levels. This position was heavily tied up with industrial relations issues and the perceptions among local firms and workers. As the General Manager noted that if someone genuinely held skills appropriate to the position

> '..the point is you recognise the guy as a tradesman. Because we're not a union shop we can pay him (as) that … and no-one around here who's a fitter or non-fitter or apprentice are (sic) concerned about that. If they were, there's nothing been brought up at the Consultative meetings.'

The firm was supportive of the structure and skill levels and type of nationally recognised training provided through the apprenticeship system. Formal possession of trade skills were important to Harmonics and the firm wished to continue to incorporate externally credentialed national modules or units obtained by individuals into its skill based classification system.

While it currently did not access nationally recognised training for existing workers, managers were generally supportive of the principles of nationally recognised training. They said they would be willing to access nationally recognised training to upgrade qualifications of its 'second class' machinists, however they were not satisfied with the extent of available RPL arrangements.

Partly as a result of the quite intensive training program undertaken over the previous few years, combined with a large reduction in labour turnover, Harmonics was satisfied that the workforce had the technical skills required for the production processes used. Where individual gaps are identified, internal on-the-job training and mentoring is seen as cost effective a targeted. Where external training has been required in the recent past, the emphasis had been on non-accredited supplier training, or training based on the specific processes used by the firm.

Conclusion

Harmonics was an interesting example of new training arrangements being introduced as part of a revised approach to human resource development. Expansion into global markets required investments in both capital plant and equipment that have been complemented by investments in human resources and training.

The firm remained supportive of the generalist trade skills provided by the apprenticeship system. These remained the core of the skill matrices developed at firm level. If the purchase of nationally accredited training for non-trade employees was indicated by business needs, the firm would make a business decision. In its immediate circumstances however, the firm used nationally accredited standards and training as guides for its in-house training, without, in its view, being drawn into unnecessary bureaucratic or administrative structures.

Network TV

Arts/Media industry; non-user of nationally recognised training

Erica Smith

Network TV was a regional TV station operating in most States in Australia and with links to a New Zealand station. Revenue in the 2003 financial year was $148 million. During late 2002 the company had restructured, with several changes in senior management. During 2003 the network operations was being centralised to the Head Office so that all editing and scheduling would be done centrally. Various national government initiatives such as the broadcasting regulations and the move to digital broadcasting impacted strongly on Network as a TV station.

The Head Office was located in a bush setting on the outskirts of a medium-sized city and employed 120 staff; 300 permanent staff were employed across the other 25 sites with around 100 casual staff altogether. Casual staff ranged from relief newsreaders to staff who dressed up as the station 'mascot' for publicity appearances. The largest proportion of staff were in clerical and sales roles because of the importance of advertising in Network's business. 57 worked in 'news operations' (journalists and camera people) and 80 in 'operations' (traffic, production and so on). Some of the areas were quite strongly segregated by gender and there was a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and educational levels, with some areas (such as TV production and journalism) often attracting applicants with degrees. Staff often used Network as a stepping stone to the larger metropolitan TV companies: Michelle said, 'We groom them and then they go off to bigger pastures. But that's fine and we certainly recognise that that's one of the functions … that we fill.'

There was also a tradition that young qualified staff worked for a few years and then went on a 'big holiday' overseas, in a similar manner to apprentices taking the opportunity to travel at the end of their apprenticeship. There seemed to be a tendency particularly in the operations area for staff to remain within the industry. One staff member mentioned that it was hard to get a different job because other industries regarded TV experience as too specialised to be useful elsewhere.

Network did not have an enterprise agreement, dealing instead with a variety of different awards, some (eg the television industry award) very detailed and prescriptive. A revitalised performance appraisal system had been in place for approximately a year. The current HR Manager had only been in position for less than four months. Previously she had worked in HR positions in the club industry and in a department store.

Research method

Interviews were held in November 2003 at the Head Office. It was decided to limit the 'drilling down' to the operations area which comprised around 80 staff. The following staff were interviewed:

Name	Position
Michelle	Human Resource Manager
John	Networks Operation Manager.
Shane	Station Engineer (supervisor of four technical staff)
Brandon	Trainee Technician

Although it was hoped to interview the Personnel Manager as well, this did not prove possible. There was no Training Manager. In addition to the interviews, information was gained from the annual reports for 2002 and 2003. A tour of some areas of the site was also given.

Training activities

Training at Network was managed within the different departments and there was not a strong company-wide training focus. Michelle had only been in position for a short time and her role was a strategic one, with a Personnel Manager reporting to her but no Training Manager. There was not yet a standard induction package although there was a staff handbook. The industry covered a wide range of occupations so some staff needed to licensed to operate (for example electrical engineers) and there were industry codes of practice which needed awareness-raising among staff rather than formal training. OH&S training was outsourced to local providers at each site. Training for the sales staff was important and was organised by the General Manager in charge of sales.

Skill needs in the operations side of the industry were changing. For example the advent of computerisation meant that the same level of service could be provided with far fewer staff. Computerisation enable scheduling of advertisements for the whole of Australia from the Head Office, for example. It was estimated that around 150 fewer people were employed than had been prior to the computerisation of such activities. Some staff had degree qualifications and Network had a close relationship with the TV Production degree course at a regional University. This university was seen as 'our nursery for new employees coming through' and third year students undertook two two-week internships at Network or other TV stations. All the networks tended to headhunt the better students from this course as it was seen as very skills-focussed compared with other universities' courses. Some students were offered work straight away and had to finish their degrees part-time. There was no corresponding relationship with VET providers.

Primarily, however, staff in operations did not have qualifications. Formerly TV stations had offered what they called 'traineeships' (cadetships) but now there was not enough lower-level work to warrant these positions. Staff might be taken on, however, in non-technical areas and then moved into a technical vacancy if the staff showed the right aptitude and attitude. There was quite a lengthy tradition of training in the industry but it seemed to be patchy and occupationally based rather than industry based. John, for example, had worked in the radio and TV industry for 33 years and said,

> 'Back in those days we didn't have TAFEs or anything like that, so it was all by correspondence through the Marconi School of Wireless to get the Broadcast Operator's Certificate.'

However these days most training was on-the-job. As John put it,

> 'It's just a filtering down mechanism; when the new ones come in they learn the fundamental skills from the people that are next in the pecking order above them and then they learn from the ones above that and so forth.'

Apart from the electrical engineering staff, who attended TAFE for a Certificate III in Electrotechnology (Communications) and generally continued on to an Advanced Diploma, training tended to be confined to new equipment training from the vendors and purchased off the job courses in areas such as management and supervision. John for example had been sent to an eight day course in middle management at an interstate University.

> 'I was a bit apprehensive when I went down because I thought, well, here's the boy from the bush, and they had people from all over the place… The first couple of days they were talking about all these theories on this and that and whatever, and I'm going 'Yeah???' But the beauty of the course was, it really reinforced ideas I already had and practices I already

had in place. You know, which were for me just common sense things coming from the lower rans and working your way up.'

He viewed training for junior managers as important too.

> 'Anybody who goes into like a team leader of shift supervisor type of role we definitely try and get them into a Line Management seminar type thing … because obviously it's a tough call coming out of a group of people that they're your workmates, and all of a sudden you're like a shift leader and you've suddenly got responsibilities for pulling them into line.'

In addition there were commercially-available courses in specialist areas, sometimes run by international companies who flew staff in to service the Australian market, but these were generally very expensive; for example a Sony digital beta tape course cost $3500 per participant. Completion of some courses meant that workers became highly sought after and so the company would not necessarily be interested in sending them on such courses as they were not strictly needed for the job. Vendors provided training for new equipment. For example a Sony mixer had recently been installed in a new control room and staff were not confident in its use; a training session had been booked with 'the factory'.

Generally, in the operations area, it was clear that experience was more highly valued than qualifications. It was suggested that this might be because of the rapid pace of change in technology. As Shane put it

> 'It changes so quickly. It's like doing a computer course in Windows 2000. By the time that is finished, XP is out and 2000 is obsolete. I think that's the way it's getting (in TV) and especially now, with the way things are happening with digital television. By the time you get your certificate it's out the window.'

The knowledge required was also quite specific. Shane said:

> 'At the end of the day all they're looking for is experience ... it really works out that someone who can make the right decision when something is broken, as in how to either get around it or what do to immediately to get us back on air in a way that we're not wasting money … it all works down to the dollar.'

Shane said that the way he and his staff learned about new equipment and processes was to 'just get your hands dirty'. In some areas it was actually hard to get experience; for example transmitters rarely broke down so it was difficult to be trained in how to fix them. Brandon noted that much of the work was non-routine and was in response to various developments; for example they had needed to build new equipment when the station had begun to record news programs again after a period without the programs. Also the move to digital meant that new equipment needed to be installed and new processes instituted. He said, 'There's always something to learn here.'

There was informal exchange of information and knowledge between staff of different TV networks as staff tended to move around between networks and made good contacts. Staff also commonly used the internet to search out training that might benefit themselves or the company; in some cases the big training companies emailed staff direct. They were encouraged to make a case to their manager to attend such training and the manager made a decision on cost or relevance grounds. For example two staff had asked to attend a course on installing domestic TV antennae because members of the public sometimes rang with queries which the staff would have liked to have been able to answer. However this idea was vetoed. There was also a risk to the organisation in sending staff on any of the more sought-after course; for example Brandon would have liked to attend an 'MP' video transmission course and he explained that 'if you can know about that you're worth your weight in gold. You can almost write your own ticket.'

In addition in Shane's area a team meeting was held each week where 'a learning thing' often happened: knowledge was shared between the group about different processes. Brandon described the swapping of information about available courses in the team. It was evident that they were all focused on learning more and getting certification for the courses they had undertaken; Brandon emphasised the importance of 'knowledge'. It was expected that training might become more formalised but not in the near future. Michelle said, 'We don't have, at this stage, formal training and development plans for each person and I don't see that in the next 12 months that we're going to get to that stage.'

While performance management appraisals were returned to HR Michelle had not yet been able to set up a formal system for identifying training needs from them.

Involvement with nationally recognised training

There was no current involvement with nationally recognised training for existing workers, although technical staff like Brandon were sent to TAFE for their initial qualifications. Brandon was undertaking a Certificate III in Electro Technology (Communications) with specialisation in Television Fundamentals. He had originally been enrolled in the Advanced Diploma but had to change to the Certificate III for some administrative reason which was unclear, perhaps because user choice funding was not available for the higher level qualification. It did not seem to be quite clear whether he was formally signed up as an apprentice or not, although he was certainly having time release, where possible to undertake his modules at TAFE. Brandon had not yet started the specialisations and at the time of the case study visit found there was not a great deal of connection between his work and TAFE studies; however he enjoyed learning the basics of electronics.

It was clear that there was a lack of information among senior staff members about the availability of nationally recognised training for Network staff. One reason seemed to be that staff had not had a great deal of previous experience in the area. While Michelle had been involved with programs such as Responsible Service of Alcohol, and more recently with retail traineeships, her discussion of these programs seemed to indicate that she regarded nationally recognised training as primarily for high-volume operator level training rather than for existing workers. She had investigated the possibility of using Front Line Management training for supervisory staff[3] but was not aware of the Film, TV, Radio & Multimedia Training Package which was the most relevant for the technical side of the industry. Also there did not seem to be a strong emphasis on training issues among the industry networks that existed, nor was there a history of links with the relevant ITAB. While Michelle had had some involvement with the State Hospitality ITAB in a previous job, she had not kept up such involvement.

In addition, the presence of a number of staff with degree level qualifications and the existence of well-regarded university courses for some important areas of the organisation meant that the VET sector was not seen as a primary source of staff for the industry. The diversity of staff and the dispersal across Australia also made planning for training difficult. In thinking about FLM qualifications Michelle realised she would need to have an RTO deliver primarily self-paced learning modules with, perhaps, some group meetings from time to time.

While there were codes of practice within the industry and legislative requirements it was not considered that there was a need for formal training to address these requirements, except in the case of, for example, electrical engineering staff where such issues were dealt with in their TAFE training. The use of awards rather than an enterprise agreement meant that it was not possible to link pay to qualification levels except insofar as this was built into awards.

[3] Shortly after the case study visit, this program began at Certificate IV level, with six learners initially enrolled.

However there was certainly some interest, in the operations area, in the concepts of nationally recognised training if a lack of knowledge about what was available. John for example had had discussions within his networks and with staff from the regional university with which Network were linked. He said,

> 'One of the things we've felt would be great, is if some training was set up in some form that people could go to, some sort of accredited training so that you know that at, say, Level 1, if that person had a certificate that said "I've done the Level 1", then we knew from that that they could operate a video tape machine, they could do this, they had those basic fundamentals. And if they went and did the next one, well, okay, I knew he's going to have those sort of skills… not to the nth degree, but some basic form, so that there were three or four levels, and so if you were a Level 3 woman, I'd know I could bring you in and maybe put you straight into some sort of editing. Whereas at the moment if you came to me and were successful at getting a job, you would have to probably start here and slowly be trained on the job and just work your way up.'

The regional university was particularly interested, he said, in co-operating on this sort of venture as they had expensive equipment that was not fully utilised. John was on the advisory committee for the university's degree course in TV production. John was evidently unaware that nationally recognised training offered exactly the sort of consistency and progression through levels that he had described.

John was also active in a local committee instituted by the State government to set up a film and television office to bring together the local TV, film and electronic games companies. Training was high on the agenda for the proposed office. There were however no local training providers. While the local TAFE college offered training with electives relevant to the industry there were no targeted courses. A local training company offered a pre-entry training course for the industry and Network took work experience students from that with a view to employing them later. Brandon was a graduate of that course. Previously another company had offered a six month intensive entry-level operator training course which had send quite a few graduates to Network. That company had closed down the previous year.

Conclusion

Network TV was a medium-sized company with a very diverse workforce and skills base and rapidly changing technology in its operations area. The huge range of jobs meant that staff ranged from those with degrees to those with virtually no qualification. There seemed to be a tradition in the operations area of hands-on experience and some mistrust of qualifications. The different occupations within the organisation had quite specific career paths and traditions of training and the way in which training was organised at Network was that each area had traditionally looked after its own training needs. It was hard to say which was the causal factor in this chain.

The case study focused on the operations area and it was clear that there was a groundswell in the industry for some sort of structured industry-wide training system, but there did not seem to be awareness that such a structure already existed in the relevant Training Package.

The barriers to utilisation of nationally recognised training at Network TV can be summarised as follows:

- ✧ Occupational diversity of workforce
- ✧ Geographical dispersal
- ✧ Lack of systematic knowledge of the VET system
- ✧ Links to higher education rather than VET providers

- ✧ Industrial relations based on awards rather than enterprise agreement, preventing the use of competency standards for HR purposes
- ✧ Lack of a specialist training officer
- ✧ Availability and high status of proprietary and commercial courses

Quality Chemicals

Manufacturing/process manufacturing industry; partnership with RTO

Peter Rushbrook

Quality Chemicals began operations in 1930 and in 1986 the company was acquired by another organisation which in 1991 entered into a partnership that created Quality Chemicals, part of the US Quality Chemicals group, a large privately owned company. Quality Chemicals' business includes base chemicals, intermediate chemicals, chemicals, aromatics, performance polymers and maleic anhydride. The company was a global producer of ethylene and propylene, the chemical industry's basic building blocks. These important materials were used to make a wide range of consumer products, such as detergents and cleaners, cosmetics, textiles, computer housings, automobile body parts and fuel additives.

Quality Chemicals' inner-west Melbourne site employed 340 people (all full-time, with many from a non-English speaking background. Most jobs were skilled and semi-skilled, based on a range of trades. Quality Chemicals' world wide corporate values policy placed workers' needs foremost in their plant operations and ensured excellent working conditions and high pay. Not surprisingly, the company's labour turnover rate was less than one per cent. The main union representing the Quality Chemicals workforce was the Australian Workers Union (AWU). At the time of the case study, there had not been a declared industrial dispute on the site for more than a decade.

Because of the nature of the products and processes, Quality Chemicals was one of 44 Victorian listed 'major hazard facilities'. Safety-related and best-practice skills training were consequently a high enterprise priority.

Research method

Interviews were held in November 2003 at the Quality Chemicals site. Four staff were interviewed, all of whom could speak for more than one aspect of the organisation's operations.

Name	Position	Other roles
Edward	Training Manager	Representing Human Resources
Harry	Line Manager	Trainer and trainee
Noel	Line Manager	Trainer and trainee
Barry	AWU shop steward	Trainer and IR consultant

Additional information was gained from Quality Chemicals' promotional publications and a site tour.

Training activities

Training was an essential part of Quality Chemicals' operations, particularly since it was labelled a major hazard facility and had to report to Victoria's WorkSafe (occupational health and safety) authority. All workers completed stepped training, from non-accredited company induction (four hours), site training (three days), basic chemicals education (several weeks), mentored on-the-job training (three weeks to four months), and final assessment for solo work activity, to job-specific nationally recognised training. Other safe-practices training was also conducted

through WorkSafe, including hazards incident reporting and management, fork-lift operation, and chemicals handling. The stable nature of the workforce meant that following induction training of new staff, most onsite informal and accredited training was conducted with long serving 'existing' workers. Quality Chemicals became a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) in the mid-1990s. This was undertaken because other providers, particularly TAFE, could not provide a suitable, customised around the clock service.

During the last decade Quality Chemicals' in-house training was managed by Edward, Quality Chemicals' training champion. Edward started his career as a motor mechanic and worked in a range of automobile related service and sales area before joining Quality Chemicals as a plant operator. Edward quickly developed an interest in training and was promoted to training manager. Part of his role involved establishing Quality Chemicals' RTO. His self-proclaimed 'passion' for the area saw him complete a diploma in technical education teaching and later a degree in vocational education. He has also served on a range of the chemical industry's state and national training accreditation bodies. Edward described his role as 'getting the best out of other people'.

Quality Chemicals had an approach to workplace education that emphasised the company's valuing of worker empowerment and choice. Workers were encouraged to put forward collective suggestions that were usually acted upon by the training manager. In one example payroll personnel thought they needed training in a new finance system and wrote a submission to management detailing their requirements. Management approved and gave the payroll personnel complete responsibility for organising the required training. The company also offered broader education in the form of English for the site's large NESB population. While conducted out of hours the company paid for transport to and from the training facility.

Quality Chemicals enjoyed excellent relations between management, workers and the Australian Workers Union (AWU), the site's dominant industrial organisation (though there are also six other unions representing a range of workers). Barry, the AWU shop steward, began at Quality Chemicals in 1978 as a shift operator and in 1983 was appointed the site union representative (a part-time role). In 1994 the company appointed him as a change manager to assist in improving workplace communication within the chemical section. Success in this role was broadened to the entire site with Barry's full-time, company paid appointment as AWU shop steward, a position that enabled communication with all organisational levels. Barry's role enabled him to negotiate training across the organisation. Barry believed that a key outcome of training was an 'increase in worker confidence'. Barry also believed that training at Quality Chemicals 'just happens' because of the successful fostering of an organisational training culture.

Involvement with nationally recognised training

Nationally recognised training was offered using external trainers and consultants, and 'off-the-shelf' learning packages that met with mixed success. The company struggled with the adjustments required to deal with compliance issues and the accompanying paperwork – it was not part of their core business. Staff found VET language both confusing and bewildering. In 1999 the enterprise entered into partnership with a local TAFE Institute which dealt with the bureaucratic issues for them. The TAFE Institute conducted training needs analyses and customised programs to the Quality Chemicals environment, and provided appropriate assessments, both on-the-job and off-the-job. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), on-site assessment and training classrooms were used in the determination of competency. Courses ranged from Certificates II and III to diploma in a range of chemical-related disciplines. Managers completed Frontline Management programs. The company did not use new apprenticeships or other programs attracting government funding.

Harry and Noel, two line managers, workplace trainers and Frontline Management trainees, said that the utilisation of the TAFE Institute as the external training provider 'takes the pressure off' their training role, particularly with regard to the customisation of workplace competencies,

assessment and the undertaking of needs analyses. Within their roles they felt empowered to make decisions relating to the improvement of training within their specific worksites. This included approaching senior management with ideas for continuous workplace improvements.

The introduction of Training Packages was regarded as valuable if approached, as they put it, 'sensibly' and if time was spent customising them to Quality Chemicals' needs, without *changing their intent*. However the union representative felt otherwise; he thought the Certificate II, III and IV in Chemical Operations were 'a heap of shit', requiring considerable customisation to be effective.

Training had been incorporated with the 'Altona Agreement', an Australian Workers Union national agreement for the chemical industry. The benefits of national training were seen to include skills portability and the fostering of worker confidence. Quality Chemicals believed that both formal and informal training had lead to a confident, informed, motivated and 'self-starting' workforce.

Conclusion

Quality Chemicals was an excellent example of an existing workers training success story. With a strong company training culture and an impassioned, highly skilled training manager the company was able to offer a range of in-house and nationally accredited programs that meet both the company's and workers' needs. Quality Chemicals low staff turnover, in many ways, placed a premium on the company to upgrade existing worker skills because of a low rate of skill importation through recruitment. Quality Chemicals status as a Victorian 'major hazards' facility guaranteed thoroughness in its enabling of safety-related training and the maintenance of high delivery standards. An interesting feature of Quality Chemicals training journey was its establishing of an RTO and its later decision to allow the registration to run out in favour of an external TAFE provider. The latter decision was taken following a perceived strengthening of TAFE's capacities to respond effectively to customers' needs, particularly in relation to course customisation and flexible delivery. It was also felt that as the management of an RTO was not part of the company's core business it was perhaps best left to a specialist outside body.

Riverside Sports Club

Hospitality industry; enterprise RTO

Peter Rushbrook

Riverside Sports Club (Riverside) was established in the 1920s as a sports recreational club and was is located on the New South Wales – Victoria border on the Murray River. The club had a large gambling (poker machine) facility. Riverside employs 170 staff in the areas of administration, finance, cleaning, food and bar, cooking, TAB and KENO operation, lawns maintenance and childcare. About 70 per cent of staff were full-time, with the remaining positions filled by casuals and part-timers. There were no staff from a non-English speaking background. Staff turnover was 27 per cent which was below the state-wide industry average of 36 per cent. The enterprise was slowly expanding to try to meet threats from the introduction of poker-machine gambling over the border in Victoria and from the imminent NSW smoking ban.

Riverside prided itself on the promotion of core values focusing on the promotion of sport, the provision of entertainment and social facilities and regional best practice leadership in hospitality services. In addition to its sporting focus Riverside was a major fund-raiser for local charities and community organisations. The club took great pride in this community-leadership role.

Riverside's workers were covered by three unions: the Australian Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union – Liquor and Hospitality Division, the Australian Workers Union and the Club Managers Association of Australia. Riverside does not have a specific Enterprise Based Agreement, relying instead on state and federal awards (for example, the NSW State Club Employees Award and the NSW Club State Managers Award). The work site did not have a nominated union representative from any of its listed industrial organisations.

Research method

Interviews were held in November 2003 at the Riverside site. Four staff were interviewed, some of whom could speak for more than one aspect of the organisation's operations.

Name	Position	Other roles
Erol	Human Resources Manager	RTO Manager, union spokesperson
Ken	Chef	Trainer and Trainee
Nancy	Waitress	Trainee
Helen	Kitchen Hand	Trainee

Additional information was gained from Riverside's Staff Induction Manual and a site tour.

Training activities

Riverside established its own Registered Training Organisation (RTO) four years prior to the case study. It was established by Erol, the RTO's 'change champion'. According to him:

> 'If I wasn't here it wouldn't have happened. It's been my little project…It was [established] from a human resources point of view. We needed a pool of talent because we didn't have that then…We would like to see all our staff go through the [formal training] program over the next two or three years.'

Erol was the Training Manager and was assisted part-time by two staff. He had a longstanding training background and VET qualifications in hospitality and business. All Riverside's trainers

had completed the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. The RTO's scope included frontline management, workplace assessing and training, hospitality (operations) and assets maintenance. It also offered mandatory courses in the responsible service of alcohol, responsible conduct of gambling, hygiene, and occupational health and safety issues for duty of care. Club employment was not possible unless these programs are completed. Mandatory training was conducted as part of the NSW Club Employees Award' and its Access Program.

Originally conceived by Riverside's directors as an external revenue source (following initial resistance to the idea of accredited training), the RTO at one point enrolled over 200 'external' trainees. In recent times the RTO's activities had been 'scaled back' to internal learners only (although local VET in Schools students were trained, as part of Riverside's extensive community program). The company's directors' had come to recognise the value of enterprise-based accredited training.

Training was offered in both on-the-job and off-the-job modes. Since August 2003 all staff training time has been paid by Riverside. This cost commitment was supported by some government funding received through traineeship programs. Prior to that time some training was completed in workers' own time. Because of the nature of shift work the company found it difficult to organise groups of an optimum 10-12 learners.

Involvement with nationally recognised training

Training Packages were used widely by Riverside's RTO. Nationally recognised courses currently offered are:

- ✧ Certificate IV in Frontline Management (delivered by an external consultant)
- ✧ Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment and Training
- ✧ Certificate II and Certificate III in Hospitality Operations
- ✧ Certificate II and Certificate III in Assets Maintenance.

It was estimated that 100 per cent of 'front-office' staff and 70 per cent of kitchen staff had received formal training. Most of the management team had completed all or part of the Frontline Management program.

The training manager believed that some packages were too broad in scope and required extensive local customisation to be effective. For example, though the certificates in Assets Maintenance were offered little changed, the Certificates II & III in Hospitality Operations, according to Erol, had been 'massively changed because of our needs because of the antiquated resources that are out there at this stage'. The course also failed to include such basic competencies as pouring beer; this was going to be added to the program as an entry level requirement. Frontline Management, taught by one specific Riverside trainer, was also customised for the Riverside context.

Formal training for existing workers (70 per cent of training activity) provided employee benefit in the form of credibility, formal skills recognition and transferability. Riverside was believed to gain measured increased productivity and training in excess of national benchmarks. Erol claimed that 'it gives us [Riverside] a benchmark and them [employees] a qualification.'

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was offered but most workers elected to complete the entire program or course, because according to Erol, 'they usually find it's going to be less work' than working through the RPL process.

Cost issues related to government compliance, particularly within traineeship schemes, had led to some questioning of the RTO's viability. For Erol:

> 'It's paperwork; that's one of the largest things…dealing with funding is very difficult to be compliant. So the cost factor of running a Registered Training Organisation nearly outweighs the benefits for an organisation our size.'

Within the Riverside RTO some aspects of training were conducted by Ken, the Riverside Head Chef with fourteen years' experience in the sporting clubs industry. Riverside was his first appointment as a certified trainer. Ken decided to try training as he wanted to make sure his experienced workers and new apprentices and VET in Schools students were 'getting the right training (hard and long)' in actual workplace conditions. He also undertook the role for the lifestyle and family reasons of working 'regular' daylight hours after years of late night cooking-related work. Ken was involved in teaching 'back of house' hospitality programs. These included advanced courses for experienced workers and entry level (knife-sharpening and food preparation) for apprentices and VET in School students (he was assisted by two other in-house trainers in this task). Ken customised all courses to suit both Riverside and student needs. In addition to skills and knowledge instruction. Like Erol, Ken believed nationally accredited training adds value to the organisation and its workers but felt frustrated at the amount of bureaucracy involved:

> 'My biggest downturn (sic) with training I think is the amount of paperwork. We just haven't got the time to sit down and do the paperwork that has to be done so basically we have to make time to do it.'

Along with all Riverside managers Ken was also a student of the organisation's Frontline Management program. He was undertaking the course

> 'basically to become a better manager… to pick up the skills and be better able to read people's minds, to treat each person differently and try and keep a happy working environment.'

Nancy was a waitress and Helen a kitchen hand at Riverside. Both were Certificate III in Hospitality learners with Head Chef Rick. This was their first accredited training program since leaving school many years before. They enjoyed Rick's 'hands-on' approach and preferred to complete almost the entire program with RPL applied for only in some of the most basic introductory skills. When the written material was used both agree that 'some of the books are a little double-Dutch'. As experienced workers without previous qualifications they believed the course might lead to a 'pay rise' and the option of a portable qualification to be used for jobs in other organisations.

Conclusion

In spite of early Riverside director resistance to the idea of nationally recognised training, the RTO training scheme championed by the Training Manager had proved to be a success for the training of existing workers. After an initial offering of RTO accredited training as an Riverside commercial venture the courses offered were later restricted to Riverside staff (apart from the community service of creating training places for VET in Schools students). This change occurred after the Riverside directors saw positive improvements in worker skills and productivity following the completion of accredited training programs. Workers also valued the training programs as a means of a pay rise, skills development and skills qualification portability.

Sing Tel Optus Pty Ltd Communications

Call centre industry: enterprise RTO

Andy Smith

Sing Tel Optus Pty Ltd Communications ('Optus') was Australia's second telecommunications carrier behind Telstra. Optus was launched in November 1991 immediately following the deregulation of the telecommunications market by the then federal Labor government. It was expected that, with deregulation, a number of privately owned telecommunications companies would move into the Australian market providing effective competition for the former Telecom Australian monopoly and thereby reduce costs and improve services for consumers. In the event, only Optus entered the telecommunications in a comprehensive way, challenging Telstra's dominance. A number of other companies entered the market in the 1990s such as Orange, but these were restricted to the lucrative mobile market. Only Optus attempted to challenge Telstra in all areas of the market.

In 1998, Optus was acquired by telecommunications giant, Cable and Wireless and became known as Cable and Wireless Optus. In order to compete with Telstra, Optus invested heavily in telecommunications infrastructure such as optical fibre networks, mobile phone towers and satellite technology.

In August 2001, Optus was acquired by SingTel, the Singaporean communications company and the largest telecommunications company in Asia. SingTel serves over 40 million customers in six major markets – Australia, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Optus was the largest of SingTel's subsidiaries and was acquired by SingTel in order not only to give the company a presence in the Australian telecommunications market but also to acquire the company's advanced technological base. However, SingTel operated Optus at arm's length, with the company run mainly by Australian managers.

Optus' most profitable operations were its mobile and business data services. Optus was particularly successful in the mobile area where it held around one third of the total Australian market. Optus serviced over 5 million customers and had an annual turnover of $5 billion – much of this customer base and turnover was generated by the mobile division. Optus employed approximately 11,000 people in four major locations – Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra. The acquisition of Optus by SingTel had had a significant impact on the structure of the company. Before the acquisition, it was not clear who would buy Optus, and the command was restructured into stand alone divisions – mobile, business, consumer etc – in order to make it attractive for potential buyers to acquire parts of the company separately. In the event, SingTel acquired the whole company but the highly divisionalised structure remains. This has had implications for training and development within the company.

Optus was divided into five major operating divisions:

- ✧ Mobile
- ✧ Optus Wholesale
- ✧ Optus Business
- ✧ Consumer and Multimedia (formerly separate divisions)
- ✧ Networks.

Optus was also serviced by a number of central, corporate divisions including Human Resources.

Method

The case study focused on the call centre operations of the Mobile division based at the Gordon call centre in Sydney. Interviews were carried out with a number of staff at the Gordon call centre and at Optus corporate HQ in North Sydney. Interviewees included:

- ✧ General Manager, Learning and Development
- ✧ Manager, Optus College
- ✧ Manager, Organisation Development
- ✧ Gordon Call Centre Manager
- ✧ NSW State Human Resource Consultant
- ✧ Call Centre trainer/assessor
- ✧ 4 customer service representatives

Training at Optus

The Learning and Development unit at Optus was located within the corporate Human Resources function. It was headed by the General Manager, Learning and Development who reported to the Director of Human Resources. Optus was a non-unionised company. As a result, industrial relations played little part in the human resources function in the company. However, learning and development occupied a very central role in the company's approach to HRM. At a corporate level, the learning and development function included Organisation Development which focused on management development, a small multi-media production group which produced e-learning materials for general use in the company and the RTO, known as Optus College. Each of the divisions also supported a Learning and Development Manager who reported to the divisional HR Manager but also had a functional accountability to the General Manager, Learning and Development. This mixture of centralised and decentralised HR functions was a legacy of the divisionalisation that occurred prior to the SingTel acquisition. The learning and development function was quite large, employing around 80 people, most of whom were trainers attached to the business divisions of the company and working for the divisional Learning and Development Managers. This was a testimony to the strength of the learning and development function within Optus that during the period immediately following the SingTel acquisition that no learning and development staff lost their jobs despite a significant workforce reduction of some 25 per cent.

Optus provided a range of learning and development programs for employees. Optus employed a large number of graduates and their training was structured through a graduate program in various specialisations – engineering, finance, sales and marketing etc. School leavers were also recruited by Optus as engineering cadets and could study towards a degree in engineering with the company. The company also offered a number of management development programs. These started with the 'Leaders of Tomorrow' program which was based on the Front-Line Manager program and was designed to train staff in the call centre operations of the company to progress to Team Leader positions. Beyond the Team Leader positions, management development tended to focus on on-the-job development including the use of development centres, coaching, mentoring, 360-degree feedback and attendance at external management development programs. At the time of writing, these programs were being re-structured by the Organisation Development Manager. For Senior Managers, the Executive Development program was run in conjunction with the Australian Graduate School of Management at the University of New South Wales and involved attendance at a number of specially designed programs over a four month period.

Optus College

A major and increasingly important part of the learning a development function at Optus was the Registered Training Organisation, known as Optus College. Optus College was first formed in 1999 and was located in the corporate Learning and Development function and had a remit to provide accredited training across the entire organisation. The motivation for the company to establish Optus College was to provide basic training for the ever increasing numbers of staff that were being hired to staff the call centre businesses in the various divisions. As the Optus College Manager said:

> 'The RTO was primarily set up for the Call Centre traineeship, and then we attached other qualifications as time went on.'

In the early days, costs also played an important role in the decision to establish an RTO. By moving to a model which focused on the on-the-job traineeship, the company realised that it could roll out a major training program to large numbers of new staff very quickly but without a heavy investment in the infrastructure of a traditional training department and classroom-based training. This model proved to be very successful for the company and for the learning and development function. The scope of Optus College expanded to include a greater number of qualifications. Including:

- ✧ Cert III in Telecommunications (Call Centres)
- ✧ Cert IV in Assessment and Workplace Training
- ✧ Cert III, IV and Diploma in Front line Management
- ✧ Cert IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Project Management.

The College was controlled by an internal Board of Management chaired by the General Manager, Learning and Development and comprising the Learning and Development Managers from the divisions. This helped to ensure that the qualifications that the College offers remained relevant to the business needs of the divisions within the company.

Involvement with nationally recognised training

Of the qualifications offered by the College, the Certificate III in Telecommunications was the largest single program. It was offered to all new customer service representatives (reps) when they joined one of the Optus call centres. Although the program was not mandatory, nearly all new employees undertook and completed the qualification which took 12 months. Since its inception in 1999, over 2,000 employees had completed the Cert III. The fast expansion of the Call Centre operations and the relatively high turnover of staff (up to 40 per cent) meant that, although the qualification was offered only to new staff, nearly all of the customer service reps, some 3000 in the mobile and consumer divisions, were undertaking or had completed the qualification. The company felt that this was not only important training from the point of view of increasing the skills of their call entire staff but also offered a significant level of employability to the employees who completed the qualification. At the end of the 12 month program, a graduation ceremony was held. As the Optus College Manager remarked:

> 'A lot of people really do value it (the qualification). We actually have a graduation ceremony three times a year and quite often we get a rep to speak about what the qualification has meant to them. Quite often we have had mature age students get up and say "This is the first qualification I've ever had and I can go home and say I'm really proud of this qualification".'

The training was based on a four week off-the-job induction program, although this varied from two to six weeks depending on the call centre. This training was mandatory for all new employees and was run by training staff from the learning and development function. In this

induction new staff learned the basics of how to deal with different types of customers and queries on the phone. They would often listen to recorded or live conversations of other reps. The training included role plays as well as product knowledge and was guided towards the competencies in the training package. Towards the end of the induction period the trainees would start to take live calls that were fed in from the call centre for the purpose. At the end of the off-the-job induction, the trainees were assessed on two scenarios.

On successful completion of the induction, the trainees were moved to an off-line call centre team, known as a Development Team. This was a 'live' team established in the same manner as a normal call centre team with about a dozen team members and a team leader. The development teams also had two trainers attached to them who were responsible for coaching the trainees through the calls that they received. The members of the development teams were not required to perform to the same standards as normal call centre teams and the performance statistics for the development teams were not included in the performance ratings for the call centres as a whole. This relieved the trainees of the pressure to perform to the company standard and enabled them to focus on developing their skills. Trainees would usually spend up to four weeks before they were transferred to an actual call centre team. In the development team there was the flexibility to pull trainees off the phones for training which was not possible in the normal teams. As one trainer put it:

> 'In the Development Team there is more flexibility to say 'Okay, we need to obviously go over some things with you' so we pull them off the phones for half an hour. Now that does not then affect the rest of the Centre, showing that we are one man (sic) down… By the time they leave the Development Team they are pretty much right to be up and running.'

At this stage, the training shifted into an on-the-job mode. The call centre teams were managed through a rigorous performance management system. The performance management system set tight standards for the time that reps spent on an individual query and the way in which the query was handled. The average handling time for each query was 330 seconds. This included the time spent taking the call from the customer as well as actioning any follow up that needed to occur to resolve the customer query. All calls were timed and the times were fed back to the Team Leaders in regular performance reports which highlighted the performance of individual members of the team. Calls were also regularly monitored for quality. Each rep would have eight calls per month listened to by trained quality assurance specialists, usually other reps in the call centre. The quality assurance specialists would produce a report on the way in which the call was handled and this information was given back to the Team Leader immediately.

Every month, Team Leaders held 'one on ones' with each of the dozen members of their team. The reps were rated on a four step scale from poor performance to highly commendable and the Team Leader would discuss the performance feedback from quality assurance with each rep. From these performance management meetings, the Team Leaders would decide whether the rep needed additional training. This training would be delivered in the form of on-the-job coaching. The coaching tasks in each team were handled by a Customer Service Support Representative (CSSR). The CSSR acted as both a senior customer rep and trainer within the team and would normally have up to 40 per cent of their work time dedicated to training and coaching activities. The CSSR also had responsibility for the training of the whole team in new product knowledge and procedure issues. Thus, the training for the reps was very closely linked into the performance management system in a tightly controlled environment. As one rep put it:

> 'It is pretty much controlled here. As well as discussing calls like in one on ones they can use it for behavioural concerns…..behaviours that were great and then, I guess any career development in that as well.'

The 'one on ones' were focused on improving the performance of the reps through the development actions that were agreed. As the Call Centre Manager described the process:

> 'The team leader will sit down with the rep in a one on one and put together a development plan. And they will set some specific targets and obviously it's not the Team Leader sitting down and saying ' this is what you're going to work towards'. It's a combined effort. A consultative approach. Sit down with the rep, get their view, what do they think they can do and try and set some short term and some medium term goals to get the rep to where we want them to be.'

The behaviour of the reps during their calls was also a crucial part of their training. Optus referred to the behaviours that they wanted to encourage in their reps as 'challenger behaviours'. This referred to Optus as a 'challenger' in the telecommunications market and so challenger behaviours referred to the way in which the Optus reps distinguished their level of service for customers from other competitors. These behaviours were described as Engage, Think and Deliver. Each of these behaviours was broken down into further behaviours. The call monitoring would rate the behaviours of the rep and the feedback report would highlight how well the rep performed in terms of the challenger behaviours. Any low rating would be flagged electronically to the Team Leader who would be expected to act on it immediately rather than wait for the monthly one on ones. The embedded nature of the training into the performance management system created an atmosphere of continual training. As one rep put it:

> 'There's more ongoing training. Every week they have new things up that we are learning … I think that is a really important thing, the fact that they are always giving us refreshers, like we get training folders every week. Two, sometimes three, folders a week.'

At the end of their first three months the reps underwent an assessment process combined with a development or probationary review (reps were on three month probation with Optus). This was carried out by the Team Leaders who acted as the assessors for the training program. A further review of the rep's performance was carried out at six months and again at nine months. The focus here was on career development within Optus and the final assessment occurred at 12 months when the reps completed their qualification and then went on to the formal graduation ceremony. The close link to career development for the call centre reps was emphasised by the generic title that Optus gave to this initial training – the Pathways program.

The purpose of the Certificate III training was to give the reps the basic customer service skills that they would require on the job. However, managers still had some reservations about the direct relevance of the training to the tightly controlled requirements of the job in the Call Centres. As one Call Centre Manager put it:

> 'In some areas it works and in some areas it doesn't. At the moment we get the competencies that we rate our reps against in the traineeship. They don't necessarily mirror what they are experienced to do in their role. The other thing when you look at the tools and resources that are provided to us for this particular traineeship, is that a lot of it is very manual; paperwork, sheets, that type of thing. When you look at our environment, everything is pretty much done on-line. In saying that … it is still obviously beneficial. But it just means that I think that Team Leaders who manage it well over the twelve month period get the value out of it. But people who don't manage it well, probably don't get the value out of it … I think that they (team leaders) probably see the traineeship as something different to the development, training and coaching that is required in our environment.'

Although the training was highly integrated into the performance management system used in the Call Centres, there was clearly some further work to be done on the integration and the customisation of the qualification for Optus. At the time of writing, Optus was reviewing the Pathways program to give a greater sense of the career development opportunities within the company and to tie the training more clearly into a career development process for reps and others at entry level in the company.

Although the training for Call Centre reps was the largest single program run by Optus College, the company had extended the use of nationally recognised training to other groups. All members of the Learning and Development function (some 80 staff) had completed the Cert IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. The other major area for nationally accredited training was for Team Leaders who underwent the Certificate IV in Frontline Management. Just as the Cert III in Telecommunications was the foundation for the Pathways program for Call Centre reps, the Cert IV in Frontline Management was the foundation for the Optus management development program, Leaders of Tomorrow. As with the Cert III in Telecommunications, the Cert IV in Front line Management was delivered primarily on-the-job with a number of activities that were designed to increase the supervisory experience of a call centre rep. The Call Centre Manager described the Leaders of Tomorrow program:

> '(It's) a 12 month course that looks at performance management, coaching, and those types of modules. The first step is to get the potential team leader coaching some of the team members, and then possibly assisting one of the Development Teams. They were building themselves up and building a profile to get a CSSR role in a team. Once they are at the CSSR level they can apply for this leadership front-line manager course. So there's a step by step process that they can go through from being a rep to being a team leader.'

The role of nationally recognised training at Optus

The original decision by Optus to establish an RTO and to use nationally recognised training for their call centre reps was driven by the need to train large numbers of people joining the call centre operations and by the availability of government funding to support the call centre traineeship. Establishing the RTO enabled Optus to deliver the training primarily on-the-job, for large numbers of employees and in a cost effective way. As the Optus College Manager describes it:

> *'We've realised the benefit of providing people with a qualification, particularly for the Call Centre reps because it is very difficult to provide them with any development opportunities, because they have to be on the phone all the time … This provides us with the opportunity to give them a qualification while they are on the job.'*

However, after that initial decision to establish the RTO, the company realised that there were more benefits to be gained for them in using nationally recognised training more widely and having an RTO to deliver and award the training. The provision of nationally recognised training enabled Optus to develop a reputation as an employer of choice in a tightening labour market and it also helped to develop visible career pathways for employees in the organisation. As the Optus College Manager put it:

> 'Last year we went through a period where we really had to weigh up 'Do we need this qualification?' Senior managers had to make a decision whether they wanted to keep it or not. So they made a decision that they wanted it because we provided our people with a qualification and it also supported career development…that was the main reason they kept it, regardless of the funding … to differentiate us, to provide people with that development.'

Thus, the use of nationally recognised training enabled Optus to link its requirements for skills development that was delivered primarily on-the-job to the need to give employees a visible career development pathway. As discussed above, the training was also very tightly linked to the performance management system. Thus, since its inception at Optus, nationally recognised training became increasingly central to the human resource strategy of the company. As the General Manager for Learning and Development explained it:

> 'In the broader sense, the learning and development function within the business is an enabler of continuous performance improvement. So that is around the development of fundamental skills that are required for the individual to be able to do their job… Mapping

> that back to what the Optus College or the Training Packages provide us is a formally structured link into that strategy; a means of providing consistency across the organisation. A nice outcome benefit of that approach is a nationally aligned, nationally recognised qualification … Another driver for going down the path of RTO status is that it provides us with an avenue to access other training packages and then to map those packages to our specific business needs.'

This is a succinct statement of the way in which nationally recognised training progressed at Optus from a cost effective means of providing high volume training to a central element in the company's entire human resource strategy. Optus was developing the strategic importance of nationally recognised training and Training Packages in the company still further by utilising the competencies in Training Packages to underpin the performance management system. As the Optus College Manager described it:

> 'Where we are now leading to is really focusing on career development. And we're using qualifications to support that progression. So they (qualifications) are becoming more important because they are a tool for career progression and the competency standards are being used to identify minimum standards. They are also being used in job descriptions to identify the core skills and knowledge that people need to know. So we're using it for more than just training.'

The company developed a Success Profile based on four sets of standards including Knowledge, Behaviours, Personal Attributes and Experience. A Success Profile could therefore be developed for any job in the organisation and could help the company identify the development needs of individuals who aspired to those jobs. In many cases, the standards for each of these components could be described very effectively by using the competencies developed for the relevant Training Package. This process of designing standards that could be used for both performance management for incumbents and development plans for aspirants was a major program for the Organisation Development section within Learning and Development at Optus.

The development of the silo-like divisional structure at Optus prior to the SingTel acquisition impeded effective management development in the company by making it more difficult for people to change division or function to gain the wider experience they required for promotion to senior management positions. The new approach to management development allowed the company to move people more freely around the organisation to gain the skills and experience they needed to move on. This process was being underwritten by the development of Success Profiles for groups of jobs in the organisation. Ass the Organisation Development manager described it, *'The success profile is a competency model that covers behaviours required for high performance, skills and knowledge, job challenges and experiences and some personal attributes.'*

These 'models' were built from feedback from focus groups of job holders but also from the competencies contained in the relevant training packages where there was a suitable qualification. The Organisation Development Manager described how she used the competencies in this process:

> 'I'm doing some work in Customer Service, starting out with the transition from Team Leader to Customer Service Centre Manager. And again, I used the qualifications as a guide. The Advanced Diploma in Customer Service management is my guide to build the profile and then what we can do is to say 'right, if you see these capabilities, you don't currently have, then that leads directly to doing the qualification over the next two years.'

In this way, the competencies contained in the Training Package were used not only to build the basis of the Success Profile for a job but also ensured that the appropriate qualification was tailored to fulfilling the requirements of individuals to gain the skills necessary to move into the job or simply perform at a higher standard.

Conclusion

Optus was making increasing use of nationally recognised training. Starting in 1999 with the establishment of the RTO, Optus College, the company initially used nationally recognised training to provide an on-the-job, cost effective solution to its high volume training needs. However, from these beginnings the training has become integrated very effectively into both the performance management and career development aspects of the company's human resources strategy. At Optus, these functions were central to the strategic mission of the Human Resources Division. By integrating the training into the performance management system and using the competencies in the Training Packages to develop standards for career progression in the company, the use of nationally recognised training has had a major impact on the way learning and development and the human resources function more generally operated in Optus.

Appendix B

Case study protocols

Case study protocols

Remind respondents that the project is about training for existing workers (who have been employed for more than three months)

Employee type	RTO	Partnership/purchase NRT	No NRT
HR Manager	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **GENERAL** • Industry area • Size of company & single site/multi-site; Australia-wide/State based • Any particular structural issues eg franchises • Rough numbers and types of workers; different occupations, full-time/part-time; industrial Awards; NESB • Labour turnover rates (high/medium/low) and any other relevant workforce issues	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **GENERAL** • Industry area • Size of company & single site/multi-site; Australia-wide/State based • Any particular structural issues eg franchises • Rough numbers and types of workers; different occupations, full-time/part-time; industrial Awards; NESB • Labour turnover rates (high/medium/low) and any other relevant workforce issues	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **GENERAL** • Industry area • Size of company & single site/multi-site; Australia-wide/State based • Any particular structural issues eg franchises • Rough numbers and types of workers; different occupations, full-time/part-time; industrial Awards; NESB • Labour turnover rates (high/medium/low) and any other relevant workforce issues

	TRAINING • Overview of training in the org –types, which workers etc • Its history and its status • What are the drivers of training? • How do you decide who gets training? • Is training in the enterprise agreement? • Any government funding of training? • Any legislated training requirements (eg OH&S, RSA) **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • Why do you use it? • How did your involvement come about? (prompt-champion?) • How do you use it (what groups of workers, extent, mainly generic units or technical?) • Existing worker appships/traineeships? • Delivery methods? Use of RPL? • Other uses of competency standards (prompt-non-certified training, use in performance mgt) • What were/are your sources of info • Perceived benefits	**TRAINING** • Overview of training in the org –types, which workers etc • Its history and its status • What are the drivers of training? • How do you decide who gets training? • Is training in the enterprise agreement? • Any government funding of training? • Any legislated training requirements (eg OH&S, RSA) **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • Why do you use it? • How did your involvement come about? (prompt-champion?) • How do you use it (what groups of workers, extent, mainly generic units or technical?) • Existing worker appships/traineeships? • Delivery methods? Use of RPL? • Other uses of competency standards (prompt-non-certified training, use in performance mgt) • What were/are your sources of info • Perceived benefits	**TRAINING** • Overview of training in the org –types, which workers etc • Its history and its status • What are the drivers of training? • How do you decide who gets training? • Is training in the enterprise agreement? • Any government funding of training? • Any legislated training requirements (eg OH&S, RSA) **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • Level of awareness? • Used in past? (why stopped?) • Thought about using? (why didn't?) • Barriers? • Use competency standards? (prompt-non-certified training, use in performance mgt)

	• Perceived disadvantages • Barriers/obstacles to using it • Training Packages-caused any changes? • Training Packages – advans (prompts: new industry areas, qual structures, ability to deliver in workplace, easy availability on NTIS • Training Packages - disadvans (prompts-straitjacket, slow to change) • Effects of NRT on HR function? • Has it created new jobs in the training area? **RTO** • Why become an RTO? • How did it come about? • Perceived benefits? • Perceived challenges? • Where does the RTO sit in the org? (Any comments) • Does the RTO deliver to people outside company? • Does the RTO do all the NRT in the org?	• Perceived disadvantages • Barriers/obstacles to using it • Training Packages-caused any changes? • Training Packages – advans (prompts: new industry areas, qual structures, ability to deliver in workplace, easy availability on NTIS • Training Packages - disadvans (prompts-straitjacket, slow to change) • Effects of NRT on HR function? **RELATIONSHIP WITH RTO(s)** • How many RTOs? • What type of partnership? • Why choose relationship rather than become an RTO? • Challenges of partnership? • Benefits of partnership? • Has it created new jobs for trainers/assessors within org?	

Training Manager/ RTO manager	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **TRAINING** • Overview of training in the org –types, which workers etc • Its history and its status • What are the drivers of training? • How do you decide who gets training? • Is training in the enterprise agreement? • Any government funding of training? • Any legislated training requirements (eg OH&S, RSA) **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • Why do you use it? • How did your involvement come about? (prompt-champion?) • How do you use it (what groups of workers, extent, mainly generic units or technical?) • Existing worker appships/traineeships?	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **TRAINING** • Overview of training in the org –types, which workers etc • Its history and its status • What are the drivers of training? • How do you decide who gets training? • Is training in the enterprise agreement? • Any government funding of training? • Any legislated training requirements (eg OH&S, RSA) **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • Why do you use it? • How did your involvement come about? (prompt-champion?) • How do you use it (what groups of workers, extent, mainly generic units or technical?) • Existing worker appships/traineeships?	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **TRAINING** • Overview of training in the org –types, which workers etc • Its history and its status • What are the drivers of training? • How do you decide who gets training? • Is training in the enterprise agreement? • Any government funding of training? • Any legislated training requirements (eg OH&S, RSA) **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • Level of awareness? • Used in past? (why stopped?) • Thought about using? (why didn't?) • Barriers? • Use competency standards? (prompt-non-certified training, use in performance mgt)

	• Delivery methods? Use of RPL? • Other uses of competency standards (prompt-non-certified training, use in performance mgt) • What were/are your sources of info • Perceived benefits • Perceived disadvantages • Barriers/obstacles to using it • Training Packages-caused any changes? • Training Packages – advans (prompts: new industry areas, qual structures, ability to deliver in workplace, easy availability on NTIS • Training Packages - disadvans (prompts-straitjacket, slow to change) • Extent of customisation? • Effects of NRT on HR function? • Has it created new jobs in the training area? **RTO** • Why become an RTO? • How did it come about? • Perceived benefits? • Perceived challenges?	• Delivery methods? Use of RPL? • Other uses of competency standards (prompt-non-certified training, use in performance mgt) • What were/are your sources of info • Perceived benefits • Perceived disadvantages • Barriers/obstacles to using it • Training Packages-caused any changes? • Training Packages – advans (prompts: new industry areas, qual structures, ability to deliver in workplace, easy availability on NTIS • Training Packages - disadvans (prompts-straitjacket, slow to change) • Effects of NRT on HR function? • Has it created new jobs in the training area? • Extent of customisation? **RELATIONSHIP WITH RTO(s)** • How many RTOs? • What type of partnership? • Why choose relationship rather than become an RTO?	

	• Where does the RTO sit in the org? (Any comments) • Does the RTO deliver to people outside company? • Does the RTO do all the NRT in the org? What groups of workers are trained by the RTO (Prompt-equity groups etc) • Delivery methods? • AQTF compliance issues? • % of RPL granted?	• Challenges of partnership? • Benefits of partnership? • Has it created new jobs for trainers/assessors within org? • Delivery/assessment methods? • % of RPL?	
Line manager *From the dept which is the biggest user of NRT/training*	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **TRAINING** • What training occurs in your dept? • How do people nominate/get selected for training? • Attractiveness of training to workers • Benefits of training to the dept?	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **TRAINING** • What training occurs in your dept? • How do people nominate/get selected for training? • Attractiveness of training to workers • Benefits of training to the dept?	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **TRAINING** • What training occurs in your dept? • How do people nominate/get selected for training? • Attractiveness of training to workers • Benefits of training to the dept?

	NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING • What training occurs and for which groups of workers? • Has it created any changes in the type of training and/or the attractiveness to workers? • Any special challenges or opportunities? • Relevance of NRT and extent of customisation to your needs? • Assessment methods? • Involvement of your staff in delivery/assessment? **RTO** • Does the fact that the org is an RTO affect the training your staff can access?	**NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • What training occurs and for which groups of workers? • Has it created any changes in the type of training and/or the attractiveness to workers? • Any special challenges or opportunities? • Relevance of NRT and extent of customisation to your needs? • Assessment methods? • Involvement of your staff in delivery/assessment? **RELATIONSHIP WITH RTO** • How does the relationship work? • challenges/opportunities? • Satisfaction with quality of training?	**NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • Do you know much about NRT? • Would you like to see NRT available for staff? If so, which groups and why? • Do you have views on why it has not been adopted? • Benefits and/or challenges of NRT?
Union rep *From the largest union*	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT

	TRAINING • Overview of training in the org –types, which workers etc • Its history and its status • What are the drivers of training? • How do you decide who gets training? • Is training in the enterprise agreement? • Any government funding of training? • Any legislated training requirements (eg OH&S, RSA) **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • What training occurs and for which groups of workers? • Has it created any changes in the type of training and/or the attractiveness to workers? • Any special challenges or opportunities? • Relevance of NRT and extent of customisation to needs of workers? • Assessment methods? • Involvement of your staff in delivery/assessment?	**TRAINING** • Overview of training in the org –types, which workers etc • Its history and its status • What are the drivers of training? • How do you decide who gets training? • Is training in the enterprise agreement? • Any government funding of training? • Any legislated training requirements (eg OH&S, RSA) **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • What training occurs and for which groups of workers? • Has it created any changes in the type of training and/or the attractiveness to workers? • Any special challenges or opportunities? • Relevance of NRT and extent of customisation to your needs? • Assessment methods? • Involvement of your staff in delivery/assessment?	**TRAINING** • Overview of training in the org –types, which workers etc • Its history and its status • What are the drivers of training? • How do you decide who gets training? • Is training in the enterprise agreement? • Any government funding of training? • Any legislated training requirements (eg OH&S, RSA) **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • Do you know much about NRT? • Would you like to see NRT available for staff? If so, which groups and why? • Do you have views on why it has not been adopted? • Benefits and/or challenges of NRT?

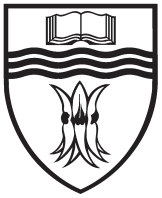
	RTO • Does the fact that the org is an RTO affect the training staff can access?	**RELATIONSHIP WITH RTO** • How does the relationship work? • challenges/opportunities? • Satisfaction with quality of training?	
Trainers/ assessors x 2 *Interview together*	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • What training/assessment do you deliver and for which groups of workers? • Has it created any changes in the type of training and/or the attractiveness to the workers? • Any special challenges or opportunities? • Relevance of NRT and extent of customisation that you carry out? • Assessment methods? Use of RPL? • How has your job changed with NRT? • Effects of AQTF? **RTO** • Does the fact that the org is an RTO affect the training/assessment you deliver?	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • What training occurs and for which groups of workers? • What RTOs do you have relationships with and what type of partnership? • What is your involvement with the RTO? • Has NRT created any changes in the type of training and/or the attractiveness to workers? • Any special challenges or opportunities? • Relevance of NRT and extent of customisation of training? • Assessment methods? Use of RPL? • How has you job changed with NRT? • Effects of AQTF?	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • Do you know much about NRT? • Would you like to see NRT available for staff? If so, which groups and why? • Do you have views on why it has not been adopted? • Benefits and/or challenges of NRT?

1 group of workers *From the dept which is the biggest user of NRT/training*	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • What training occurs and for which groups of workers? • Has it created any changes in the type of training and/or the attractiveness to you or other workers? • Any special challenges or opportunities? • Relevance of NRT and extent of customisation to your needs or those of other workers? • Assessment methods? Have you got RPL? • Are you involved in delivery/assessment? **RTO** • Does the fact that the org is an RTO affect the training you or other workers can access?	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • What training occurs and for which groups of workers? • Has it created any changes in the type of training and/or the attractiveness to you or other workers? • Any special challenges or opportunities? • Relevance of NRT and extent of customisation to your needs or those of other workers? • Assessment methods? Have you got RPL? • Are you involved in delivery/assessment? **RELATIONSHIP WITH RTO** • How does the relationship work? • challenges/opportunities? • Satisfaction with quality of training?	**PERSONAL** • Your own career background • Quals • Previous involvement with NRT **NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING** • Do you know much about NRT? • Would you like to see NRT available for staff? If so, what quals or areas of training?

Appendix C

Questionnaires

CHARLES STURT
UNIVERSITY



ENTERPRISES' COMMITMENT TO NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING FOR EXISTING WORKERS

Questionnaire for Human Resource Managers

We are interested in the reasons why companies choose or don't choose to use nationally recognised training and therefore would like to hear from you even if you do not use it.

Vocational Education & Training Research Group

This survey is about the use of **nationally recognised training** in enterprises. It focuses on training for workers who have been with you for a while (3 months or more) – not on induction and up-front skills training for new entrants. However a few questions about new entrants are included, just to give us a better picture of your overall training activity.

By **nationally recognised training** we mean training in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector that leads to a qualification (Certificate I to IV, Diploma or Advanced Diploma) under the Australian Qualifications Framework or to a Statement of Attainment covering one or more units of competency. As well as qualifications from national Training Packages we also include non-Training Package qualifications that may be registered with particular State or Territory Training Authorities. Only a Registered Training Organisation (including TAFE) can award a qualification or Statement of Attainment.

Please note: We don't include university courses, Workcover or similar accredited courses, or proprietary courses such as International Computer Drivers Licence or CISCO courses

We are interested in the reasons why companies choose or don't choose to use nationally recognised training and therefore would like to hear from you even if you do not use it.

Please note that we have tried to design questions that you will be able to answer without referring to documentation; where figures or percentages are asked for, we only expect estimates.

The questionnaire has been approved by the Commonwealth Government Statistical Clearing House (Approval no. 01440-01)

About your organisation and its staff

1 **How many employees are in your entire organisation in Australia?** Total.....

2 **How many employees are covered by the area of the organisation for which you provide the HR/ training service or administration?** Total.....

3 **For the area for which you provide the HR/training service or administration, please estimate the percentage of employees in the following classifications:**

Full-time permanent	
Part-time permanent	
Casual	
Contractors	
	100%

4 **For the area for which you provide the HR/training service, please estimate the percentage of employees who are members of a trade union?** Approx %.....

5 **Does your organisation have a formal training committee?**

☐ No (go to Question 7) ☐ Yes

6 **If yes, does the committee include a trade union or other employee representative (s)?**
Tick as many as apply

☐ No ☐ Yes, trade union representative ☐ Yes, other employee representative

7 **In what industry sector is your organisation (eg retail, mining, local government)?**

Please state.....

.....

8 **Over the last five years, has *your organisation***

☐ expanded its operations? ☐ stayed about the same? ☐ reduced its operations?

9 **Over the last five years, has the number of permanent employees in y*our organisation***

☐ increased? ☐ stayed about the same? ☐ declined?

10 **Over the last five years, in your opinion, has the use of technology in *your industry***

☐ increased rapidly? ☐ increased steadily? ☐ undergone no real change? ☐ declined?

11 **Over the last five years, in your opinion, have the skill needs of *your industry***

☐ increased rapidly? ☐ increased steadily? ☐ undergone no real change? ☐ declined?

12 **Over the last five years, in your opinion, have the skill needs of *your organisation***

☐ increased rapidly? ☐ increased steadily? ☐ undergone no real change? ☐ declined?

About your organisation's use of apprenticeships and traineeships

13 Do you employ *apprentices* as new workers? (including through a Group Training Organisation)

☐ No, we do not employ apprentices as new workers

☐ Yes, routinely ☐ Yes, sometimes

14 Do you employ *trainees* as new workers? (including through a Group Training Organisation)
(Please include only those in formal traineeship contracts.)

☐ No, we do not employ trainees as new workers

☐ Yes, routinely ☐ Yes, sometimes

15 Since January 2002, have you offered training to existing workers by way of traineeships or apprenticeships?
(*By 'existing workers' we mean staff who had already been working for you for three months or longer. In your answer to this question only, please also include part-time workers who have been employed for less than 12 months)*

☐ No, we have never trained existing workers in traineeships or apprenticeships **(go to Q 20)**

☐ Yes, we have a definite policy to train existing workers in traineeships or apprenticeships

☐ Yes, we have sometimes trained existing workers in traineeships or apprenticeships

16 If yes, what is the main reason you have trained existing workers in traineeships or apprenticeships?

Please state.....

.....

For your existing worker apprentices and trainees please answer the following three questions:

17 Approximately how many existing workers have been trained since January 2002? .....

18 Approximately what percentage of these workers have received their qualifications solely on the basis of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Recognition of Current Competence (RCC)? .....

19 For the workers who received some training as well as RPL/RCC services, please state the amount of RPL/RCC that was awarded on average, in general? *(we do not expect exact answers)*

☐ No RCC/RPL awarded ☐ Less than half the qualification

☐ More than half the qualification ☐ Don't know/not recorded

About your organisation's training structures and practices

20 Compared with similar organisations in your industry, do you think you do

☐ More training ☐ About the same amount of training ☐ Less training

21 In your organisation, what are the main 'drivers' of training for existing staff (not apprentices and trainees recruited from outside)? ***Please put one tick on each line.***

	Not important	Some importance	Very important
New technology			
OH&S requirements			
Market pressures			
Quality			
Business strategy			
Demand from employees			
Organisation change			
Other, please specify ..... *please restrict yourself to one 'other' only*			

22 Does your organisation have a training department or unit?

☐ No ☐ Yes

If **yes**, how many employees are employed *solely* in the training department

Total.....

23 Does your organisation have? ***Please put one tick on each line.***

	Yes	No	Don't know
A written training strategy or implementation plan			
A training manager			
Workplace trainers/instructors, part of whose job is to train or assess			
A separate training budget			
A scheme to reimburse employees for course fees for external courses [please exclude apprentices or trainees]			
Training based on formal training needs analyses			

24 Since January 2002 has your organisation purchased/paid for training for your employees from any of the following external providers? Please include cases where the provider comes on-site and also where your staff attend the provider or study by distance. ***Please put one tick on each line.***
(Please do not include training for apprentices and trainees recruited from outside.)

	No	A little	Some	A lot
TAFE Colleges				
Private training providers				
Equipment & product suppliers				
Employer associations				
Other, please specify..... *please restrict yourself to one 'other' only*				

25 For existing workers (ie excluding newly-recruited apprentices and trainees), have you been able to obtain any government (State or Commonwealth) or industry funds to assist with training since January 2002? *Tick all that apply.*

☐ No ☐ Commonwealth New Apprentice incentive payments for apprenticeships/traineeships

☐ Commonwealth - other (eg WELL) ☐ State Training Authority user choice funding

☐ State Training Authority – other (eg Ticket for Training, CTP)

☐ Industry (eg Construction industry levy training fund)

Please make any comments that you wish about government or industry funding for training

.....

.....

About your involvement with nationally recognised training

Please refer back to the definition of Nationally Recognised Training on the inside front cover

Although training for newly-recruited apprentices and trainees is important, we are not researching this type of training in this study and ask you to exclude these workers from your answers.

26 How much do you know about these features of nationally recognised training?

	Nothing at all	Heard of name only	Know a little about	Know a lot about
National competency standards				
Training Packages				
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)/recognition of current competence (RCC)				
Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)				
New Apprenticeships				
User choice				

27 What are the sources of your knowledge about nationally recognised training? ***Tick all that apply.***

☐ Have no knowledge ☐ TAFE or other Registered Training Organisation

☐ Australian National Training Authority ☐ State Training Authority (eg DET, OTTE)

☐ Employer/industry association ☐ Trade unions ☐ New Apprenticeship Centre

☐ National Industry Training Advisory Body (ITAB) ☐ State ITAB

☐ Group Training Organisation ☐ Other.....

Please state the source from which you get the most useful information.....

.....

28 What has been the involvement of you or your organisation in the development or review of national Training Packages in your industry areas?
Training Packages are nationally developed collections of competency standards grouped into qualifications. They have been in use since 1997 although in some industries their introduction was later.

☐ No involvement, to my knowledge ☐ On national steering committee

☐ Commented on drafts ☐ Attended consultation

29 Do you use nationally recognised competency standards as the basis of any training for existing workers in your organisation? *(this could include their use for training that does not attract a qualification/Statement of Attainment as well as training that does)*
Tick any that apply.

☐ No ☐ Yes, national **industry** competency standards from a Training Package

☐ Yes, nationally-recognised **enterprise** competency standards from a Training Package

30 Do you use competency standards as the basis for any of these other activities? *Tick as many as apply.*

☐ In writing job descriptions ☐ In job evaluation/classification

☐ In performance management ☐ In recruitment and selection

☐ Other (please state).....

31 Has your organisation provided or purchased nationally recognised training for any existing workers since January 2002?
(Please refer back to the definition of nationally recognised training on the inside front cover. You might provide this training through a partnership with an RTO or by one-off or occasional arrangements with an RTO).
Please do not include apprentices and trainees newly recruited from outside nor cases where you pay for staff to undertake study in their own time.

☐ No **(go to Question 53)** ☐ Yes

32 Please estimate the percentage of your employees that have been involved in the following types of training since January 2002.
Nationally recognised training .....*%*

Formal or structured training that is not nationally recognised..... *%*

33 Please estimate the percentage of each of the following groups that have undertaken some form of formal training activity since January 2002. *Formal or structured training means here off-the-job courses or on-the-job training carried out according to a written plan*

Nationally recognised training	Percent of group	**Formal or structured training that is not nationally recognised**	Percent of group
Professional		Professional	
Managers		Managers	
Technical/trades		Technical/trades	
Clerical/Admin		Clerical/Admin	
Operational/shop floor		Operational/shop floor	

34 For what *occupations/jobs* within your organisation do you provide or broker nationally recognised training (eg gardeners, machine operators, supervisors)? *List the top five, in approximate order of number of employees involved.*

1. (Largest number of employees involved) .....
2. .....
3. .....
4. .....
5. .....

35 List in order of importance up to three reasons why your organisation decided to provide or purchase nationally recognised training

1. (Most important) .....
2. .....
3. .....

36 Are complete qualifications or just Statements of Attainment issued to your existing workers?

☐ Statements of Attainment only **(go to Q 38)** ☐ Qualifications only ☐ Some of each

37 Where full qualifications are delivered please list in order of frequency the AQF qualification levels awarded (start with 1 with the qualification level most frequently awarded and leave any blank that are never awarded)

☐ Certificate I ☐ Certificate II ☐ Certificate III

☐ Certificate IV ☐ Diploma ☐ Advanced Diploma

Please comment if you wish.....

.....

38 How important was the availability of government funding for nationally recognised training in your organisation's decision to use nationally recognised training?

☐ Very important ☐ Of some importance

☐ Not important ☐ No funding available, to my knowledge ☐ Don't know

39 Since your organisation has been using nationally recognised training, has the total amount of *all* training in your organisation:

☐ Increased considerably? ☐ Increased somewhat? ☐ Undergone no real change?

☐ Don't know

40 If the total amount of training has increased please say whether you think this is attributable to:

☐ Don't know ☐ The availability of nationally-recognised training ☐ Some other reason

Please state other reason if applicable .....

.....

41 Please list in order of importance up to three benefits to your organisation of involvement with nationally recognised training.

1. (Most important).....
2. .....
3. .....

42 Please list in order of importance up to three problems or difficulties associated with your organisation's involvement with nationally recognised training.

1. (Most important) .....
2. .....
3. .....

43 Has the introduction of Training Packages facilitated the provision of nationally recognised training for your workers? *(see definition of Training Packages at Question 28)*

☐ No Please comment .....

☐ Yes Please comment .....

Do you have any additional comments about Training Packages?

.....

.....

.....

44 Is the nationally recognised training you provide to, or purchase for, your employees customised to the specific needs of your organisation?

☐ Customised to a great extent

☐ Customised somewhat

☐ Not customised or only customised in very minor ways

45 In general, which of the following nationally recognised training services do your workers most commonly receive? *Tick one only.*

☐ Training (including assessment) ***(Go to Question 48)***

☐ Assessment/RPL services only

☐ Sometimes training and sometimes assessment-only

46 If you ticked the second or third box at Question 45, please say for what purpose(s) you provide or purchase assessment-only/RPL for your employees?

.....

.....

.....

47 Has the outcome of these assessment-only/RPL processes generally been satisfactory?

☐ Generally very satisfactory

☐ Somewhat satisfactory

☐ Not satisfactory. *Please comment* .....

48 What involvement do your own organisation's staff have in the assessment of staff undergoing nationally-recognised training or assessment-only/RPL processes?
Tick one only, for the most commonly occurring scenario.

☐ No involvement in assessment

☐ Partner in assessment: Our own staff are workplace-assessor qualified

☐ Partner in assessment: Our own staff are not workplace-assessor qualified

☐ Other .....

49 What arrangement(s) do you have with an RTO or RTOs? *(Please remember that nationally recognised training means training that leads to a formal qualification or statement of attainment which must be awarded by an RTO.)* ***Tick as many as apply.***

A formal partnership with an RTO or RTOs	☐ TAFE	☐ non-TAFE
An informal but on-going partnership with an RTO or RTOs	☐ TAFE	☐ non-TAFE
Ad hoc arrangements with RTO(s) as necessary	☐ TAFE	☐ non-TAFE

If you have ticked more than one box please nominate the most important and comment.

.....

50 In general is the nationally recognised training/assessment provided: Tick one box only

☐ Mostly at the RTO premises ☐ Mostly onsite delivered by our trainers and moderated by RTO

☐ Mostly on-site delivered by RTO ☐ Other (give details)

51 Have you considered becoming an RTO?

☐ No

☐ Yes *Please state the main reason why you decided not to become an RTO*.....

.....

☐ Have been an RTO but are not any more. *Please state the main reason why you stopped being an RTO*

.....

52 Do you have any additional comments about nationally recognised training?

.....

.....

.....

End of questionnaire

IMPORTANT NOTE

Please complete the rest of the survey ONLY if you answered 'No' to Q31

53 Please estimate the percentage of your employees that have been involved in formal or structured training since January 2002 (please include either off-the-job courses or on-the-job training carried out according to a written plan) ..... %

54 Please estimate the percentage of each of the following groups who have undertaken some form of formal or structured training activity since January 2002

Formal or structured training	Percent of group
Professional	
Managers	
Technical/trades	
Clerical / Admin	
Operational/shop floor	

55 Have you used nationally recognised training in the past for existing workers?

☐ No (Go to Question 57) ☐ Yes as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

☐ Yes in an arrangement with an RTO

56 If yes, please list in order of importance up to three reasons why you no longer do so

1. (Most important) .....
2. .....
3. .....

57 If you have never used nationally recognised training, has your organisation considered involvement in nationally recognised training?

☐ No ☐ Yes as an RTO

☐ Yes in partnership with an RTO ☐ Yes on an ad hoc basis with an RTO

58 If yes, please list in order of importance up to three reasons why you have not gone ahead with involvement.

1. (Most important) .....
2. .....
3. .....

59 Have you considered the use of assessment-only/Recognition of Prior Learning services for your employees?

☐ No ☐ Yes, and may use it ☐ Yes, and decided against it

If 'yes and may use it': for what purpose(s) would you provide assessment-only/RPL for your employees?

.....

.....

If 'yes and decided against it': could you say why you decided against it?

.....

.....

60 Do you have any additional comments about nationally recognised training?

.....

.....

.....

Please state approximate time taken to complete the questionnaire (in minutes) ☐

****

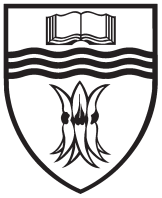
If you have any queries about the questionnaire please contact Erica Smith on 02-6933 2087 or esmith@csu.edu.au

Please return in the envelope provided, by November 26th, to: School of Education, VET Research Project, Charles Sturt University, Locked Bag 588, Wagga Wagga, NSW 2678

You can see more about the project under 'current projects' on the web site http://www.csu.edu.au/faculty/educat/edu/vetfolder/research/index.html

Thank you very much for your assistance which is greatly appreciated.

CHARLES STURT
UNIVERSITY



ENTERPRISES' COMMITMENT TO NATIONALLY RECOGNISED TRAINING FOR EXISTING WORKERS

Questionnaire for enterprise RTOs

Vocational Education & Training Research Group

This survey is about the use of **nationally recognised training** in enterprises. It focuses on training for workers who have been with you for a while (3 months or more) – not on induction and up-front skills training for new entrants. However a few questions about new entrants are included, just to give us a better picture of your overall training activity.

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Please note that we have tried to design questions that you will be able to answer without referring to documentation; where figures or percentages are asked for, we only expect estimates.

The questionnaire has been approved by the Commonwealth Government Statistical Clearing House (Approval no. 01440-01)

About your organisation and its staff

1 **How many employees are in your entire organisation in Australia?** Total.....

2 **How many employees are covered by the area of the organisation for which you provide a training service?**

Total.....

3 **For the area for which you provide a training service, please estimate the percentage of employees in the following classifications:**

Full-time permanent	
Part-time permanent	
Casual	
Contractors	
	100%

4 **For the area for which you provide a training service, please estimate the percentage of employees who are members of a trade union?**

Approx %.....

5 **Does your organisation have a formal training committee?**

☐ No (go to Question 7) ☐ Yes

6 **If yes, does the committee include a trade union or other employee representative (s)?**

Tick as many as apply

☐ No ☐ Yes, trade union representative ☐ Yes, other employee representative

7 **In what industry sector is your organisation (eg retail, mining, local government)?**

Please state.....

.....

8 **Over the last five years, has *your organisation***

☐ expanded its operations? ☐ stayed about the same? ☐ reduced its operations?

9 **Over the last five years, has the number of permanent employees in y*our organisation***

☐ increased? ☐ stayed about the same? ☐ declined?

10 **Over the last five years, in your opinion, has the use of technology in *your industry***

☐ increased rapidly? ☐ increased steadily? ☐ undergone no real change? ☐ declined?

11 **Over the last five years, in your opinion, have the skill needs of *your industry***

☐ increased rapidly? ☐ increased steadily? ☐ undergone no real change? ☐ declined?

12 **Over the last five years, in your opinion, have the skill needs of *your organisation***

☐ increased rapidly? ☐ increased steadily? ☐ undergone no real change? ☐ declined?

About your organisation's use of apprenticeships and traineeships

13 Do you employ *apprentices* as new workers? (including through a Group Training Organisation)

☐ No, we do not employ apprentices as new workers

☐ Yes, routinely ☐ Yes, sometimes

14 Do you employ *trainees* as new workers? (including through a Group Training Organisation)
(Please include only those in formal traineeship contracts.)

☐ No, we do not employ trainees as new workers

☐ Yes, routinely ☐ Yes, sometimes

15 Since January 2002, have you offered training to existing workers by way of traineeships or apprenticeships?
(*By 'existing workers' we mean staff who had already been working for you for three months or longer. In your answer to this question only, please also include part-time workers who have been employed for less than 12 months)*

☐ No, we have never trained existing workers in traineeships or apprenticeships **(go to Q 20)**

☐ Yes, we have a definite policy to train existing workers in traineeships or apprenticeships

☐ Yes, we have sometimes trained existing workers in traineeships or apprenticeships

16 If yes, what is the main reason you have trained existing workers in traineeships or apprenticeships?

Please state.....

.....

For your existing worker apprentices and trainees please answer the following three questions:

17 Approximately how many existing workers have been trained since January 2002? .....

18 Approximately what percentage of these workers have received their qualifications solely on the basis of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Recognition of Current Competence (RCC)? .....

19 For the workers who received some training as well as RPL/RCC services, please state the amount of RPL/RCC that was awarded on average, in general? *(we do not expect exact answers)*

☐ No RCC/RPL awarded ☐ Less than half the qualification

☐ More than half the qualification ☐ Don't know/not recorded

About your organisation's training structures and practices

20 Compared with similar organisations in your industry, do you think you do

☐ More training ☐ About the same amount of training ☐ Less training

21 In your organisation, what are the main 'drivers' of training for existing staff (not apprentices and trainees recruited from outside)? ***Please put one tick on each line.***

	Not important	Some importance	Very important
New technology			
OH&S requirements			
Market pressures			
Quality			
Business strategy			
Demand from employees			
Organisation change			
Other, please specify ..... *please restrict yourself to one 'other' only*			

22 Does your organisation have a training department or unit?

☐ No ☐ Yes

If **yes**, how many employees are employed *solely* in the training department

Total.....

23 Does your organisation have? ***Please put one tick on each line.***

	Yes	No	Don't know
A written training strategy or implementation plan			
A training manager			
Workplace trainers/instructors, part of whose job is to train or assess			
A separate training budget			
A scheme to reimburse employees for course fees for external courses [please exclude apprentices or trainees]			
Training based on formal training needs analyses			

24 Since January 2002 has your organisation purchased/paid for training for your employees from any of the following external providers? Please include cases where the provider comes on-site and also where your staff attend the provider or study by distance. ***Please put one tick on each line.***
(Please do not include training for apprentices and trainees recruited from outside.)

	No	A little	Some	A lot
TAFE Colleges				
Private training providers				
Equipment & product suppliers				
Employer associations				
Other, please specify..... *please restrict yourself to one 'other' only*				

25 For existing workers (ie excluding newly-recruited apprentices and trainees), have you been able to obtain any government (State or Commonwealth) or industry funds to assist with training since January 2002? *Tick all that apply.*

☐ No ☐ Commonwealth New Apprentice incentive payments for apprenticeships/traineeships

☐ Commonwealth - other (eg WELL) ☐ State Training Authority user choice funding

☐ State Training Authority – other (eg Ticket for Training, CTP)

☐ Industry (eg Construction industry levy training fund)

Please make any comments that you wish about government or industry funding for training

.....

.....

About your involvement with nationally recognised training

Please refer back to the definition of Nationally Recognised Training on the inside front cover

Although training for newly-recruited apprentices and trainees is important, we are not researching this type of training in this study and ask you to exclude these workers from your answers.

26 How much do you know about these features of nationally recognised training?

	Nothing at all	Heard of name only	Know a little about	Know a lot about
National competency standards				
Training Packages				
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)/recognition of current competence (RCC)				
Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)				
New Apprenticeships				
User choice				

27 What are the sources of your knowledge about nationally recognised training? ***Tick all that apply.***

☐ Have no knowledge ☐ TAFE or other Registered Training Organisation

☐ Australian National Training Authority ☐ State Training Authority (eg DET, OTTE)

☐ Employer/industry association ☐ Trade unions ☐ New Apprenticeship Centre

☐ National Industry Training Advisory Body (ITAB) ☐ State ITAB

☐ Group Training Organisation ☐ Other.....

Please state the source from which you get the most useful information.....

.....

28 What has been the involvement of you or your organisation in the development or review of national Training Packages in your industry areas?

Training Packages are nationally developed collections of competency standards grouped into qualifications. They have been in use since 1997 although in some industries their introduction was later.

☐ No involvement, to my knowledge ☐ On national steering committee

☐ Commented on drafts ☐ Attended consultation

29 Do you use nationally recognised competency standards as the basis of any training for existing workers in your organisation? *(this could include their use for training that does not attract a qualification/Statement of Attainment as well as training that does)*
Tick any that apply.

☐ No ☐ Yes, national **industry** competency standards from a Training Package

☐ Yes, nationally-recognised **enterprise** competency standards from a Training Package

30 Do you use competency standards as the basis for any of these other activities? *Tick as many as apply.*

☐ In writing job descriptions ☐ In job evaluation/classification

☐ In performance management ☐ In recruitment and selection

☐ Other (please state).....

.

31 Has your organisation provided or purchased nationally recognised training for any existing workers since January 2002?
Please do not include apprentices and trainees newly recruited from outside nor cases where you pay for staff to undertake study in their own time.

☐ No ☐ Yes

32 Please estimate the percentage of your employees that have been involved in the following types of training since January 2002.
Nationally recognised training .....*%*

Formal or structured training that is not nationally recognised..... *%*

33 Please estimate the percentage of each of the following groups that have undertaken some form of formal training activity since January 2002. *Formal or structured training means here off-the-job courses or on-the-job training carried out according to a written plan*

Nationally recognised training	Percent of group	**Formal or structured training that is not nationally recognised**	Percent of group
Professional		Professional	
Managers		Managers	
Technical/trades		Technical/trades	
Clerical/Admin		Clerical/Admin	
Operational/shop floor		Operational/shop floor	

34 For what *occupations/jobs* within your organisation do you provide or broker nationally recognised training (eg gardeners, machine operators, supervisors)? *List the top five, in approximate order of number of employees involved.*

1. (Largest number of employees involved) .....
2. .....
3. .....
4. .....
5. .....

35 List in order of importance up to three reasons why your organisation decided to provide or purchase nationally recognised training

1. (Most important) .....
2. .....
3. .....

36 Are complete qualifications or just Statements of Attainment issued to your existing workers?

☐ Statements of Attainment only **(go to Q 38)** ☐ Qualifications only ☐ Some of each

37 Where full qualifications are delivered please list in order of frequency the AQF qualification levels awarded (start with 1 with the qualification level most frequently awarded and leave any blank that are never awarded)

☐ Certificate I ☐ Certificate II ☐ Certificate III

☐ Certificate IV ☐ Diploma ☐ Advanced Diploma

Please comment if you wish.....

.....

38 How important was the availability of government funding for nationally recognised training in your organisation's decision to use nationally recognised training?

☐ Very important ☐ Of some importance

☐ Not important ☐ No funding available, to my knowledge ☐ Don't know

39 Since your organisation has been using nationally recognised training, has the total amount of *all* training in your organisation:

☐ Increased considerably? ☐ Increased somewhat? ☐ Undergone no real change?

☐ Don't know

40 If the total amount of training has increased please say whether you think this is attributable to:

☐ Don't know ☐ The availability of nationally-recognised training ☐ Some other reason

Please state other reason if applicable .....

.....

41 **Please list in order of importance up to three benefits to your organisation of involvement with nationally recognised training.**

Please note we will be asking a bit further on about being an RTO-please try to confine yourself in the current question to nationally recognised training more generally.

1 (Most important) .....

2. .....

3. .....

42 **Please list in order of importance up to three problems or difficulties associated with your organisation's involvement with nationally recognised training.**
Please note we will be asking a bit further on about being an RTO-please try to confine yourself in the current question to nationally recognised training more generally.

1. (Most important) .....

2. .....

3. .....

43 **Has the introduction of Training Packages facilitated the provision of nationally recognised training for your workers?** *(see definition of Training Packages at Question 28)*

☐ No Please comment .....

☐ Yes Please comment .....

Do you have any additional comments about Training Packages?

.....

.....

.....

44 **Is the nationally recognised training you provide to, or purchase for, your employees customised to the specific needs of your organisation?**

☐ Customised to a great extent

☐ Customised somewhat

☐ Not customised or only customised in very minor ways

45 **In general, which of the following nationally recognised training services do your workers most commonly receive?** *Tick one only.*

☐ Training (including assessment) ***(Go to Question 48)*** ☐ Assessment/RPL services only

☐ Sometimes training and sometimes assessment-only

46 **If you ticked the second or third box at Question 45, please say for what purpose(s) you provide assessment-only/RPL for your employees?**

.....

.....

.....

47 **Has the outcome of these assessment-only/RPL processes generally been satisfactory?**

☐ Generally very satisfactory

☐ Somewhat satisfactory

☐ Not satisfactory. Please comment.....

.....

About your experiences as an RTO

48 **How long has your organisation been an RTO?**

.....years

49 **In what State or Territory was the RTO registration processed?**

.....

50 **Please list in order of importance up to three things that assisted your organisation in becoming an RTO.**
Please consider things within the organisation as well as external to it.

1. (Most important) .....
2. .....
3. .....

51 **Please list in order of importance up to three difficulties/challenges in becoming an RTO.**
Please consider difficulties/challenges within the organisation as well as external to it.

1. (Most important) .....
2. .....
3. .....

52 **How many Training Packages and non-Training Package qualifications do you have on your scope of registration?**

..... Training Packages

..... Non- Training Package qualifications

53 **To whom in the organisation does the RTO manager report?**
Please give job title not name

.....

54 **Please list in order of importance up to three reasons why your organisation became an RTO rather than work in partnership with an RTO or purchase training services as required.**

1. (Most important) .....
2. .....
3. .....

55 **Please list in order of importance up to three benefits that have accrued from being an RTO**.
In your answer please answer for 'being an RTO' as opposed to 'offering nationally-recognised training' (which you answered at Question 41)

1. (Most important) .....
2. .....
3. .....

56 **Do you intend to renew your registration as an RTO?**

☐ No ☐ Yes, into the indefinite future

☐ Yes, but initially only in our next audit ☐ Unsure at the moment

Please comment .....

.....

57 **Do you provide nationally recognised training to outside organisations or individuals?**

Tick one box on each line

	NONE	A LITTLE	A GREAT DEAL
Training to outside organisations	☐	☐	☐
Training to outside individuals	☐	☐	☐

If you do provide such training, please give details .....

.....

58 **Do you have any partnerships/arrangements with another RTO or RTOs related to the delivery of accredited training?**

☐ No ☐ Yes

If yes, please describe the relationship

.....

.....

59 **Do you have any additional comments about nationally recognised training?**

.....

.....

Please state approximate time taken to complete the questionnaire (in minutes) ☐

If you have any queries about the questionnaire please contact Erica Smith on 02-6933 2087 or esmith@csu.edu.au

Please return in the envelope provided, by November 26th, to: School of Education, VET Research Project, Charles Sturt University, Locked Bag 588, Wagga Wagga, NSW 2678

You can see more about the project under 'current projects' on the web site http://www.csu.edu.au/faculty/educat/edu/vetfolder/research/index.html

Thank you very much for your assistance which is greatly appreciated.