

Submission

by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)

To

Productivity Commission

COAG Reform Agenda: VET reforms

RESPONSE TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is an independent body responsible for collecting, managing, analysing, evaluating and communicating research and statistics about tertiary education and training. This submission provides information on the statistics and research findings relevant to the inquiry into the:

- (a) impacts of reforms to vocational education and training on productivity and workforce participation, and
- (b) initiatives for supporting young people and disadvantaged groups to make a successful transition from school to further education, training and employment.

1. The impact of VET reforms on productivity and workforce participation

Indicators: (a) Growth in training participation in VET and (b) in higher VET qualifications

Data

NCVER can provide data from its *Students and Courses* to examine the growth in training participation in VET (including VET in Schools) and in higher VET qualifications. This includes information on the completion of courses and qualifications for Australia as a whole and for jurisdictions. This information can be broken down by age group, industry sector, Training Package and occupation. Information can also be provided for the different equity groups (indigenous, disability, and English as a Second language). High level data from these collections reveal that in 2010 there were 1.8 million VET students in the VET system. There was a 5.4% increase in student numbers from the previous year. The number of Indigenous students, students with a disability and students from non-English speaking backgrounds increased by 11.3%, 9.1%, and 6.7% respectively. There were 393900 qualifications completed with 40% at the Certificate III level.

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2383.html>

Data from the Contract of Training (COT) collection can be used to report on similar activities for apprentices and trainees, trade and non-trade. This can also be done by industry and by Training Package. Information can also be provided for the different equity groups (Indigenous, disability, and English as a Second language.) In 2010 there were 314 000 commencements representing an increase of 15.7%. There were 168 400 completions, and 139 900 cancellations. There was a 21.9% increase in commencements for the trades, and a 13.1% increase for the non-trades compared with the previous year.

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2387.html>

Across all collections information can be provided for those who live in regional and remote areas (using the ABS Remoteness Score (ARIA+)). For all collections bar the COT Collection information for disadvantaged groups can be reported in terms of the SEIFA index.

The VET Atlas can also be used to identify participation in VET of different groups in different locations. <http://www.ncver.edu.au/resources/atlas/aus/aus.html>

Indicator: Growth in employment outcomes

NCVER can also provide data from its *Students' Outcomes Survey* on growth in employment outcomes for those who participate in training. It can do this both for those who undertake full courses and those who undertake single modules. It can use the SEIFA index to report data for disadvantaged groups.

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2315.html>

Completed research

Pocock B, Masterman-Smith H, Skinner N, 2011, Increasing VET participation amongst lower paid workers over the life-cycle, NCVER, Adelaide,
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2378.html>

Karmel T & Oliver D 2011, Pre-apprenticeships and their impact on apprenticeship completion and satisfaction, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2353.html>

National Centre for Vocational Education Research 2011, Australian Apprenticeships Review Panel (4 projects on DEEWR website)
<http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/ExpertPanel.asp#NCVER>

Sweet R, 2011, The mobile worker: Concepts, issues, implications, NCVER, Adelaide,
<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2343.html>

Watson, 2011, Does changing your job leave you better off? A study of labour mobility in Australia, NCVER, Adelaide <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2344.html>

Buddelmeyer H & Marks G, 2010, Annual transitions between labour market states for young Australians, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2247.html>

Bretherton T 2010, Developing the child care workforce: Understanding 'fight' or 'flight' amongst workers, NCVER, Adelaide <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2261.html>

Karmel T & Misko J 2009 Apprenticeship in the downturn, NCVER, Adelaide
<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2197.html>

Karmel T, 2009, The current state of apprenticeships: prepared for COAG Apprenticeship Taskforce.

Rafferty M 2010, Work, skills and training in the Australian red meat processing sector, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2301.html>

Buchanan J, 2009, Understanding vocational education and training, productivity and workforce participation: An issues paper, NCVER, Adelaide,
<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2154.html>

2. Supporting young people to make successful transitions to employment or further education and training

Indicators: Strengthened pathways between school, employment and further education

Data

We can look at the concept of pathways in terms of where people start off and where they end up, that is, origins and destinations. In this regard NCVER can provide information from the *Apprenticeship and Traineeship Destination Survey*, to evaluate the further training and employment benefits of making a decision to pursue an apprenticeship or traineeship. This survey can also be used to provide data on the destinations of those who have decided to undertake pre-vocational programs. <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2262.html>. The Student Outcomes Survey (including, SOS online) can be used to understand the benefits of different pathways for other VET students including employment and wage outcomes. http://www.ncver.edu.au/resources/sos_online.html

Data from the Higher Education Statistical Collection and publications investigating the extent of traffic between VET and Higher Education and vice versa, can also be used to understand issues such as credit transfer between VET and higher education. However there are limitations in deriving too many inferences from the data on transfer in both directions (Curtis 2009, Moodie (forthcoming)). This is because not all studies are based on large data sets representative of the whole population, and may be subject to selection bias.

Indicator: Successful transitions for young people and disadvantaged groups

Data

Information from NCVER data bases including Students and Courses, Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY), Students Outcomes Survey, and Apprenticeship and Traineeship Destination Survey can be used to investigate transitions.

NCVER has published on its website, lists of resources which present summaries of NCVER's statistics and research on indigenous VET students, <http://www.indigenouset.edu.au/> and VET students with a disability <http://www.disabilityandvet.edu.au/>.

Completed research— pathways

Fitzpatrick, Lester, Mavromaras, Richardson & Sun, 2011, From education to employment: how long does it take?, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.lsay.edu.au/publications/2373.html>

Guthrie H, Stanwick J, Karmel T 2011 Pathways: Developing the Skills of Australia's workforce, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2376.html>

Herault N, 2011, The effect of VET completion on wages of young people, NCVER, Adelaide <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2379.html>

Karmel T & Liu J 2011, Which pathways work for young people, NCVER, Adelaide <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2397.html>

Karmel T & Mlotkowski P, 2010, Reasons for not completing apprenticeships change with duration, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2234.html>

Moodie G 2010, Mixed sector tertiary education – issues paper <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2331.html>

Karmel T & Lim, P 2011 The vocational equivalent to year 12, NCVER Adelaide <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2416.html>

Semo R & Karmel T, 2011, Social capital and youth transitions: do young people's networks improve their participation in education and training, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2408.html>

Watson , 2011, Does changing your job leave you better off? A study of labour mobility in Australia, NCVER, Adelaide <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2344.html>

Vnuk M, 2009, The effectiveness of the traineeship model, prepared for the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, Victoria <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2212.html>

Curtis D, 2009, Student Transfer, At a Glance, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2144.html>

Wheelahan L 2009, Higher education in TAFE, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2167.html>

Karmel T, Mlotkowski P, Awodei 2008, Is VET vocational? The relevance of training to occupations of vocational education graduate, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2013.html>

Work in progress: Moodie G (forthcoming), The role of educational institutions in fostering vocations, NCVER, Adelaide

Completed Research — disadvantaged groups

Bretherton T, 2011m, Understanding the undertow: Innovative responses to labour market disadvantage in VET, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2377.html>

Liu J & Nguyen N (forth coming) Successful youth transitions, NCVER, Adelaide

Buddelmeyer, H, 2010 The role of VET in preventing scarring of youth joblessness, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2318.html>

Jonas P 2010, What would it take? Employers' perspectives on growing their labour supply with equity groups, NCVER, Adelaide <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2219.html>

Nechvoglod L, 2010, *New Learner Markets: Reaching hard to reach learners* prepared for Department of Planning and Community Development, Adult Community and Further Education, Victoria

Nguyen N 2010, Early post-school outcomes of Indigenous youth: the role of literacy and numeracy, NCVER, Adelaide <http://www.isay.edu.au/publications/2308.html>

Polidano C, & Mavromaras K, 2010, The role of education in labour market outcomes of people with disabilities, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2215.html>

Thomson & Hillman, 2010, Against the odds: influences on the post-school success of 'low performers', NCVER, Adelaide <http://www.isay.edu.au/publications/2285.html>

Dockery M, 2009, Cultural Dimensions in Indigenous participation in vocational education: Future Research, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2174.html>

Giddy K, Lopez J & Redman A 2009, Redman, A, Brokering successful Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes: Common themes in best practice models, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2127.html>

Work in progress

McVicar D, (forthcoming) Promoting social inclusion for disadvantaged groups, NCVER, Adelaide,

Cocks E (forthcoming) Social and Economic outcomes for apprentices and trainees with a disability, NCVER, Adelaide

Shah C (forthcoming) Role of Social Inclusion: geographic and regional aspects, NCVER, Adelaide

Wheelahan L, Arkoudis S, Moodie G, Fredman N, & Bexley E, (forthcoming), Shaken not stirred? The development of one tertiary education sector in Australia, NCVER, Adelaide

3. A responsive and quality training system (Improving system transparency, teacher quality and quality assurance)

Indicator: Greater transparency in reporting to support informed choice for consumers (individuals and businesses)

Data

The need for greater access to comprehensive information about quality and availability of training is essential if VET clients are to access information they require for making informed choices about their training. The issue of transparency has become even more important with the expansion of the training market and increased moves to introduce training entitlements. A more comprehensive provider collection would help governments make sensible resource allocation decisions and implement effective quality assurance systems (Karmel 2011). Initiatives to introduce more transparency and a comprehensive provider collection have faltered because training providers are not voluntarily supplying the necessary data to NCVER. Karmel argues that if these limitations are to be removed the provision of data needs to be mandated.

In the meantime there are some positive developments with the acceptance of new data sharing protocols that means that NCVER can report information at the RTO level for VET that is publically-funded at a high level. In principle agreement to introducing a case for a unique student identifier is also encouraging.

Indicator: Improving VET teacher quality

Data

NCVER's Students Outcomes Survey and Survey of Employer Use and Views may also shed some light on how clients evaluate the training students receive. <

http://www.ncver.edu.au/resources/sos_online.html

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2030.html>

There is currently not a national VET workforce or collection although many states have their own surveys.

Indicator: Increased rationalisation of quality indicators

Data

NCVER provides a system for the collection of aggregate data from RTOs to inform quality indicators. Data includes number of enrolments, number of completions for each qualification and unit of competency. RTOs can download reports for their organisations to provide to state registering and accrediting bodies.

NCVER has also been involved in the auditing of AQTF standards for state and territory registering bodies for the National Audit and Registration Agency (NARA). This audit examined NARA's approach to auditing RTOs and found that NARA was generally compliant with the AQTF standards for registering bodies. Suggestions were made for process improvements related to increasing the consistency between auditors with respect to language used, recordkeeping and report construction.

http://www.nara.tvetaustralia.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/51198/NCVER_Audit_Report_-_September_2009.pdf

Completed research

Total VET Activity

Karmel T, 2011, Collecting 'total' vocational education and training activity, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2380.html>

Unique student identifier

Nous Consulting Group, 2011, Discussion paper on Unique Student Identifier, NCVER, Adelaide <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2412.html>

Nous Consulting Group 2011, USI Project: report on stakeholder consultations, NCVER, Adelaide <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2413.html>

Quality of VET teachers

Guthrie H, McNaughton A, & Gamlin T 2011, Initial Training for VET Teachers: a portrait within a larger canvas, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2390.html>

Guthrie H, 2010, Professional Development in the VET Workforce, NCVER, Adelaide <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2279.html>

Guthrie H & Berwyn Clayton 2011, Building capability in VET providers: the TAFE Cut, NCVER, Adelaide, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2224.html>

VET workforce

Vocational education and training workforce data 2008: A compendium <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2218.html>

Quality assurance

Ron Mazzachi 2010, Audit Report of AQTF Standards for the State and Territory Registering Bodies, prepared for National Audit and Registration Agency. http://www.nara.tvetaustralia.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/51198/NCVER_Audit_Report_-_September_2009.pdf

4. A demand driven-system: Increased competition

Indicator: Increased competition in training provision (including contestable funding)

Data

The NVER data base 'Students and Courses' can be used to look for growth in the number of RTOs involved in the provision of publically-funded VET.

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2383.html>

Completed research

NCVER has published a book of essays and responses to these essays, around the issues of 'competition' and 'contestability'. There was not unanimous agreement on all issues between the essay writers and commentators. There was, however, general acceptance of perceived risks associated with a state retreat from the training market, and with the need for high quality information. High quality information for consumers (individuals and businesses) and governments is essential irrespective of whether we believe in planning for training supply or leaving it to consumers to determine what training should be provided. Another publication reports on interviews with a number of commentators about the future for the VET sector. This report points to the need for more effort to be applied in articulating the role of VET in the tertiary education sector.

Dawe S 2009, Competition in the labour market, NCVER, Adelaide,
<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2150.html>

Beddie F & Curtin P 2010, The future of VET: A medley of views
<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2284.html>

5. Reduce the gaps in foundation skills for work age population

Indicator: Increase in literacy and numeracy levels

Data

The 'Students and Courses' data base holds information on the completion of different courses. Interrogation of the data base could provide us with information on outcomes from different curriculum aimed at improving language literacy and numeracy and foundation skills (including the Certificate in Spoken and Written English, Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA used in Victoria and Western Australia), Certificate I in Women's Education, Certificates I & II in Introduction to Vocational Education (IVEC I & II) now revised into the Certificates I and II in Education and Skills Development (South Australia and the Northern Territory).

Completed research

NCVER has recently held a forum in which participants discussed issues around the building of foundation skills. The forum agreed that the priorities for governments were to target those most in need of training and support, use sustainable funding models for programs, apply suitable measures for program evaluation. Other recent research has examined the effectiveness of adult education processes which use the strengths, aspirations and capacities of individuals as starting points, and at how employers view their role in improving literacy and numeracy skills of their workers. It has published a discussion paper called 'Building the Foundations' <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2345.html>

NCVER has also developed a wiki on their website which provides a list of resources and publications about adult literacy. Research topics ranged from adult literacy teaching and learning approaches and outcomes, to the professional development needs of literacy practitioners. Topics also covered various literacy practices and delivery approaches across Indigenous and ethnic communities, industry, volunteer and community settings.
<http://www.adultliteracyresource.edu.au/>

Townsend, R & Waterhouse, P 2008, Whose Responsibility? Employers' Views of Developing their Workers' Literacy, Numeracy and Employability Skills, NCVER, Adelaide.
<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1992.html>

Waterhouse, P & Virgona, C 2008, Working from strengths: Venturing towards strength-based adult education, NCVER, Adelaide. <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1992.html>

Work in progress

Data

NCVER is currently undertaking a project to map the performance levels of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALLS) survey to those of the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). The ACSF is the framework used to verify outcomes for the Commonwealth Government's Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP) and the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program. The LLNP and WELL programs provide information on a very small proportion of the population—some 100 000 per year—who fall within the COAG target area.

An earlier feasibility study indicated that mapping between the ALLS and ACSF frameworks is possible. The follow up research is a larger-scale research study investigating whether performance levels on the ALLS literacy and numeracy scales can be reliably mapped to the performance levels of the ACSF. This would mean that the ACSF performance levels could be used as a proxy for ALLS performance levels. This would make it possible to provide more frequent information on the literacy and numeracy development of identified target groups of the adult population than is available from the large-scale international testing programs.

Research underway

NCVER has recently contracted two studies that will focus on the language, literacy and numeracy area. The first will explore how production workers in competitive manufacturing enterprises learn literacy and numeracy practices and in their training. The second will concentrate on numeracy issues and investigate the capacity of the VET workforce to meet the numeracy needs of working-aged Australians. This study will also be focused on production workers in the manufacturing sector.