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Accelerated apprenticeships: Apprentice, employer and teaching staff perceptions

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About the research

Accelerated apprenticeships: Apprentice, employer and teaching staff perceptions by Victor J Callan

Australia's continued buoyant economy means that demand for skilled workers in many occupations is outstripping supply. To remedy this imbalance federal and state governments are implementing various strategies. These include raising levels of skilled migration, programs to improve the basic skills of people without formal qualifications and accelerated apprenticeships. The last of these is the subject of this report.

While apprenticeships are a readily identifiable way to meet skills needs, there are concerns that current models are not delivering, with high non-completion rates in some industries and a general difficulty in attracting apprentices. Accelerated apprenticeships, which reduce the typical four-year duration of a trade apprenticeship, may address some of these issues.

Accelerated apprenticeships: Apprentice, employer and teaching staff perceptions by Victor Callan focuses on pilots of accelerated apprenticeships in the automotive trades in Queensland. Callan examined the perceptions of apprentices, employers and teachers of the strengths and shortcomings of both traditional and accelerated approaches.

Key messages

- The traditional model of apprenticeship training is still well regarded. It is not failing but it does need to evolve to remain useful and relevant.
- In the automotive industry, at least, the establishment of certificate II training within the certificate III is a key aspect of the design of accelerated apprenticeships.
  - This allows students willing to do repetitive service tasks, and who may prefer to exit their training early, to do so with an industry qualification that matches an essential element of the trade.
- Accelerated models offer obvious benefits but they will usually be more expensive, imposing additional costs as well as pressures upon apprentices, employers and trainers.
- To achieve results in shorter time frames, accelerated apprenticeships must incorporate innovative up-front training; intensive pre-apprenticeship training; the full application of recognition of prior learning; intensive forms of off-the-job-delivery; and industry investment in workplace mentors.

Readers interested in employment-based learning models should also see *Effective models of employer-based training* by Sarojni Choy et al. (NCVER 2008).

Tom Karmel
Managing Director, NCVER

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Executive summary

The traditional model of apprenticeship is under pressure. For some time we have seen high non-completion rates across states, difficulties in attracting new apprentices in areas of major skills shortages and debates about the need for alternative models, including more accelerated forms of apprenticeships for Australian industries.

The focus of the current project was upon recent pilots of accelerated apprenticeships for various trades in the automotive industry in Queensland. This report examines the implications of these accelerated models for the apprentice, employer and training provider. In analysing the strengths and areas for future development of both traditional and more accelerated models, the components of an ideal model are put forward for further debate.

In total, 37 interviews were undertaken between March and June 2007. The special focus of interviews was with individuals involved with, or knowledgeable about, traditional and more accelerated apprenticeships in the automotive industry in Queensland and Victoria. Two research questions were addressed: one focused on what a shorter or accelerated competency-based apprenticeship model might look like; the other considered the implications of such a model.

The perceived strengths of the traditional apprenticeship model were mostly centred upon the provision of a well-defined and structured training program. Based upon a competency model, the training was seen at its best when it brought together in a partnership the skills and experiences of employers and teachers. The challenge was seen to be getting the right mix for the industry of the on- and off-the-job training. The traditional apprenticeship was working but needed to evolve more quickly.

The barriers to change in the traditional apprenticeship model were seen to be mostly the attitudes of employers and providers. Industry was seen to be its own worst enemy, with the strongly held view that 'you need to do your time like we all did'. A fundamental concern was the integrity of the current model as a result of ill-considered change. On the other hand, the traditional model was seen to advantage employers and training providers more than apprentices. The move towards more flexible and shorter models was seen by some as well overdue and necessary to re-adjust this imbalance.

Looking at the perceived benefits of more accelerated models, apprentices reflected upon:

- ✧ achieving a qualification in a shorter time period, and so quicker access to higher wages
- ✧ assisting experienced but not formally qualified people to gain a formal qualification
- ✧ attracting more mature workers to a trade, as a consequence of the shorter time period and reduced financial and other costs to them and their families
- ✧ increasing the use of recognition of prior learning, which allowed earlier completion of training and the recognition of their prior industry experience. Recognition of prior learning is the recognition of competencies currently held, regardless of how, when or where the learning occurred, and this learning is counted towards the achievement of a qualification.

Employer benefits were associated with:

- ✧ an increased pool of qualified tradespersons
- ✧ apprentice training being undertaken more on the job with associated productivity benefits for their businesses
- ✧ more effective response to the greater levels of skill segmentation that are now occurring in their industries between routine and more specialist skill sets
- ✧ the increased productivity and morale of employees, who are now better trained, have qualified more quickly and who can access higher pay and better career paths.

Training providers reported that moving into accelerated models:

- ✧ extended their capabilities around the design and delivery of more flexible training, applying their skills around competency-based training, recognition of prior learning and closer industry partnering
- ✧ assisted in building better relationships with industry that had other spin-offs
- ✧ re-invigorated some apprenticeships where numbers were low
- ✧ developed their skills in relation to the provision of more consistent high-quality training and administration across all parts of apprenticeships, including school-based, on-the-job and off-the-job components.

There are also understandable concerns about the use of accelerated models. Apprentices mentioned the pressures associated with putting more time into completing study and assessment. Some learners did not cope. They had dropped out rather than move back to the more traditional model. Also, despite their acceleration, a few believed that employers would not sign off on the completed competencies.

Employers reported concerns about the quality of the apprentice being produced as a result of less on-the-job experience caused by the shorter time frame. There was also a reduced period to recover lost productivity from accelerated training. More effort was required by employers in supporting and managing the training of apprentices in the workplace, including, in some cases, through the provision of workplace mentors. Some felt that more attention was needed to screening practices to identify more suitable applicants. Once they had supported their apprentices in the accelerated process and to complete early, there was still the threat of poaching by other employers who did not train.

Training providers cited concerns about the potential for more attrition in an accelerated program, because of the pace of learning and assessment demands on the learners. In addition, the management of more intensive and flexible delivery required more coordination and cooperation between the apprentice, employers and training provider.

The establishment of certificate II training within certificate III training is a key aspect in the design of accelerated apprenticeships. This moves apprenticeships away from a 'one size fits all' approach that has been dominant in traditional apprenticeships. The certificate II component allows students with different levels of talent and motivation to exit with an industry qualification that allows them to complete essential and important roles in the workplace. It also provides many industries with what they need—skilled workers who are willing to do repetitive service that those fully qualified apprentices find to be an under-utilisation of their knowledge and skills. However, the trend to incorporate certificate II qualifications was seen by some providers to be adding to a deskilling of many trades.

Finally, current funding models did not match the reality that accelerated models required even lower student-to-staff ratios, with smaller classes and much more travel and administration in shorter time frames. This also had implications for employers, who had to dedicate staff resources to mentoring apprentices.

While there was a widely held view that it was not possible to apply the same accelerated model to all apprenticeships in all industries, there was general agreement that, based on the experiences to date with various pilots, there were some key elements that need to be brought together to make these new models work well. The major features of an ideal model include key decisions in the following areas:

- preparing the way—checking assumptions with apprentices, employers and teachers about the nature and demands of accelerated apprenticeships; selecting the most motivated apprentices, teachers and employers; establishing apprentice cohorts; and industry involvement in the design of the apprenticeship model
- training up-front—online delivery of underpinning knowledge, intensive pre-apprenticeship training, the full application of recognition of prior learning, and building in certificate II qualifications
- providing core elements—on-the-job delivery, off-the-job delivery, use of workplace mentors, and use of existing employer partnerships and networks
- supporting elements—linkages into school-based programs and pathways into more advanced training, field officer monitoring, and the establishment of competency-based wage progression.

Introduction and research questions

Rethinking the current apprenticeship model

The Australian apprenticeship system has continued to evolve over time. These changes have included:

- the introduction of competency-based training and training packages
- an opening-up of training frameworks to all age groups beyond the traditional group of young new job entrants
- development of a range of financial incentives available to employers to encourage them to take on apprentices.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that the traditional model of apprenticeship is under pressure. In this traditional model, paid work and structured training typically occur together, with training organised around a competency framework and a training package. Evidence of stresses to this model includes the high non-completion rates across states and the difficulties in attracting and retaining apprentices in response to skills shortages across a diverse group of industries. Many in industry and provider organisations are asking if the current apprenticeship model is the right one to meet the needs of the learner and the needs of the employer required to support training, on top of the demands of running a profitable business. Emerging from this debate are discussions about the need for more accelerated forms of apprenticeships across Australia.

The issue of change to the traditional apprenticeship model, however, is a complex challenge. The nature of work and the industry shape what can occur to support learning in any particular workplace. As Harris, Simons and Bone (2006) report, there are differences in apprentices' workplaces that influence the way training can be managed. For example, the challenges in designing the training of apprentices in manufacturing where a production process relies upon many people cooperating at once are quite different from those in other industries like retail and community services. The age and work experience profiles of those being trained in apprenticeships is also changing (see Karmel 2004, 2006).

A number of reports have challenged the usefulness of the current forms of apprenticeship training; for example, Australian Industry Group (2005); Department of Education and Training (2005) in New South Wales; the Department of Employment and Training (2005) in Queensland; Victorian Department of Education and Training (2006); Western Australian Department of Education and Training (2005). Employers and training providers are asking for a rethinking of the nature of the contemporary apprenticeship model (see also Toner 2003a, 2003b, 2005; Harris, Simons & Bone 2006). Employers highlight the need for alternative strategies as a consequence of:

- changing skill requirements that continue to emerge with rapid technological advancements
- skill shortages, with skilled staff being poached from across companies in the same industry as well as by companies in related industries
- production pressures that require more training of apprentices to be done in the workplace
- attractiveness of other alternatives to being locked into a four-year apprenticeship on relatively low pay in many industries that offer limited career prospects in the longer term.

The skills shortage that has emerged in many Australian industries is the major driver behind the need to review the traditional form of apprenticeship. In the 2005 Survey of Employers' Use and Views of the VET System conducted by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER 2005), 41% of employers reported that they experienced difficulties in recruitment. The majority reported that this was due to a shortage of skilled people with trade and other qualifications in the industry.

The good news, however, is evidence that traditional apprenticeship commencements since 2001 are up by two-thirds (NCVER 2007b). The current proportion of tradespersons employed as traditional apprentices has risen to 12%, although it still remains slightly below the long-run average of 13%, which prevailed prior to the recession of the early 1990s (Toner 2003a). Analyses suggest that there will be increases in the number of completions in the next few years (Karmel & Virk 2006). At the same time, as many Australian states support numerous pilots of more accelerated forms of apprenticeship, there is no doubt that the traditional model of apprenticeships over time will be joined by alternative forms that in particular are seen to be better tailored to meeting the needs of specific industries vis-a-vis how the training is designed, delivered and assessed.

Perceived strengths and shortcomings of the traditional model

The traditional apprenticeship is still strongly supported Australia-wide. The strengths of the current apprenticeship model include:

- ✧ entry of the apprentice into clearly defined and structured training that accesses the skills and knowledge of current employers through on-the-job experiential training
- ✧ availability of off-the-job training support that accesses skilled and experienced trades teachers
- ✧ sharing of the responsibility for the training between the individual, employers and training organisations
- ✧ for employers, access to productive employees, support through training incentives, and some flexibility regarding the nature of the training provided
- ✧ for the apprentice, employment during the period of training, completion of a qualification that is nationally recognised, and the prospects of being more attractive to employers. For example, the evidence reveals that gaining qualifications at certificate III level or higher is very beneficial in assisting people to obtain full-time employment (Karmel & Nguyen 2006).

The shortcomings, however, of the traditional apprenticeship model include:

- ✧ evidence of lower completion rates among some groups more than others (that is, younger apprentices, Indigenous people, people unemployed prior to the apprenticeship [Cully & Curtin 2001])
- ✧ perceptions among apprentices that the training wage is inadequate when compared with the wages gained by less skilled and unskilled workers; and the opinion that some employers treat apprentices as 'cheap labour' (Callan 2001; Cully & Curtin 2001)
- ✧ the tradition of time-based apprenticeships continued by many employers, despite the fact that competency-based models allow advanced completion well under the expected four years
- ✧ evidence of the failure of some employers to create the appropriate training culture in the workplace, including inappropriate levels of supervision, a lack of attention to a training plan, and inadequate opportunities for the apprentice to practise skills away from the production process (Callan 2001; Cully & Curtin 2001)
- ✧ a lack of attention by training providers to the introduction of more work-based training and assessment, and a related reluctance by providers to apply recognition of prior learning and more flexible approaches that might accelerate the completion of training
- ✧ the failure to apply recognition of prior learning to recognise the existing knowledge and skills of those who enter into apprenticeships. As noted in a recent report (Hargreaves 2006), no single

significant barrier is identified to preventing the effective implementation of recognition of prior learning. However, there are several factors which, in some contexts, act as deterrents. More and effective recognition of prior learning requires: greater promotion; an understanding that recognition of prior learning is a valuable learning experience in its own right; improved support to assist students to gather evidence; and trained and especially experienced professional assessors

- ✧ continued evidence that competency-based training is not fully understood by apprentices, employers and training providers.

In summary, there is a substantial body of knowledge about the many strengths, but also the shortcomings of the current system and training models (see Bowman, Stanwick & Blythe 2005; Callan 2001, 2006; Cully & Curtain 2001; Harris et al. 2001; Toner 2005). Overall, these studies reveal that the core of the traditional apprenticeship model is working. We do not have a failed apprenticeship system. However, there is a need to continue to reform the nature of apprenticeships so that the modern apprenticeship best meets the needs of the Australian workforce. Change is needed, but the current evidence is that it needs to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

Evolutionary change to the traditional apprenticeship model

Employers and apprentices have some interesting things to say about the current model for apprenticeships (Toner 2005; Australian Industry Group 2005). Employers favour change, but incremental developments rather than a radical reform. They are seeking refinements to the apprenticeship and training system. This fine-tuning includes expanding pre-apprenticeship programs, developments to the financial incentives paid to employers, and the use of mechanisms to raise the quality of applicants, such as better marketing to attract better applicants. They also support the use of group training as a labour market intermediary.

In addition, advocates of the incremental rather than transformational approach argue for a broadening of the existing model to provide for higher-level training (for example, for paraprofessionals, Stanwick & Saunders 2004). They cite the need to tailor training much more for specific groups (for example, mature-age workers), and greater attention needs to be given to how the current system can operate as a truly competency-based system that allows completion of training inside the typical four-year period. Toner (2001) calls for the better enforcement of current policies, as well as changes to government financial incentives.

There are numerous recent reviews that have focused upon the nature and performance of traineeship models in various Australian states. These discussions are typically part of a larger debate about how these state governments can ensure that they have a highly skilled workforce to support the continued strong performance of their regional and state economies. As well, there are reviews by industry bodies like the Australian Industry Group, as well as research activities through NCVER. Each describes various options on how the current apprenticeship model can be further developed. For example, the Department of Employment and Training (2005b) report *Queensland skills plan* proposes evolutionary developments for apprenticeship models that involve:

- ✧ moving away from time-based apprenticeships
- ✧ introducing up-front training options that give apprentices and their employers the option to concentrate a significant amount of the formal training component at the beginning of the apprenticeships
- ✧ bringing into apprenticeship training greater recognition of prior learning and more workplace training and assessment
- ✧ reviewing the training wage.

The Australian Industry Group (2005) identifies similar areas for development such as rethinking the time-based approach to training, with the application of a genuinely competency-based progression rather than a fixed time period. They advocate also for more flexible and creative

approaches to timetabling, blocking, and pedagogy, with a higher level of integration between work and learning. In addition, they want to see improved marketing of the apprenticeship system.

School-based developments

Many advocates of the need for reform to the traditional apprenticeship model point to the innovations that are occurring in school-based training. School vocational education and training (VET) programs have a positive impact on Year 10 and Year 11 retention rates, and provide a clear vocational pathway for some students, especially for boys studying in the area of building and engineering (Anlezark, Karmel & Ong 2006).

Smith and Wilson (2002) in their NCVER report found that the current school-based model is successful in attracting students into apprenticeships from outside capitals cities, and students of lower socioeconomic status. Such students are satisfied in general with their jobs, and they enjoy learning with adults rather than with students. They like the higher levels of responsibility that exist in school-based programs. However, while the school-based model has espoused benefits, there are negative outcomes that possibly reflect the recency of this innovation. Some students report little help from their schools in resolving training and school timetable clashes. There can be a low number of hours worked, when compared with the total number of hours normally involved in the completion of an apprenticeship. Also, students cite evidence of poor training provision from some training organisations.

Queensland as a case study

Reforming apprenticeships

The current research provides a case study of the development and implementation of a model of accelerated apprenticeships in Queensland. The special focus is the application of accelerated forms of training being piloted in its automotive industry. Throughout 2006 and into 2007, the Queensland Government announced a number of strategies to respond to skills shortages identified in some industries. These strategies emerged from various reports and discussion papers, including the Green Paper *Queensland's proposed responses to the challenges of skills for jobs and growth* (Department of Employment and Training 2005a) followed by *Queensland Skills Plan: A white paper* (Department of Employment and Training 2005b).

Feedback on the Green Paper supported the retention of a single apprenticeship system, but one that could accommodate the needs of different groups more effectively. Also proposed were a number of reforms. The reform strategies included additional trade training places, allowing young people to be given an opportunity to try different trades through pre-vocational programs, and initiatives to attract mature apprentices. In addition, there were new strategies to support employers who engaged apprentices. These strategies included the provision of subsidised training and assessment programs for qualified tradespeople who are supervising apprentices to help employers provide high-quality on-the-job training to apprentices.

The government also commissioned the Training and Employment Recognition Council (2006) to deliver a report titled *Report on the review of apprenticeship nominal durations* to examine the broad range of responses about the concept of shortened apprentice durations. In early 2007, the new term 'expected duration' was introduced. The expected duration serves to complement the existing nominal duration, but is the target time frame for earlier completion by apprentices who can achieve competency within the target period. The expected duration provides a target completion period that will be supported by actions that include a closer monitoring of apprentice progression and an enhanced skills recognition process. If an apprentice is not competent by the expected duration target, they continue their training until the nominal duration.

With reference to the automotive industry, recommendations were made for shorter nominal terms for seven automotive qualifications—from 48 months to 36 months as the new duration. No change was recommended to the duration of three qualifications in automotive (Certificate III in Automotive Specialist [Diesel Fitting]; Certificate III in Automotive Mechanical Technology [Heavy Vehicle Road Transport], and Certificate III in Automotive Mechanical Technology [Heavy Vehicle Mobile Equipment]).

This same report proposed a four-stage 'Queensland Apprenticeship Model' specifically to support the introduction of an expected duration that could align with or vary from the established and typically longer nominal term for an apprenticeship. The stages are:

- ✧ Stage 1: Pre-apprenticeship, with recognition of prior learning
- ✧ Stage 2: Intensive up-front training, with a stage review
- ✧ Stage 3: Progressive off-the-job training, with a stage review
- ✧ Stage 4: Reach expected duration, with option to extend duration to nominal term.

Significantly, it was argued that this model would be more workable and effective if it incorporated the use of pre-apprenticeship programs, up-front intensive school-based apprenticeships and recognition of prior learning. The report identified the greatest potential for acceleration in the early stages of the apprenticeship, including the use of up-front intensive training, either as pre-apprenticeships or built into the early stage of the apprenticeship. It also cited the good match between a well-delivered school-based apprenticeship and VET in Schools programs, and the creation of accelerated models of apprenticeships.

Accelerated apprenticeships in the automotive industry

In a report by Automotive Training Australia Limited (2004), *Vocational education and training in the Australian automotive industry 2004–2007*, the automotive industry is described as a major sector of the Australian economy, with annual turnover exceeding $50 billion, and employment in excess of 300 000.

The industry has seen considerable change in the consolidation and rationalisation of dealerships in Australia. Manufacturers have made it clear that they see a future that has fewer dealer owners. They intend to see businesses being more centralised and standardised, and easier to manage in order to introduce more innovation, standard operating procedures and the sharing of best practice. Dealerships are now larger and more customer-oriented and concerned with building longer-term relationships with customers. It is predicted that the industry will see the emergence of discernable segments and niche specialisations especially in the retail service and repair parts, which employ a large number of apprentices (Bodi & Maggs 2002). A gap is seen to be emerging in the skill set required for routine service work that is largely mechanical, to work that is more concerned with higher-level diagnostic and repairs and which requires a skill set combining electronic, diagnostic, conceptual and communication skills. This division of skills sets has implications for the training of apprentices, including the viability of the current training model, which provides a 'one-size fits all' approach around a four-year apprenticeship.

The rapidity of technological developments is placing pressure on the industry to maintain the currency of employee skills. The skills shortage in the Australian automotive industry is noted in the March 2006 issue of the Skills in Demand Lists under Trades produced by the former Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.[1] This list identified statewide shortages for automotive trades for motor mechanic, auto electrician, panel beater and vehicle painter. In addition, these

[1] The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations was abolished in December 2007 and its functions assumed by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

skills shortages are exacerbated by retention problems, workforce ageing, poor wages and conditions, negative perceptions about careers in the industry, and the need for the industry to respond to rapidly changing technology (see Automotive Training Australia Limited 2004, 2006).

It is argued by some that solutions to these challenges require a fundamental re-evaluation of the industry's approach to formal vocational education and training (VET) programs and qualifications (Automotive Training Australia Limited 2004). Among the training-related strategies is an expansion of VET in Schools programs, particularly school-based Australian Apprenticeships. In addition, the skill sets demanded by the industry now require a new target among secondary school students. Broader responses are seen to be required that will attract physics, chemistry and electronics students, as well as a more targeted approach to bring into the industry significant teacher groups such as science teachers.

Research questions

The focus of the current project was upon accelerated apprenticeships for various trades in the automotive industry in Queensland. This project examines the issues shaping various models of accelerated apprenticeships that are being piloted in the industry. This report looks at the implications of these accelerated models for the learner, employer and training provider. Also, it proposes an ideal model for further debate. Two research questions are addressed:

1 What might a shorter or accelerated competency-based apprenticeship model look like?

2 What are the implications of this model?

Methodology

Interviews

Semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews were completed as the primary research method. This method enables considerable depth of understanding and detail to be ascertained about a complex concept, such as the apprenticeship model. Central to the use of these interviews was the ability to tap into the personal beliefs, perceptions and experiences of a wide group of interviewees about the current status of the apprenticeship model and the newer accelerated versions being trialled at present.

A copy of the interview questions is provided in the appendix, while the same document provides a list of respondents involved in the interviews. The key groups involved in the interviews were current apprentices, employers, members of employer associations, and teachers, trainers and assessors in the automotive industry. In total, 37 interviews (see the appendix on the breakdown) were completed between March and June 2007. All interviews were completed by the author.

Sampling

An initial list of names of people to be interviewed was generated through discussions with members of the steering committee set up to support the project (see appendix). From this list, those interviewed were asked to nominate other people they knew were experienced members of the automotive or training industries, and whom they believed would be interested in expressing their views about traditional and non-traditional models of apprenticeships.

As a relatively small group of respondents gained through snowball sampling, the final sample is at best indicative only and not representative of employer, industry members, teaching staff and apprentice attitudes.

Findings

Strengths and shortcomings of the traditional model

The perceived strength of the current apprenticeship model for the various automotive trades, as expected, related to the provision of a well-defined and structured training program. Based upon a competency model, at its best the training brings together in a partnership the skills and experiences of employers and teachers. The challenge was seen to be getting the right mix of on-the-job training for the industry as well as meeting requirements associated with the underpinning and other knowledge provided by the off-the-job training experiences.

Interviewees made a number of observations about the current model. In 2006 there were about 1000 completions in the automotive industry through the current model in Queensland. As one respondent reported, 'therefore, if it ain't broke, then leave it alone'. Others had the view, however, that 'industry is its own worst enemy'. It was frequently mentioned that there are many in the industry who, 'because they did their four years, then the younger generation needs to do the same. If we keep thinking this way, ignoring the technological changes that have occurred, we will get no one to work for us.'

Another element to the argument, 'the need to do the time', was articulated by respondents, who were concerned about threats to the integrity of the current model by the introduction of ill-considered, knee-jerk reactions by the shortening of nominal terms. As some evidence for this, a number of respondents gave examples of poor training at present. They felt a minority of training providers were qualifying apprentices who, according to employers, were still far from competent on the job. At the same time, others noted that a number of organisations less focused upon quality outcomes had been taken out of the system, and training in the industry today was at high levels.

Another line of argument is that the industry today requires a variety of qualified people. The 'one size fits all model' was becoming less relevant. As one trainer said:

> Really today most of the work, I think some 80–90%, is really basic servicing as the cars today are so reliable. The repair work that includes diagnostic and electrics is 10 to 30% possibly at the most of what you do. We need skilled mechanics that can do this type of work that will only increase over time. This distinction in the workshop is now between those who do the repetitive but important basic services and those who work on computers and more with the customers.

In relation to the benefits of the traditional approach to training automotive mechanics, many noted the well-known and demonstrated benefits of sharing the training between the individual, employers and training organisations. At the same time, a criticism of this relationship was that the traditional model was positioned more to advantage employers and training providers than apprentices. Employers gained access to productive employees, training incentives, and a training wage that subsidised the training. There was some flexibility through block release, and workplace training and assessment. However, the move towards more flexible and shorter models of training was seen by some as overdue in creating a balance that was not so employer-centric. A respondent explained:

> The real barrier we find to introducing different models of training is the attitude of employers. If they did four years to become a qualified motor mechanic, the current apprentice needs to do the same. Many do not grasp where the industry is heading in terms

> of the need to compete more for apprentices, that the industry is seen to be dirty grease monkey work, the hours with evening work are less attractive, the pay is poor while in training and then when you are finished, and there are few career paths.

Drivers and risks in new accelerated models

Drivers

When asked about the drivers for accelerated models, respondents emphasised the need to:

- ✧ respond better to urgent shortages in skilled trades, with the associated turnover of existing skilled staff leaving the automotive industry for other sectors, while dealerships have ageing workforces that need to be replenished. The industry needs to get better at meeting the needs of younger generations of workers, who expect an employer to offer good pay while in training, access to the latest technology, mentoring and support. This includes apprentices accelerating the completion of their training contracts so that the individual secures a qualification and access to full wages earlier and, as a result, may choose to stay in the industry in the longer term
- ✧ demonstrate more flexible and customised training responses, including a mandate to continue to modernise and reform the apprenticeship system in the automotive industry. Workplaces want to expand and grow more quickly, and they want access to an increased number of tradespersons in a shorter time. As accelerated models are using more work-based training, there are also productivity benefits when apprentices spend less time away from the workplace for off-the-job training
- ✧ continue to respond to advances in technology that will have an impact on, and change, the skills required of staff. For example, some manufacturers are designing cars where there is little or no servicing in the first 150 000 kilometres or possibly over an eight to ten year period, and, in turn, cars will not require trade-qualified staff to complete the regular servicing needed for most makes and models.

Apprentices in particular provided strong support for the need for the industry to recognise the range of talent and prior experience of those who applied for apprenticeships. Many come today as Year 12 graduates with very solid academic backgrounds in mathematics and the sciences. Others may have completed some form of school-based training or more likely have been 'playing with cars all of my life'. They expect to be mentored, supported, well paid and for the industry to be able to show some career paths if they decide to stay post-training. They do not want jobs that are repetitive, boring and that do not allow them to use the skills in which they have been trained.

Risks

While there are drivers for the introduction of a more accelerated model for the automotive industry, interviewees noted a number of risks. A major concern relates to the quality of the training outcomes that can be achieved in shorter apprenticeships. As many respondents pointed out, however, it is attitudinal change that is the major barrier to new models of apprenticeships training.

A key factor in making accelerated models work will be changing the attitudes of the employer. A training provider reflected:

> We can do lots of smart things today in how we design and deliver apprenticeships, but it still comes down to the employer's attitudes. The fact that it took him 4 or 5 years to do his apprenticeship still strongly shapes a reluctance to support any reductions in the duration.

Many of those interviewed believe that those more negative about newer models will sit back, watch and wait, and if the outcomes are seen to be good, only then will they get involved. But this will happen over years and not months.

Other concerns were focused upon the learning and training demands on apprentices. There is already in the traditional apprenticeship system evidence of cracks, in terms of lower completion

rates among some groups of entrants, such as younger apprentices and people unemployed prior to the apprenticeship. Some apprentices already have difficulties in finding the time to complete the required levels of learning, study and assessment within four years. The pace of an accelerated model is seen by some to open these cracks even wider, so that non-completion rates will increase further. As one respondent concluded: 'There is no drifting along or downtime in the accelerated model. I do worry about how many apprentices will cope, especially the less talented or experienced ones.'

Among other barriers, some respondents cited evidence that employers will attempt to hold back apprentices even in an accelerated apprenticeship. Driving this will be the need to keep access to 'cheap labour' and wanting to minimise the financial cost to them during the period of training. There is a belief among some employers that it is only at year three or four that they begin to get a full recovery of their investment in supporting the training. As one respondent explained:

> The fundamental problem is that there are still employers who see an apprentice as a detriment to their business requirements. Even with an accelerated program, they can still delay sign-off on competencies, or promise up front to support the program, but change their mind later. They do not see that well-trained staff will be fundamental to their future business success.

Other risks are the failure of some training providers to apply fully the recognition of prior learning or to build the meaningful training partnerships with employers that are required to make a fast-track model work. Many emphasised the importance of quality teachers who can build trusting relationships and rapport with industry to make accelerated models achieve their desired outcomes.

As a summary of the perceived risks, one trainer said:

> The apprenticeship system has already proved to be problematic in guiding a learner through a four-year program of on- and off-the-job training. How will it go when it has to push people through in two or three years—the cracks will become even more evident and the risk is that more will fall through the system with unsatisfactory outcomes. It will need quality teachers and trainers who truly apply competency-based training with concentrated effort around training and assessment, working flexibly with employers, and a rethinking of what are the most valuable skills required for the automotive industry of today and not of yesterday.

Facilitators

Many interviewees talked about how the industry was changing its attitudes about the need to retain talented and qualified employees. A major part of this is to identify better career paths for trained apprentices. A number of respondents described the current situation:

> We talk here about the seven-year itch. People get bored with the basic repetitive servicing that is a big part of the job. You work in the same bay with the same tools and people every day. They get sick of it, and decide to go and work in the mines, become jackaroos, or, if they can, move into customer service.
>
> It is often the more capable ones that leave you. We do not care as much when the poor performers leave. But my best apprentice had just done his seventh grease and oil change on a four wheel drive. This endless servicing is what it is all about—there is very little actual repair work. He walked as he was bored and saw no career path.

In short, the industry is rethinking how it engages with its apprentices, including not only an acceleration of training, but also the need to make the training more relevant to the type of work that needs to be done today in automotive workshops and dealerships. One part of this engagement is responding to the segmentation occurring in the industry, through either finding more challenging work for apprentices that allows them to use their knowledge and skills (for example, diagnostic work) or changing the nature of training to certificate II levels that better matches the skills required for routine and repetitive service work that is still the majority of activity in workshops today.

A second feature of this engagement with current and completed apprentices is identifying more well-defined career paths in dealerships, in addition to higher wages for qualified apprentices in response to the poaching that is occurring by other dealerships or other industries.

A third aspect concerns changing the attitudes in schools and among teachers (and in turn parents) to the value of apprenticeships, including stronger support for students who want to begin school-based apprenticeships and VET in Schools. Here attitudinal change is slow, with only a handful of teachers across Brisbane-based schools actively supporting efforts by the industry to gain access to students to promote apprenticeships. The prospects of more accelerated training, more challenging work and better career prospects are being used in these more recent efforts to get schools on board.

Examples of accelerated models in the automotive industry

What follows is a description and review of perceptions about the performance of accelerated training models in the Queensland automotive industry to date, incorporating brief reference to other forms of non-traditional models that are being piloted in other industries. Suggestions about an ideal model for accelerated apprenticeships are offered.

The Toowoomba Further Faster Auto pilot training model

Table 1 provides a summary of the key characteristics of this training model being piloted at the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE. The program is targeted at 12 mature-age participants, as well as participants more directly from school. Essentially it is a form of intensive up-front training that leads participants into the accelerated apprenticeship.

As can be seen, the model varies, depending upon the group of participants. Its main features are the use of recognition of prior learning, the variations to suit mature-age or existing workers, the building-in of the certificate II qualification for the less-experienced mature-age workers, and a total of 16 weeks to move through stages 1 to 3. At stage 4, participants sign the training contract and officially become apprentices.

The model applies recognition of prior learning for all applicants at stage 1. Because of experiences on farms with farm machinery or experience in family businesses in automotive and machinery repairs, a number of applicants successfully gained recognition of prior learning for various competences. The program also uses an intensive full-time nine-week up-front component at the training organisation at stage 1, which is focused upon competencies in the Certificate II in Automotive for the mature-age applicants and those with less industry experience. This is followed by a vocational component at stage 2 to complete on-the-job tasks for the certificate II competencies for the mature-age participants. Existing workers do a nine-week mechanical workshop. At stage 3, the off-the-job training re-commences. Most students will complete in 2008, although at least two with considerable recognition of prior learning were expected to finish in the second half of 2007.

Critical to the success of this pilot is:

- the application of recognition of prior learning up front because of the targeting of mature-age existing workers
- the incorporation of the certificate II qualification up front
- the planned use of a cohort approach, so that the accelerated apprentices were to be kept together for the off-the-job training to support each other's learning and progress
- the selection of local automotive industry employers who were supportive of the concept of an accelerated apprenticeship and willing to make the adjustments in workplaces to accommodate more on-the-job learning and assessment

- the selection of well-motivated participants who were able to cope with the pace of the on- and off-the-job training and assessment, with employers preferring applicants who had life experience and good generic skills rather than coming directly out of school
- the use of intensive full-time up-front training of 16 weeks for participants
- regular contacts, visits to workplaces and status reports by teachers describing the apprentices' progress, as well as checks to confirm that accelerated apprentices were attending the organised blocks to ensure their early completion
- additional financial support of $750, which included access to tools, steel cap boots, protective eye wear, and a textbook allowance
- completion of the apprenticeship in 30 months.

The learning that has emerged from the pilot and the experiences of those who have moved into apprenticeships to date include:

- the difficulty of keeping the group of apprentices together as one cohort across the training owing to timing and administrative difficulties
- the need to gain strong commitment and buy-in from employers such that they will deliver on their promises to support the program, including agreed sign off on competencies, once achieved, to enable apprentices to fast-track
- despite the screening processes, the variability across learners once in the program in their pre-existing knowledge, skills, and motivation
- the inability to attract female apprentices, but this is also seen as generally reflective of a larger trend in the industry
- perceived differences in the levels of support and training experience given to participants hosted by an individual employer by comparison with hosting by a group training organisation.

At the end of this pilot intensive skills development program, eight of the 12 participants were offered training contacts by employers.

Table 1 Stages in the up-front intensive skills part of the program

	For mature-age participants	For existing worker participants
Stage 1	AUR20705 Cert 2 in Automotive Mechanical	
	Up to 9 weeks of full-time training at the training provider. Recognition of prior learning is available for those who have some existing skills.	Recognition of prior learning and on-the-job gap training for pre-vocational and competencies
Stage 2	Vocational placement with local mechanical workshops over 4 weeks	Conducted over a 9-week period
Stage 3	Second stage of off-the-job training at TAFE of 3–4 weeks. All participants undertake a further 2 weeks of full-time training to complete the additional competencies from AUR 30405 Certificate III in Automotive Mechanical Tech (Light Vehicle)	Second stage off-the-job training at TAFE for competencies not achieved through recognition of prior learning. Existing worker participants join the full-time program at TAFE to complete the same competencies not completed through recognition of prior learning. All participants undertake a further 2 weeks of full-time training to complete the additional competencies from AUR 30405 Certificate III in Automotive Mechanical Tech (Light Vehicle).
Stage 4	Employer selects successful applicant and the contract of training is signed	Register worker as apprentice with the contract of training

The Toyota Network Training apprenticeship (pro technician) model

This model is beginning to attract national and international interest, including dealerships and their training organisations from Canada and the United States. This training partnership is between Toyota Institute Australia, and in Queensland through SkillsTech Australia, and in Victoria through

Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE. This development by Toyota is part of a trend for dealer networks such as Holden and Volvo to want to have more control over the nature and quality of training in the automotive industry.

Driving the introduction of this accelerated apprenticeship by Toyota dealerships were the skills shortages and levels of turnover among trained motor mechanics, automotive technicians and specialists. Those interviewed attributed turnover in the dealerships to the image of the automotive industry; a perceived lack of career paths from the role of trained technician; and the requirement for different types of trained staff to complete routine service and repair roles, as against more specialist technical and diagnostic work. Qualifications include the Certificate III in Automotive Mechanical Technology (Light vehicle). Knowledge is gained through the traditional methods of formal classroom instruction, workbooks, projects and assignments and online pre-course study. Skills transfer is gained through simulated workshops, on-job supervised training with the use of a specially allocated workplace mentor, and on-the-job experience. Assessment is through the traditional means of tests, oral, practical exercises, presentations, projects and assignments, training plan and training record book, participation, observation, workbooks and by recognition of prior learning.

Key elements in the training include:

- the delivery of both training and assessment at the technical and further education (TAFE) institute as the registered training provider and administrator of the program, as well as delivery of training on the job at dealership workshops using teachers and trainers
- re-design of the training to reduce duplication, and a re-writing of the curriculum through the partnership between Toyota Institute Australia and the partner training organisations, with training of 36 units of competence in light vehicle being delivered by the TAFE (12 units) and 24 units between the dealership workshop and Toyota's own training arm. Applying Toyota's principles of lean production to the design of the apprenticeship, the re-design reduced the need for attendance at TAFE by 25%. The training materials up front include an outline of Toyota, the role of the service technician in the organisation, Toyota customer service and marketing, and related information. The units of competency are matched to the Toyota approach and language relating to servicing
- the application of a paradigm shift by Toyota on the future of servicing in the automotive industry, which now requires increased levels of segmentation with types of workers employed in its dealership workshops, as well as the full application of business principles and productivity measures by these workers in the modern workshop. Put as a broad generalisation by one respondent, the model is 'multiple bays doing lots of fast service, with a ratio of one diagnostician for every five service people, with a few master technicians supporting the whole service operation'
- a three-stage program with Years 1 and 2, each involving 400 training hours, and Year 3 with 200 hours. The targeted completion time is 2 years and 10 months. Apprentices are away from their dealership workshops for 15 to 18 days maximum per year, by comparison with the traditional model of around 40 days per year. Expectations are that 228 apprentices will complete training in both states by October 2008
- the program up front attempts to identify participants who will be likely to see the training through. Dealerships identify and screen applicants; that is, some run aptitude tests on literacy and numeracy and they hold interviews. They also identify applicants for the training through their links with schools, local TAFEs, and their own promotional activities during the year
- intensive front-end loading of the initial training is used in prerequisites and areas of underpinning knowledge. There is also use of up-front training and access to high-tech equipment in the dealerships so that apprentices are more work-ready
- a special feature is the use of part-time workshop mentors chosen from leading hands, workshop controllers or others in the dealership. These individuals are selected for their communication skills, experience and knowledge of the industry, and they provide support for the apprentices in the workshop training. These individuals have also completed three units or

more in the certificate IV to act as trainers or training support. They can provide 'soft sign-offs' that apprentices have completed a unit of competence, which is later verified by the TAFE teacher or trainer. The workshop mentor is expected to allocate two hours per week for one-on-one training and contact with each apprentice, with a maximum of three to five apprentices each. Some dealerships have moved their mentors to a full-time role, actively tracking the progress and providing support at the three training delivery points: in the workshop, at Toyota's training facility and in the TAFE Institute. In addition, teaching staff visit every apprentice on the job

- ✧ delivery in multiple locations through trainers travelling to urban and regional locations across multiple dealerships in Queensland and Victoria
- ✧ smaller class sizes than the typical TAFE targets of 13–16 students, so allowing more one-to-one contact that is seen to be necessary for a more accelerated approach to learning and instruction.

The accelerated apprenticeship is also linked into other pathways. For example, a Fast Track Adult certificate II training program allows mature-age entries into a certificate II, as well as being linked to a school-based certificate II for Year 11 and Year 12 students. The certificate II trains applicants to complete straight service work. With the completion of the certificate II, students can complete the certificate III in another one year and ten months.

To date, drop-out rates are low, with reports that 138 of 141 Queensland apprentices have completed Year 1, which involves 400 hours of training.

The expected outcomes of this set of certificate II and III training programs is the provision of skilled staff who can complete either basic service work or the growing amount of more specialist diagnostic work in Toyota dealerships across Australia. With related support through more targeted training and access to workshop mentors, it is hoped that staff will have skill sets that better match dealership expectations. The more repetitive routine service work will be completed by individuals trained only to the level of certificate II, with appropriate workshop supervision, while more talented and ambitious individuals complete a certificate III, which opens the door to more advanced technical work, as well as career paths into other roles in Toyota dealerships. These roles are seen to be a response to the compartmentalising of qualifications to better meet current skill deficits, as well as longer-term trends in their industry. As one trainer put it:

> Those trained in a certificate II are more comfortable doing the repetitive service work. Certificates III find that they are not using the skills and knowledge that they trained so hard to get. They become grease monkeys changing oil and kicking tyres. They are the ones who are more likely to walk if their expectations are not met, including better pay, more challenging work and career paths.

To date, the industry reports that the retention of accelerated apprentices is very good, with only a few leaving the training. Intakes are about 50 each for 2006 and 2007 in Queensland, and about 100 per year in Victoria, through Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE. The majority of participants are in their late teens and early twenties. A small number have completed pre-vocational programs for the automotive industry of around 16 weeks before the accelerated program. Class numbers are between five and ten in some Queensland regional locations, but students are happy with the smaller class sizes and the benefits for learning and learner support from teachers and trainers. The large metropolitan dealerships in particular have come on board. Most importantly, they are signing off on competencies as they are achieved and, therefore, fully supporting the fast-tracking of apprentices to completion.

In the interviews there was considerable support for, and recognition of, the valuable role being played by the part-time workshop mentors—at some considerable financial cost to dealerships to free up these individuals from other duties. They were seen to be playing a critical role in managing the planning of training, appropriately allocating tasks in the workshop to assist skills development, being actively interested in each apprentice, and being available for one-on-one support and

mentoring of apprentices. Their role was seen as central to both the currently high retention rates and to building a good long-term relationship between the apprentice and the dealership that might encourage them to stay upon completion of their training.

Some Toyota dealerships, however, are watching the pilot and remaining with the traditional apprenticeship because of some scepticism around fast-tracking. Nevertheless, the vast majority of apprentices are seen to be satisfied and want to be fast-tracked to complete their qualification earlier and to access higher pay. But, as noted: 'Some want to get through faster but really they do not want to put in the effort required if they really want to get engaged in this more intensive approach'.

Other potential models

First off, it is worth noting that various Victorian associations; for example, the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce (VACC) and Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV), are also applying forms of fast-tracking for automotive qualifications. However, keeping the focus upon Queensland as the case study, the Motor Trades Association of Queensland (MTA-Q) through MTA Training is the largest provider of automotive vocational training in Queensland. MTA-Q Training has over 1500 automotive apprentices and trainees across Queensland.

The training model that MTA-Q has traditionally adopted is workplace-based training using trainers who are based from Cairns to the Gold Coast, as well as west to Toowoomba and Emerald. The key responsibility of the trainers is for the development and training of the apprentices. It is a four-year flexible delivery model of competency-based training, with a major focus upon workplace-based training and assessment.

MTA-Q is mentioned in this report, because it is in the early days of working through the potential components of an accelerated model of around 30 months duration, participants graduating with a certificate IV qualification. Moreover, of most interest here is that their ideal accelerated model, rather than being developed from experience of the traditional approach to the training of apprentices, would evolve from their experience with a training model with considerable experience in the delivery of face-to-face training combined with extensive workplace consolidation. This model is seen by MTA-Q to be more relevant to students who choose a learning approach other than that associated with full-time employment. The initiative aims to increase productivity through higher-level qualifications and skills at the certificate IV level and skills that MTA-Q argues would not normally be achieved for several years post-trade under current practices.

Thus, based on a combination of their current model and residential training, their proposed accelerated model is likely to involve consideration of the following building blocks:

- ✧ a flexible learning model of 30 months duration with a combination of workplace-based and residential training and assessment that relies upon trainers building good working relationships with apprentices and employers
- ✧ the application of recognition of prior learning prior to commencement of a training contract and plan
- ✧ the use of a 2-day residential training week over 32 weeks in each year, with equivalent time in work placements across a variety of MTA-Q employer members. The intention would be to have two students filling a single employment position. This would provide the employer the equivalent to one full-time apprentice at any given time and provide industry with an increase in qualified tradespersons at the end of the 30 months. The model would best suit larger employers with increased demand. However, it would not exclude small businesses interested in this model
- ✧ considerable opportunities for face-to-face training by trainers, both in simulated workshops and classrooms, using training aids, training plans, record books, assessment items and materials for consolidation, as well as regular visits for one-on-one training and support for each apprentice undertaking work placement and employment

- use of the MTA-Q's membership of employers for access to workplaces for apprentices to consolidate their training at different stages in their apprenticeship
- MTA-Q is considering this model to address the skills shortage, with a significant focus on both underpinning knowledge and workplace consolidation and with competency outcome being the main driver. The model is considered an additional option to skill tradespersons rather than a replacement model.

Benefits and concerns identified by apprentices, employers and teachers and trainers

Table 2 presents a summary of the general benefits of and concerns over accelerated apprenticeships raised by apprentices, employer groups and teachers and trainers. It needs to be noted that this table is based on the experiences predominantly of those in the automotive industry, but it is still expected to be generally applicable to many other industries.

Overall, while it is an oversimplification of the state of play, the benefits of an accelerated apprenticeship model are seen to weigh more towards apprentices and employers than to the training provider.

For apprentices, the benefits they report include the completion of a nationally recognised qualification in a shorter time period and the associated benefits of having less time on the training wage, and gaining full wages once qualified. The shorter time frame also was attractive to older apprentices, who often had financial commitments associated with young families that precluded a long time on a low training wage.

For employers, the benefits were access to a larger pool of trained staff, who are attracted into apprenticeships not just as school leavers, but also as more mature adults. The accelerated model attracts a wider pool of apprenticeship candidates and produces more trained staff to allow them to respond better to skills shortages.

On the other hand, the concerns raised were mostly by the training providers, and to a lesser degree, by the employers. It is also interesting that the list of concerns was more extensive, but this might be expected in any new initiative that requires structural, administrative and cultural change. Providers were concerned about standards being eroded by the fast-tracking of apprentices. There was also evidence that some types of learners; that is, younger or with less industry experience, have more difficulty keeping up with the pace of training and assessment.

There was also evidence that administration had to be much tighter and better coordinated and completed than in traditional apprenticeships. This issue can be exacerbated because of the turnover of teaching and administrative staff and the tighter time frames required to complete contracts, training plans and record books. Another issue was the financial viability of the training. Providers report that the training being delivered was not cost-effective for them under their current funding arrangements. On the other hand, apprentices and employers like the smaller class sizes, while the smaller teacher–student ratio was perceived to help the learner respond better to the extra demands of this more intensive and accelerated form of training.

Table 2 Summary of the broad benefits of and concerns over accelerated models by apprentices, employers and training providers

Benefits	Concerns
Apprentices	**Apprentices**
Achieve a qualification in a shorter time period	Accelerated learning of competencies over a reduced time period that require more time, study and effort
Quicker access to a higher wage	Concerns that some learners cannot cope with the fast-track nature of the learning and skills acquisition that is required, and thus drop out
Early exit points (e.g. certificate II) for those who only require more basic training	Despite the acceleration, their employers will not sign off on the completed competencies
Assists experienced but not formally qualified persons to gain a formal qualification that is nationally recognised	
Attracts more mature workers to a trade owing to the shorter time period and reduced lost opportunity costs to them and their families	
Increased application of recognition of prior learning that allowed earlier completion of training and the recognition of prior industry experience	
Employer	**Employer**
Increase in the pool of qualified tradespersons	Reduced time for recovery of 'lost productivity' due to accelerated training
Apprentices trained more on the job with associated productivity benefits for the business	Potentially more attrition from an accelerated program due to learning demands on the student
Early exit points (e.g. certificate II) for those who only require more basic training	More effort and cost required in supporting apprentices learning in the workplace through the provision of workplace mentors and better monitoring of the quality of on-the-job learning
Adoption of more flexible forms of training partnerships and cooperation between the employer and the training organisation	More attention to the appropriate screening processes to identify suitable applicants to enter an accelerated program
Responds to the greater levels of skill segmentation that are now occurring in the industry between routine and more specialist skill sets	Increased threats of poaching by other employers who do not train
Increased productivity and morale of employees, who are better trained, qualified more quickly and higher paid	
Training provider	**Training provider**
Extends their capabilities around the design and delivery of more flexible training that applies competency-based learning, recognition of prior learning, closer industry partnering and coordination	More attention to the appropriate screening processes to identify suitable applicants
Builds better relationships with industry with other spin-offs	Potentially more attrition from an accelerated program due to the pace and learning and assessment demands on the student
Re-invigorates apprenticeship numbers in some trades where numbers are low and declining	Managing more intensive and flexible delivery that requires good levels of coordination and cooperation between the apprentice, employer and training provider
Because of the shorter time period, develops skills around providing more consistent quality training and administration across all parts of apprenticeship, including school-based, on-the-job and off-the-job	Risks to the quality of the training due to pressure upon teachers to sign off on competencies that are not fully demonstrated
Builds relationships with schools where school-based programs will need to be well run and administered to support accelerated apprenticeships	More effort with some learners who cannot cope with the fast-track nature of learning
	The fragmentation of qualifications to training only for specific competencies or lower skills sets like a certificate II
	Declining subsidies to provider due to application of recognition of prior learning and smaller class sizes that are not supported by current funding models, especially in more regional locations

Accelerated apprenticeship pilots in other industries

The focus of this report is upon the application of the accelerated model in the automotive industry. However, before offering an ideal model, it is worth providing a brief overview of the application of various models for fast-track pilots in other industries. Reviews of such pilots are becoming available for some industries such as the minerals industry (National Skills Shortage

Strategy Minerals Working Group 2006). For the current report, additional information was gained during 2007 from the Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts into a number of accelerated apprenticeship applications and funded pilots in other industries.

The objective of this brief review is to reveal evidence of supporting or additional design features that are being built into other accelerated models and which might inform an ideal model. In addition, this review shows the similarities, but also the differences across industries in how they are planning their accelerated models of apprenticeship training. These pilots included:

- an accelerated cookery pilot to respond to the shortage of qualified patisserie and pastry chefs through modifications to the Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery)
- a mature-age apprenticeship program to produce electrotechnology systems technicians to address a skills shortage in the electrotechnology industry
- a new training model for selected apprenticeships in the building and construction industry in tiling, plastering, and painting and decorating
- carpentry apprenticeships for mature-age unemployed people to complete the Certificate III General Construction – Carpentry
- accelerated Certificate III in Printing and Graphic Arts (Printing) to respond to a skills shortage in printing machinists.

A review of these accelerated apprenticeships revealed the following:

Selection, screening and target groups

- up-front screening of applicants covering literacy and numeracy assessment, prior skills and experience, attitudes, including the use of initial interviews and meetings with applicants
- apprentices undergoing up-front skills assessment and a recognition of prior learning mapping exercise against units of competency within the qualification
- covering a range of applicants, with some industries deliberately targeting 17 to 19-year-old applicants who had completed Year 12 (printing machinists program); the intentional targeting of people over 25 years of age who are mature workers currently employed in semi-skilled or unskilled roles in the industry (for example, electrotechnology); a broad target group that includes school leavers, as well as unqualified people currently working in the industry but without qualifications (for example, commercial cookery); and groups that include the long-term unemployed (for example, carpentry).

Training model

- the training model defined according to stages or levels that are matched, but accelerated against the time frames of the traditional form of apprenticeship in the industry
- targeted completion times of 30 months for the qualifications in printing, commercial cookery, carpentry, and for the set of qualifications in construction; that is, tiling, plastering, and painting and decorating; while 36 to 42 months for electrotechnology
- apprentices unable to achieve competency within the target period continue in training up to the nominal period of the training contract. On the other hand, outstanding candidates able to demonstrate the required levels of skills and knowledge can complete under the targeted completion time
- training plans developed as in a traditional apprenticeship for each apprentice with the employer
- the use of employers as well as group training organisations to host the training of apprentices, and to provide ongoing employment

- the use of cohorts of applicants who complete the accelerated apprenticeship together. The use of small cohorts of applicants is seen to allow more personalised attention from trainers, teachers and supervisors. Keeping the cohort together so that they proceed through the training in a small group provides support and shared experiences of the accelerated program. In the carpentry qualification, the model identified apprentices in groups of five, with a building supervisor for each group of five. The electrotechnology qualification model offers training in apprenticeship cohorts according to the levels of competence, noting that their applicant group are mature-age workers who are already in the industry in a variety of non-skilled and semi-skilled roles as trade assistants and experienced staff
- up-front intensive training to promote early delivery of competencies to ensure job readiness. This up-front training is seen to meet employer needs for apprentices who are more immediately useful in the workplace, while the inclusion of the up-front training allows them to earn wages from day one of their training. This use of intensive up-front training programs includes 26 weeks in the carpentry program; 60% of the total off-the-job training delivery completed prior to release into the workforce in the construction industry program model, including the use of an eight-week block release program upon commencement of the apprenticeship; and 16 weeks of intensive pre-trade training with the training provider at the commencement of the commercial cookery training program
- the traditional application of regular block release at defined times in the program, but with the block release periods being shorter. The models are attempting to deliver a range of training periods that allow greater flexibility in delivery, although all models accept limits due to the availability of resources. In the commercial cookery pilot, for example, after the 16-week intensive training period at the training provider, the apprentice is placed for 16 weeks with a host employer in industry as a first year apprentice. During this period, a series of monitoring visits, host employer interaction and workplace assessments take place to demonstrate that competencies have been transferred to the job. If the apprentice is seen to show workplace competency that meets the industry standard, they progress to Year 2 status. Next, they move into another 16-week period with a host employer, and again as per above, once assessed as competent, they progress to Year 3 status. The next stage involves an eight-week full-time block of training and progression to Year 3 status at the training organisation. The apprentices complete a 36-week placement with the host employer as a Year 3 status apprentice, and upon completion of demonstration of competencies in the workplace, they progress to Year 4 status. The final training period involves 24 weeks with the host employer in industry as a Year 4 apprentice
- on-the-job training that attempts to use more flexible approaches and strategies to ensure apprentices are given every opportunity to achieve what can be quite challenging targets in the planned skills development schedule. Linked to this is the use of more intensive assessment practices to ensure that apprentices gain recognition for their workplace competence in accordance with the tighter time frame than in the traditional training plan

Other facilitators and supports for fast-tracking the apprenticeship

- wage progression that is linked to achievement by competency levels in the training package (for example, electrotechnology, printing, construction). Some of these pilot schemes have achieved special industrial relations agreements that allow competency-based wage progression that ensures apprentices receive wages that are above current time-based levels, in line with the increased levels of productivity on an accelerated program. In the construction pilot for painting and decorating, for example, this mapping of wages against the completion of the 24 funded competencies provided 25% of the full apprenticeship wage at level 1 to 2 (6 completed competencies), 50% at level 2 to 3 (12 competencies), 75% at level 3 to 4 (18 competencies), and 100% of the wage at the completion of the 24 competencies
- provision of mentoring and support through visits by the registered training organisation's coordinator twice per stage (electrotechnology); as these are also seen as opportunities to capture valid opportunities that emerge for progression of training; and the use of three half-day 'on track' sessions at levels 1, 2 and 3 of the program

- alternative training and assessment sessions or reasonable adjustment to existing training and assessment methods for participants who request or require additional assistance
- additional support for learning in some models, which includes involvement in the activities of the professional organisations, including industry forums (for example, commercial cookery and electrotechnology), with meetings with key industry associations and organisations; and the use of guest lecturers from industry to deliver sessions during block release to familiarise apprentices with industry expectations and to accelerate skill and knowledge development (for example, printing and commercial cookery)
- deliberate selection of employers who demonstrate an attitude that is supportive of skills development and assessment of skills on the job, and the modified employment arrangements required for the accelerated model of training (for example, printing).

An ideal model

Major features

The focus upon the automotive industry was included to provide a case study of what a large industry, in terms of its size, contributions to our economy and in skill requirements, is doing to attract, train, support and retain its apprentices. It is worth noting that the traditional model for training apprentices in this industry is still going strong and has much support from apprentices, employers and training providers. However, driving the establishment for pilots of more accelerated models is the need for the automotive industry to be open to more flexible, innovative and more effective ways of training a wider variety of types of apprentices so that they will be attracted to seeing their longer-term future with this industry.

Based upon the interviews and meetings with apprentices, employers and training providers, this section proposes some guidelines for the key elements that need to be considered as necessary components of new models of apprentice training for accelerated learning and training. In the interviews, the widely held view was that it was not possible to apply the same accelerated model to all apprenticeships in all industries. On the other hand, there was general agreement that the experiences to date with various pilots had identified some 'essentials' and some 'nice to have' elements. The major features of an ideal model are discussed in this section.

Preparing the way

Checking employers' understanding and assumptions

Many employers still do not fully understand the nature of competency-based training. It can be assumed that the additional workplace training demands of an accelerated model will make such misunderstandings even more likely to derail the accelerated program, including an unwillingness to sign off on acquired competencies.

In an ideal model, training organisations need to invest considerable time and effort up front to explain to employers the:

- ✧ nature of competency-based training
- ✧ need to develop a supportive workplace climate for training
- ✧ need for more employer involvement in meetings with trainers and their apprentices to plan, organise and facilitate apprentices' progress through the units of competence.

Studies of apprenticeship non-completions cite the lack of effort by employers to support learning in the workplace. An accelerated program, with more workplace learning, will heighten such concerns.

There are related strategies to deal with this concern. One is the careful selection of more motivated, supportive employers with considerable experience of the demands of traditional apprenticeships. Only these types of employers are allowed to take on accelerated apprentices. A second and related strategy is to gain the commitment from employers to provide in-house support through allocating trained staff to coach and mentor apprentices; for example, workplace or workshop mentors.

Selecting the right participants

An accelerated program provides little time for, as one respondent put it, 'drifting along'. Because of the training and learning demands of the program, there is a need to check the literacy, numeracy and other aptitudes of applicants for this form of apprenticeship up front. There needs to be behavioural evidence from previous life experiences that the apprentice is mature enough to cope with the demands of this form of training arrangement on their work and personal lives. As a result, there is a need to train those in the industry in how to design and conduct selection interviews that tap into past behaviours, as well as ask interviewees to respond to hypothetical cases.

The focus of the pilots to date on mature-age participants, including people already with prior industry qualifications and experience, reflects recognition of these issues. Those who are seen by teachers to cope less well are generally younger, with less family and work support, little prior experience in the industry, and who are still unsure about their ambitions in life. Those interviewed also remarked on the preference for brighter students to be selected for this more accelerated form of learning; or, as one industry person argued:

> You do not want people who are too bright, and they just get frustrated, bored and leave. But you also do not want those that we get in because they are warm and vertical. Those with sound achievement at school or at work, and who show commitment and initiative, are ones we want for any fast-tracked training.

Another respondent concluded: 'For those with the capacity, the accelerated training is a real bonus for them'.

Selecting the right teachers and trainers

Many interviewees highlighted that the central challenge in making accelerated models work will not be a lack of imagination on the part of teachers and trainers over how to package an accelerated program. The real challenge is seen to be in the implementation rather than in the design. These fast-track programs need to be backed by what was described in some interviews as the 'new breed of teacher'. These teachers and trainers are more comfortable with pushing the training along, more tolerant of change, they want to innovate, and are always looking out for workplaces and employers that want to try new approaches. They are able to build trusting and supportive relationships with industry. As was said many times in the interviews and demonstrated by the pilots of accelerated approaches, teachers who can win the trust and support of employers are a critical component to the success of non-traditional approaches to training.

Using apprentice cohorts

Many pilots of accelerated models have attempted to take apprentices through as a cohort that will complete the accelerated apprenticeship together. The use of small cohorts of applicants allows for more personalised attention from trainers, teachers and supervisors. Furthermore, efforts to keep the cohort together mean the provision of support and shared experiences of an accelerated learning experience. A cohort approach is advocated here in the ideal model. However, to make cohorts work, a great deal of effort is needed up front in the selection process to make sure that applicants are of similar abilities.

The reality to date, however, is that many efforts to keep cohorts together have failed due to administrative issues, different levels of participants' performance, and the wide range of personal and social issues that are known to have an impact upon individuals in their late teens and twenties.

Employer involvement in the program design

Pilots of accelerated training have shown the value of incremental changes that modify the existing traditional model of apprenticeships, rather than introducing more radical transformational change that rejects almost all of what has occurred before. As noted in this report, the traditional model

is not under threat. It is well respected, and it works. For instance, a large part of most industries still prefers the use of block release. However, apprenticeships need to continue to evolve if they are to stay relevant, and pilots or spin-offs do promote innovation in training, as in other fields of endeavour.

A conclusion of this report is that industry is likely to want to be engaged in accelerated models if they are seen to be a development on the widely respected traditional approach. Defining an accelerated training model according to stages or levels that are matched but accelerated against the time frames of the traditional apprenticeship in the industry is likely to gain the support of industry. Adopting tried and tested elements from more traditional models, the automotive industry and other pilots reveals that accelerated approaches need to continue to:

- ✧ explore and apply the adoption of training plans
- ✧ track knowledge transfer through formal classroom instruction, workbooks, projects and assignments
- ✧ seek opportunities for online pre-course study
- ✧ test skills transfer through simulations, supervised on-the-job activities and on-the-job experience
- ✧ use a variety of assessment tools to motivate and challenge learning (for example, tests, presentations, and training record book, online tasks and participation).

As shown in the Queensland case study, a great deal of groundwork needs to be done with industry in working through the implications of more fast-track approaches. Considerable effort was put into industry consultation and in gaining industry feedback about the duration of apprenticeships in the lead-up to the launch of various industry pilots. An earlier review gained support for an expected duration which became the benchmark time frame within which an unskilled entrant can be expected to complete the apprenticeship. The key here is 'unskilled entrant'. With industry support, adjustments were locked into the nominal terms of many apprenticeships.

This same report also set up parameters and agreements in cases where outstanding candidates, who are able to demonstrate the required levels of skills and knowledge, could complete within the targeted completion time. In addition, apprentices unable to achieve competency within the target period are able to continue training up to the nominal period of the training contract.

Up-front training

Online delivery of some underpinning knowledge

A number of pilots of accelerated models are making clever use of e-learning technologies and flexible delivery to cover various aspects of underpinning knowledge up front either at the pre-apprenticeship stage or within the apprenticeship. This use of technology both for learning and assessment is a key enabler that needs to be incorporated in an ideal approach to an accelerated program of training for apprentices.

Intensive pre-apprenticeship training

An essential part of the ideal model is the use of up-front intensive training, either as a pre-apprenticeship or built into the early stage of the apprenticeship. The use of intensive periods of time has proved to be critical to ensuing accelerated completion. Delivery of on- and off-the-job training components from 16 to 26 weeks or more in the earliest stages of the apprenticeship is common in most accelerated models. The pre-apprenticeship programs can include forms of intensive up-front training that takes the 'unskilled entrant' to a skill level where they are more useful and productive upon employment.

The up-front intensive training promotes early delivery of competencies to ensure job readiness. Significantly, up-front training is seen to meet employer needs for apprentices who are more immediately useful in the workplace, while the inclusion of the up-front training allows them to earn wages from day one of their training. This use of intensive up-front training programs like that seen in this review included 26 weeks up front in the carpentry program and 16 weeks of intensive pre-trade training with the training provider at the commencement of the commercial cookery training program.

Application of recognition of prior learning

The success of an accelerated model relies on the full use of recognition of prior learning and skills recognition activities undertaken by capable and experienced teachers and trainers. As mentioned earlier, the accelerated model better suits certain types of people. They include mature-age applicants who have existing industry experience gained from working in unskilled and semi-skilled roles or people with existing overseas qualifications who are entering the industry.

However, the associated challenges are that teachers need to be more knowledgeable and skilled in recognition of prior learning. Also, employers need to be more supportive about its use to reduce the repetition and redundancy clearly apparent in apprenticeships for people with some industry experience gained through semi-skilled activities. To facilitate this process of recognition of prior learning, the training provider needs to complete up front a review of all elements of the off-the-job training component of qualifications. This action determines that the content is relevant to the employer and that there is a match between the required competencies of an employer and the competencies present in training packages.

Building in certificate II qualifications

Given the continued segmentation occurring in many Australian industries, the establishment of certificate II training within certificate III training is a key aspect in the design of accelerated apprenticeships. This design feature moves apprenticeships away from a 'one size fits all' approach that has been dominant in traditional apprenticeships. The certificate II component allows students with different levels of talent and motivation to exit with an industry qualification that allows them to complete essential and important roles in the workplace. It also provides many industries with what they need—skilled workers who are willing to do repetitive tasks that those fully qualified apprentices find to be an underutilisation of their knowledge and skills.

Core training elements

On-the-job delivery

On-the-job training needs are being very carefully considered in this new form of partnership between training organisations and employers. The training organisations must be open to review and to challenge the 'what' and the 'how' of learning, especially in relation to what industry reports as being redundant skills in modern high-tech businesses. Many training organisations are incorporating industry or the client company's terminology into the training and training plans to better match training packages with industry requirements.

To allow these new models of fast-tracking to work, teachers need to use more flexible approaches and strategies to ensure that apprentices are given every opportunity to achieve what can be quite challenging targets in the planned skills development schedule in tight time frames. Linked to this is the use of more intensive assessment processes to ensure that apprentices gain recognition for their workplace competence in accordance with the tighter time frame than the requirements of the traditional training plan.

A critical component, therefore, is workplace learning and workplace assessment, supported by frequent visits, the establishment of trusting relationships with the employers, and flexibility and innovation in the scheduling and approach to training. A series of monitoring visits, host employer interaction and workplace assessments needs to occur as in more traditional models to demonstrate that competencies have been transferred to the job. If the apprentice is seen to show workplace competency that meets the industry standard, they are progressed.

This last point also raises the need for providers to monitor carefully any evidence that employers are not following through on the commitment to a training contract that supports accelerated completion. This was evident in some pilots where employers had a change of heart and, to keep apprentices longer at various stages, didn't sign off the competencies. Such monitoring and support can also promote alternative training and assessment sessions or reasonable adjustment to existing training and assessment methods for participants who request or require additional assistance due to the demands of the fast-tracked program.

Off-the-job delivery

In order to work, the ideal accelerated model of apprenticeship requires the intensive delivery of flexible and customised training off the job at critical stages of the apprenticeship, including the use of intensive modules, residentials, and intensive forms of workplace training and assessment. What employers and providers need to be wary of, however, is the ability of learners to cope with the demands of these intensive periods of training. In particular, to work well they require the additional support of teachers and employers, including workplace mentors who support and manage the demands of the off-the-job learning, projects and assessment, and teaching staff skilled in designing, delivering and administering such intensives.

There is still a place for the traditional application of regular block release at defined times in the program, but with the block release periods being shorter. The piloted accelerated models are attempting to deliver a range of training periods that allow greater flexibility in delivery, although all models accept limits due to the availability of resources.

Workplace mentors

Workplace mentors are a critical element in the successful operation of an accelerated model of apprenticeship. They are typically full-time employees and are allowed by their employers to assume the formal role of dedicated workshop mentors. In the automotive industry, mentors are being selected from the workshop controller, master technician positions or similarly skilled and highly experienced trade-qualified individuals. Their role is part-time, but could be made full-time if the numbers of apprentices are large. They provide not only one-to-one training, but also broader mentoring and active case management. They manage the administrative side of the apprentices' on- and off-the-job training, including the checks of the completion of training contracts, training plans, record books, and checks on the attendance, progress and completion of assessment and competencies.

An ideal accelerated model also needs to consider the provision of mentoring by others inside or outside the business who provide more general support for apprentices encouraging them to explore life and career options and talking through their longer-term aspirations.

Employer partnerships and networks

An ideal model of accelerated apprenticeships highlights the need for strong partnerships between training providers and employers. These relationships involve a greater acceptance of differences between employers in how they want training delivered. This can include variations in the delivery of flexible and customised training off the job at critical stages of the apprenticeship, including the use of intensive modules, residentials, workplace training and assessment.

Furthermore, the ideal accelerated model requires access to the latest technologies in the place of employment or other workplaces. For some training providers, this means both the acceptance that their equipment is no longer suitable and the need to build relationships that allow access to modern equipment within the industry itself. Another element of accelerated models therefore is more delivery of training through alliances made by teachers with a variety of workplaces that allow teachers and students in small groups to access the modern technology and equipment that is more typically present in larger organisations.

Supporting elements

Any accelerated model needs good links with a well-delivered school-based apprenticeship and VET in Schools programs. The implementation of accelerated apprenticeships needs to be matched by parallel developments and enhancements of school-based training so that Year 11 and Year 12 training is more fully recognised and accredited than currently towards completion of the certificate III qualifications. Our interviewees believed that the school-based training is highly variable across different locations, but if made more uniform and consistent across locations, it can be better integrated into the up-front component of an accelerated apprenticeship.

The type of student who is expected to be more attracted to accelerated models of training is likely to require further development of pathways into more advanced training and more senior roles in organisation. Advanced diploma and higher qualifications from the certificate III qualifications can provide training and support for those trade-qualified individuals who want to stay in the technical side of an organisation, but who, because of their talents, ambitions and performance, move over time into more administrative, customer service, and business operations roles. In the automotive sector, such higher paid roles include service adviser, team leader and service or parts manager. Or possibly over time, they may wish to move into the customer service and sales side of the organisation to take up roles as vehicle sales staff, vehicle sales manager, general manager and dealer principal.

Higher levels of monitoring of apprentices' progress are also needed as a major support for the accelerated approach. The evolution of the role of the departmental or field officer who will visit employers and apprentices needs to continue to support apprentices and employers who choose to consider fast-tracking, with its additional challenges associated with timetabling, completion of placements and assessments in shorter time frames. These officers are required to work with teachers, the workplace mentors or their equivalents to check and monitor any on-the-job and off-the-job factors affecting the progress and completion of apprenticeships. As shown in the existing pilots, additional supports for learning in some models include more involvement by apprentices in the activities of the professional organisations. This involvement can include attendance at industry forums, meetings with key industry associations and organisations, and the use of guest lecturers from industry to deliver sessions during intensive training or block release to familiarise apprentices with industry expectations.

Another desirable is the need for structures that allow wage progression linked to progress in competency levels in the training package. Various pilot schemes have established industrial relations agreements that allow competency-based wage progression. These arrangements ensure that apprentices receive wages above current time-based levels, in line with the increased levels of productivity of the apprentice on an accelerated program.

Finally, the position taken here is that accelerated models are not radical departures from existing practice. Essentially they are best built upon the finest traditional model. They do offer special benefits but, as described in the ideal model proposed here, there are additional financial costs to the system and pressures upon apprentices, employers and trainers that need to be managed well. However, an important outcome that many in these three groups want is an alternative to the 'one size fits all' model that still dominates apprenticeship training today.

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Appendix: Method

Members of the Steering Committee

Troy Knox, Executive Officer, Queensland Automotive Skills Alliance

Tim Maloney, Director Apprenticeship Reform, Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts (DETA)

Wayne Rutledge, Senior Program Officer and recent automotive teacher, DETA

List of respondents interviewed

Representatives of employer groups

Dr Anna Bodi, Director, CWCC Pty Ltd, Melbourne

Brett Dale, General Manager, MTA-Q Training, Brisbane

Ron Emery, Corporate Services Manager, AP Eagers

Steve Finlay, TNP National Manager, Toyota

Troy Knox, Executive Officer, Queensland Automotive Skills Alliance

Dr Glen Maggs, Director, CWCC Pty Ltd, Melbourne

Representatives associated with training organisations, and those funding the apprenticeships

Terry Atkinson, Industry Assessor

Chris Amos, Business Manager Automotive, Technician and Trade Skills Institute

Susie Ball, Senior Project Officer, Training Initiatives, DETA

Tim Maloney, Director Apprenticeship Reform, DETA

Phillip Murphy, Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE

Graeme Muller, Teacher, SkillsTech Australia

Barry Nutter, Chair of the Training Employment Recognition Council

George Pritchard, Industry Assessor

Robert Rigg, Assistant Regional Director, DETA

Wayne Rutledge, Senior Program Officer, DETA

Wayne Stephens, DETA, Manager Stakeholder and Industry Relation, DETA

Trevor Torrens, Director, Stakeholder Engagement, DETA

Peter Walker, Industry Portfolio Manager, DETA

Gary Webb, Teacher, Automotive

Current apprentices – 15 interviews

Interview questions

Q1. Are you:

1. Trainer or Teaching staff at a public provider
2. Trainer or Teaching staff at a private provider
3. Current apprentice
4. Industry association member
5. Other (describe)

Q2. Gender: 1. Male 2. Female

Q3. In your view, what are the strengths of the traditional model or way that has been used to train apprentices today for the various trades in the automotive industry? What are the shortcomings or problems with the traditional model?

Q4. In your view, what are the major reasons why we need to consider new ways to train apprentices across the various skill areas in the Australian automotive industry?

Q5. Do you see the impact of some of these reasons becoming even more important in the next few years? If so, what reasons in particular might become even more important as reasons for changing the traditional model for training apprentices?

Q6. What do you think are the major reasons for the existing skills shortages in this industry in many of its trade areas?

Q7. Do you think these shortages are just short term or they will be felt for the longer term.? Why do you think this?

Q.8 You or your apprentices are currently involved in an accelerated competency based apprenticeship model. What are the key features of this model that you like? What are the key features that you do not like and think need further attention?

Q9. What are the implications for the following in terms of the current accelerated model? What implications does the current accelerated model that is being trialed have for the following groups?

- ✧ What does it mean (positives and negatives) for employers?
- ✧ What does it mean (positives and negatives) for apprentices?
- ✧ What does it mean (positives and negatives) for those who supervise apprentices on-the-job?
- ✧ What does it mean (positives and negatives) for those who train apprentices at a TAFE or similar training organisation?
- ✧ What does it mean (positives and negatives) for how our high schools currently operate in preparing and supporting people who want to do a trade in the automotive industry?

Q10. In your view, what needs to be done to resolve the shortcomings or negatives that you have identified in the current accelerated model by?

- ✧ Employers
- ✧ Apprentices
- ✧ On-the-job supervisors
- ✧ Trainers and teachers
- ✧ Industry associations
- ✧ High schools
- ✧ Other

Q11. Finally, can we talk about other issues that you would like to expand upon further, or that you thought we would talk about, but really have not.

Additional interview questions specifically for current apprentices

Q1. What sort of apprenticeship program are you doing—probe that are doing accelerated or more traditional program?

Q2. How long do you expect to take to complete?

Q3. What do you like about the program?

Q4. Do you have any concerns about the accelerated nature of the apprenticeship?

Q5. How did you find out about the accelerated apprenticeship pilot program? (marketing/newspaper advertisement/NAC/Group Scheme etc)

Q6. Were you given an induction which explained the accelerated nature of the apprenticeship? (was it intensive prevocational training or recognition of prior learning with intensive gap training)

Q7. Did the induction help you understand how the length of your apprenticeship would be shortened?

Q8. How useful was the initial information given in assisting you to understand how the apprenticeship duration would be shortened through the explained acceleration strategies?

Q9. Do you know if your employer was told about the accelerated nature of the pilot and if so was any additional on-the-job support provided to you?

Q10. Did you get offered the intensive prevocational training ? Did you find the intensive prevocational training useful in accelerating your skills and knowledge, and/or helpful towards the apprenticeship?

Q11. Do you know what I mean by RPL? Did you have RPL offered and how easy was it for skills to be recognised?

Q12. Now that you are in apprenticeship, do you believe your skills are at the level you were accelerated to?

Q13. What benefits did you gain from undertaking an accelerated apprenticeship?

Q14. How can an accelerated apprenticeship program be improved?

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