

## Assessing the impact of NCVER's research: Case studies – Support document

JOHN STANWICK AND JO HARGREAVES

This document was produced by the author(s) based on their research for the report *Assessing the impact of NCVER's research*, and is an added resource for further information. The report is available on NCVER's website:  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au>>

The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government, state and territory governments or NCVER. Any errors and omissions are the responsibility of the author(s).

© Australian Government, 2009

This work has been produced by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) on behalf of the Australian Government and state and territory governments with funding provided through the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training. Apart from any use permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part of this publication may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Requests should be made to NCVER.

# Contents

---

Tables	3
Introduction to case studies	4
Using NCVER's model of impact in structuring the case studies	4
Case study 1: Contradicting the stereotype	6
1. The research purpose	6
2. Project details	7
3. Analysis of immediate indicators	7
4. Analysis of less immediate indicators	8
5. Overall observations	11
Case Study 2: Apprentice and trainee completion rates	12
1. The research purpose	12
2. Project details	13
3. Analysis of immediate indicators	13
4. Analysis of less immediate indicators	14
5. Overall observations	17
Case study 3: Aspects of training that meet Indigenous Australians' aspirations	19
1. The research purpose	19
2. Project details	20
3. Analysis of immediate indicators	21
4. Analysis of less immediate indicators	21
5. Other comments and overall observations	25
Case study 4: Recognition of prior learning	27
Full citations	27
1. The research purpose	28
2. Project details	28
3. Analysis of immediate indicators	30
4. Analysis of less immediate indicators	30
5. Other comments and overall observations	37
References	39
Attachment 1: Case study questionnaires	40
Researcher questionnaire	40
End user questionnaire	42

# Tables

---

Table 1: Organisation of case-studies	4
Table 2: Case study selection matrix	5
Table 3: Numbers of people interviewed for each case study	5
Table 4: Summary of citations	8
Table 5: Summary of citations	15
Table 6: Summary of citations	22
Table 7: Summary of citations	34
Table 8: Number of citations since time of publication	35
Table 9: Numbers of times reports downloaded	35

# Introduction to case studies

---

## Using NCVER's model of impact in structuring the case studies

The model of research impact that was developed following the workshop (see figure 2 in the main report) was used as an ordering principle for writing up the case studies. This model provides a simple pictorial representation of the research cycle and where the categories of impact fit within this cycle. A similar approach was also used in RAND Corporation publications where the logic model from the payback framework was used as an ordering principle<sup>1</sup>. More detail is shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Organisation of case-studies**

Stage		Sources of information
1	Research purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funded to meet a particular research priority through the adult literacy or NVETRE program</li> <li>• NCVER project – purpose identified at management retreat in line with research priorities and identified needs</li> <li>• Other funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project brief</li> <li>• Research priority documents</li> <li>• NCVER strategic plan</li> </ul>
2	Project details (research questions and conduct research) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes project description, research questions, and methods used as well as any resource implications and audience/dissemination plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project brief</li> <li>• Interview with key researchers</li> </ul>
3	Immediate impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge production</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bibliometric analysis</li> <li>• Interviews with key researchers and key informants / end users</li> <li>• NCVER dissemination plans</li> </ul>
4	Less immediate impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building</li> <li>• Informing policy</li> <li>• Informing practice</li> <li>• Workforce skills in industry and society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bibliometric analysis</li> <li>• Interviews with key informants</li> <li>• Document analysis</li> <li>• Records and logs maintained by researchers</li> </ul>
5	Overall observations	Case study write-up

Table 2 gives details of the case studies that were selected for the research. They are a combination of in-house and external research commissioned and managed by NCVER under the Adult Literacy Research Program (ALRP) 2002-2007 or the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation (NVETRE) Program. Three projects and a themed case study comprising six projects were chosen.

---

<sup>1</sup> See for example Wooding, Hanney, Buxton & Grant (2004)

**Table 2: Case study selection matrix**

Single projects	Themed
<p><b>Case study A</b> - Contradicting the stereotype: case studies of success despite literacy difficulties; Peter Waterhouse, Crina Virgona; published 12 October 2005</p>	<p><b>Case study D</b> - Recognition of prior learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Giving credit: a review of RPL and credit transfer in the VET sector 1995-2001; Brian Knight, Andrea Bateman; published 26 May 2003</li> <li>- Recognition of prior learning in the vocational education and training sector; Berwyn Clayton, Andrea Bateman, Kaye Bowman et al, published 6 August 2003</li> <li>- Valuing RPL: selected case studies of Australian private providers; Larry Smith; published 14 May 2004</li> <li>- What's in it for me? RPL in enterprise based RTOs; Kaaren Blom, Berwyn Clayton, Andrea Bateman et al; published 6 October 2004</li> <li>- Recognition of prior learning: At a glance; Jo Hargreaves; published 8 February 2006</li> </ul> <p>ALSO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Australia – country background report prepared for the OECD activity on recognition of non-formal and informal learning; prepared for DEST by Josie Misko, Francesca Beddie, Larry Smith; December 2006 and published September 2007<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Case study B</b> - Apprentice and trainee completion rates; Katrina Ball &amp; David John; published 12 August 2005</p>	
<p><b>Case study C</b> - Aspects of training that meet Indigenous Australians' aspirations: A systematic review of research; Cydde Miller; published 18 November 2005</p>	

Table 3 summarises the number of people interviewed for each case study. More detail is given in the case study write-ups.

**Table 3: Numbers of people interviewed for each case study**

	Case A	Case B	Case C	Case D
Principal researchers	1	1	1	2
End users	3	4	3	4

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training\\_skills/publications\\_resources/profiles/The Recognition of Non formal Informal Learning Aus.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/publications_resources/profiles/The%20Recognition%20of%20Non%20formal%20Informal%20Learning%20Aus.htm)

# Case study A: Contradicting the stereotype

---

Full citation: **Waterhouse, P & Virgona C 2005 Contradicting the stereotype: Case studies of success despite literacy difficulties, NCVER, Adelaide.**

This case study is based on documentary analysis of project files, publications and other outputs from the project, citation analysis and interviews with key informants.

## Key informants

The key informants identified for this case study were:

### *Researchers*

- ✧ The principal researcher.

### *End-users*

- ✧ A TAFE teacher from the Child and Family Studies area of a university;
- ✧ The manager of the adult literacy area of a large government department; and
- ✧ An education worker in a well known welfare organisation.

## 1. The research purpose

The purpose of the research was to identify the factors, strategies and experiences that have assisted those with literacy difficulties to be successful in the work environment, despite their limitations. In particular, the project profiled people that had literacy difficulties but nonetheless still achieved and sustained employment. This is an alternative to the usual approach that views people with literacy difficulties as deficient. In particular the project looked at:

- ✧ how they developed resilience in the face of setbacks and whether the strategies they developed are transferable to the world of work; and
- ✧ whether literacy teaching has helped and which teaching approaches interventions and resources have assisted in achieving sustained employment.

### 1.1 Project specification

The actual project topic was developed by the researchers. There was a reference group, which included adult literacy educators, that was established for the project. The reference group informed the design and conduct of the research.

## 1.2 Selection and funding source

The project was funded under the 2003 Adult Literacy Research Program. This program was managed by the NCVET between 2002 and 2007 and funded research in adult literacy and numeracy. The program was linked to the overall strategy for VET at the time – *Shaping our future*. The strategy specifically acknowledges handling new literacy demands.

## 2. Project details

### 2.1 Methodology

The research was qualitative in nature using a case study approach. Ten people identified as having been successful in the workplace but having low literacy levels (NRS level 3 and below) formed the basis of the case studies. The ten people were selected using a ‘snowball’ sampling technique. The participants were all from native English speaking backgrounds.

The main data collection method was face to face interviews. The data was auto recorded but there were also field notes and digital images taken. In addition, people were asked to bring to the interview personal items which symbolised for them some aspects of their success.

### 2.2 Dissemination plan

The main products from this research were:

- ✧ a formal report in NCVET’s 1:3:25<sup>3</sup> style; and
- ✧ a CD ROM exploring the findings of the research in various formats. Sections of the CD ROM were also deemed to be suitable for radio commentary or e-zine publication.

The research team had also planned to use networks with radio broadcasters and web publishers to disseminate research findings through various media.

### 2.3 Main findings

People can achieve success in their lives despite literacy difficulties. The strategies to achieve success however require perseverance and resilience. The use of technologies and networks is also seen as being important. The study also showed there can be broader interpretations of literacy than what is taught in the classroom. The authors say this points to a rethinking of what is thought to be ‘essential’ or ‘necessary’ regarding literacy skills. The report focuses on capabilities rather than perceived deficits.

## 3. Analysis of immediate indicators

### 3.1 Knowledge production

#### *Outputs*

In addition to the products mentioned above under dissemination plan, the research was featured in:

- *Fine Print*, the journal of the Victorian adult literacy field;

---

<sup>3</sup> Reports are written based on a one page About the research section incorporating Key Messages, a three page Executive Summary and the main body of the report being around 25 pages in length.

- *Literacy Link*, the newsletter of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy;
- *Life Matters*, on ABC Radio National, 9th November 2005;
- *Adult literacy research overviews* 2005.

## 4. Analysis of less immediate indicators

### 4.1 Knowledge production

#### *Citations*

##### *Reports*

- Dymock D 2007 Community adult language, literacy and numeracy provision in Australia: Diverse approaches and outcomes, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Dymock D 2007 Engaging adult learners: The role of non-accredited learning in language, literacy and numeracy, Adult learning Australia, Canberra.
- Fielding H 2006 Enabling literacy through community engagement, Commonwealth of Australia.
- Misko J 2006 Country background report: addressing the training and assessment needs of adults with low basic skills in Australia, paper prepared for the OECD Adelaide.
- Waterhouse P and Virgona C 2008 Working from strengths: venturing towards strength-based adult education, NCVER, Adelaide.

##### *Other*

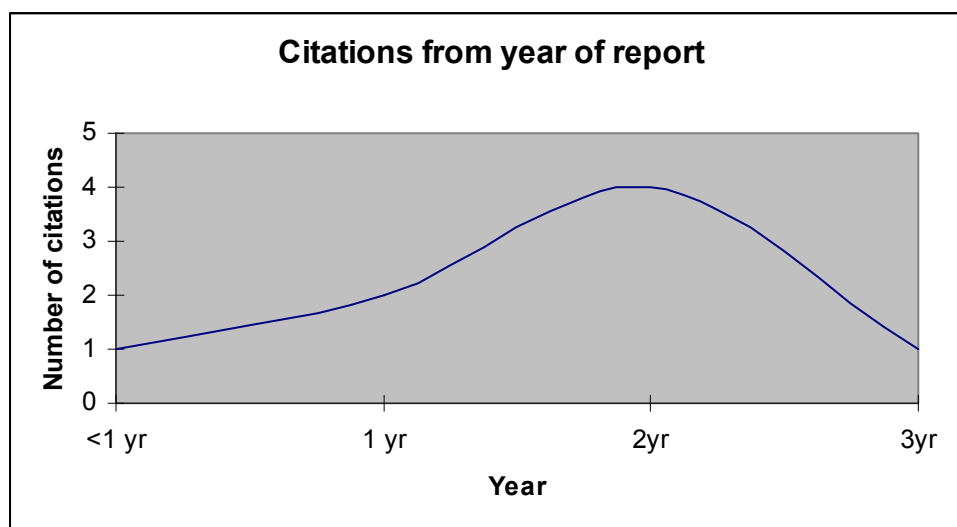
- Curlewis M 2007 The values that you hold: Encountering change in an adult community education program in Victoria, PhD thesis, RMIT university.
- Foster S and Beddie F 2005 Adult literacy and numeracy: At a glance, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Maher M 2007 Inclusive education a decade after democratisation: The educational needs of children with disabilities in KwaZulu-Natal, PHD Thesis, Auckland University of Technology.

**Table 4: Summary of citations**

Citation type	Number
Journal articles	
Reports	5
Conference papers	
Media	
Parliamentary database	
Other	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>

We can also chart when the citations took place in terms from time of the publication of the report. For the purposes of this exercise we used the categorisation less than one year from publication of report, about 1 year from publication, about 2 years from publication, and about 3 years from publication.

Figure 1: Number of citations by time from publication



The chart shows quite clearly that citations peaked about two years after the publication of the report. At about this time one would expect that the report would have filtered through the public domain and that people would have had time to cite it in their own reports.

#### *Media citations*

- ✧ Report contradicts limited literacy stereotype, *Training Packages @ Work*, Autumn 2006, p 3
- ✧ New adult literacy research reports soon to be released, *Literacy Matters SACAL Newsletter*, Summer 2005, p 6
- ✧ NCVET (Australia), *Literacy Works*, June 2005, p 3
- ✧ Success still possible despite lack of literacy skills, *Campus Review*, 23 November 2005, p 13
- ✧ Limited literacy study, Life Matters ABC, *Radio National*, 9 November 2005
- ✧ New NCVET publications, *e.Alert Workforce Information Service*, November 2005, p 3
- ✧ Contradicting the stereotype: Case studies of success despite literacy difficulties, *What's New Australian Policy Online*, 26 October 2005, p 2
- ✧ NCVET News #129, *The Communicator EDNA Online*, Issue 34, 19 October 2005, p 3

In addition to the above citations, this report has been downloaded 13,760 times from the NCVET website up until December 2008.

Furthermore, the report is referred to in various other news updates. For example, this report was referred to as a new report in *The Circular* produced by the Western Australian Department of Education, Australian Policy Online, UK National School of Government news posting, the policylink bulletin of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (Northern Ireland), Teacher magazine, NZ Literacy Portal, the Literacy Works newsletter by NZ Workbase, the Government Education Portal and the KRIVET website (Korea).

## 4.2 Capacity building

The points raised under capacity building all came from the principal researcher. The end-users interviewed did not identify any capacity building benefits.

The principal researcher identified a project that was a direct consequence of the *Contradicting the stereotype report*. This was an NCVER funded project called *Working from strengths*. The report for this project was published in 2008.

The principal researcher also mentioned that they (the researchers for this project) were further able to develop their multi-media and digital story telling capability. The capability was initiated not only by the *Contradicting the stereotype* project but also by

NCVER's encouragement for researchers to explore 'alternative' forms of representation for research data and stories (principal researcher)

This enhanced capability was also said to lead to winning tenders for further work.

The principal researcher also mentioned that the research has led to the development of new networks.

The exploration of strength-based practice, which emerged from this study, has taken us further into the community services and health sector. We are continuing to build on these relationships and networks.

### 4.3 Informing policy

Respondents found it difficult to cite specific examples of where the project has informed policy development. It seems to have played more of a role in awareness raising.

One of the dangers at the policy level is that public servant staff are 'removed' from the real world and human issues. Engaging with research like *Contradicting the stereotype* helps to reflect on these issues (end user).

The research was also used to inform end users stock take of knowledge. The adult literacy breakfast briefings (<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1703.html>) were said to be useful in this sense. One end user also mentioned that more broadly the suite of adult literacy projects could influence policy.

One end user also raised the issue of tension in that while policy focuses on the deficit model *contradicting the stereotype* talks about a strength based approach to adult literacy. While this report may raise awareness about the strength-based approach, respondents were not sure that it would influence policy.

The principal researcher also could not pinpoint any specific examples of where the research had informed policy development. However, he thought that there was an increasing recognition of strength-based approaches within the sector and perhaps the report has played a role in this.

### 4.4 Informing practice

Respondents could not pinpoint specific examples on informing practice. One end user said that the research confirmed the need for teachers to focus on strengths. Another said that it was a good vehicle for re-focusing on a non-deficit view of literacy.

The principal researcher said that actual practice impacts were hard to pin down. However, adult literacy practitioners had expressed an interest in the project at workshops and conferences, in particular the value of the digital stories. The principal researcher also mentioned that there was little incentive built into the system to disseminate or talk about the last piece of research to others.

One of the unfortunate consequences of the existing arrangements for publication and dissemination of research such as this, is that there are few genuine connections to the field, and no real incentives built into the system to encourage marketing and dissemination to potential 'end-users' or beneficiaries. Having conducted the research and

completed the report(s) etc. the researchers' attention is almost inevitably (and necessarily) moving onto the next competitive tender or proposal (principal researcher).

The principal researcher also mentioned a model in the ACE sector to address this concern. The model is known as *ACE circles of Professional Practice* and has been comprehensively evaluated and documented.

## 5. Overall observations

This project seemed to be more aimed at awareness raising and so it was difficult to point out any specific examples of where it had informed policy and practice. There were however some knowledge production impacts and capacity building impacts. The principal researcher seems to have benefitted from the research in terms of improving his skills and knowledge in digital story telling and also further work.

Respondents were also asked to rate on a scale from 1-5 how important various forms of dissemination were to facilitating impact. While not all respondents provided answers to all of the categories and also some qualified their responses the averages were:

Project reports	4.5
Seminars	4.8
Briefing papers	3.7
Media coverage	3.0
Academic publications	3.3
Discussions with policy makers	4.7

We see that seminars, discussions with policy makers and also reports are seen as very important forms of dissemination. In contrast media releases and academic publications were viewed as being relatively less important forms of dissemination. In addition these forms of dissemination, using innovative approaches with new technology were also mentioned as a good avenue for dissemination.

# Case Study B: Apprentice and trainee completion rates

---

Full citation: Ball K & John D 2005 *Apprentice and trainee completion rates*, NCVER, Adelaide.

## Key Informants

The key informants identified for this case study were:

### *Researchers*

- ✧ The principal researcher.

### *End-users*

- ✧ A Manager of Information Research in a state government department;
- ✧ Two employees from a state-based tribunal;
- ✧ The education and training manager of a major industry organisation; and
- ✧ A manager in a large government department.

## 1. The research purpose

Apprentices and trainees are regarded as an important entry point into the labour market for many. Completing an apprenticeship is considered an important indicator of the efficiency and effectiveness of the training system, although non-completion does not necessarily indicate a negative outcome.

NCVER collects information on contracts of training for apprentices and trainees. The purpose of the research was to examine apprentice and trainee completion rates.

The principal researcher that was interviewed for this case study said that there had been a dearth of information in this area and that Commonwealth and State Government departments, as well as the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) all wanted a robust methodology for calculating completion rates.

### 1.1 Project specification

The project calculated completion rates for apprentices and trainees who commenced their training between 1995 and 1999, and attrition rates for more recent commencements. The report also examined demographic factors affecting completion rates, as well as occupation and qualification level.

### 1.2 Selection and funding source

This project was funded by the NCVER statistical services program.

## 2. Project details

### 2.1 Methodology

The methodology involved tracking a commencing cohort of apprenticeships. The data in NCVER's apprenticeship and traineeship collection allows the final status to be determined for three groups:

- ✧ Contracts with employers;
- ✧ Contracts leading to particular qualifications; and
- ✧ The individual apprentice or trainee.

Based on this information, and taking into account under-reporting of completions and non-completions associated with contracts that had expired, estimates of the proportion of the commencing cohort who had completed were derived.

### 2.2 Dissemination plan

The main planned product for the research was the formal report.

### 2.3 Main findings

Aggregate completion rates for those on a single contract declined from 55% for those who commenced in 1995 to 52% for those who commenced in 1999. Looking at a group of contracts leading to a qualification, completion rates declined from 61% for 1997 commencements to 55% for 1999 commencements. Traditional apprentices were overall more likely to complete than other apprentice and trainees.

There were differences in completion rates among several factors including age group, Indigenous status, highest level of school completed, and level of qualification. There were also differences in completion rates by occupation. Labour market mobility was seen to account for some differences in completion rates. There were lower completion rates for the 20-24 year age group, which is the most job-mobile group, and occupations such as sales and service workers, where there is a high level of job mobility.

## 3. Analysis of immediate indicators

### 3.1 Knowledge production

#### *Publications*

Ball K & John D 2005 *Apprentice and trainee completion rates*, NCVER, Adelaide.

#### *Presentations*

Ball K 2004 *Factors influencing completion of apprentices*, presented at the Australian Labour Market Research Workshop, Perth, 6-7 December, 2004.

### 3.2 Capacity building

The principal researcher said that the report helped to build in-house research capacity in this area.

## 4. Analysis of less immediate indicators

### 4.1 Knowledge production

*Citations (as of July 2008)*

#### *Journal articles*

- Hill A & Dalley-Trim L 2008 Hanging in there: what makes a difference in the first year of an apprenticeship *Youth Studies Australia*, vol. 27(1), pp. 36-42.
- Smith E 2007 Australian employers' strategies to improve the quality of apprentices *Education & training*, vol. 49, no. 6, pp. 459-473.
- Snell D & Hart A 2007 Vocational training in Australia: is there a link between attrition and quality? *Education & training*, vol. 49, no. 6, pp. 500-512.

#### *Reports*

- Adult Learning Inspectorate 2005 *Aspects of vocational education and training in Australia*, Adult Learning Inspectorate, Coventry.
- Ainley J & Corrigan M 2005 *Participation in and progress through New Apprenticeships*, LSAY research report no. 44, ACER, Melbourne.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005 Plan to improve the quality, coverage and use of education and training statistics 2004 – Annual progress report 2005, ABS.
- Department of Education, Science and Training 2007, *Manufacturing industry skills report*, available at: [http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training\\_skills/publications\\_resources/profiles/industry\\_skills\\_report\\_manufacturing.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/publications_resources/profiles/industry_skills_report_manufacturing.htm)
- Dumbrell T & Smith E 2007 *Pre-apprenticeships in three key trades*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- IPART 2005 *Review of the skills base in NSW and the future challenges for vocational education and training: issues paper*, IPART, NSW
- Karmel T 2007 *Vocational education and training and young people: last but not least*, NCVER occasional paper, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Karmel T & Ong K 2007 *Will we run out of young men? Implications of the ageing of the population for the trades in Australia*, NCVER occasional paper, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Karmel T & Virk G 2007 *What is happening to traditional apprentice completions?*, NCVER occasional paper, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Kennedy M & Haines B 2008 *Course expectations and career management skills*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- NT DEET 2006 *Workforce NT report 2005*, NT DEET.
- Shah C & Burke G 2006 *Qualifications and the future labour market in Australia*, CEET publication prepared for the National Training Reform Taskforce.
- Walker I 2005 *Pathways to apprenticeships and traineeships for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds*, WA DET report.

#### *Conference papers*

- Ainley J, Curtis D, Rothman S & McKenzie P 2006 *VET experiences: what the LSAYs of Australian youth tell us*, CEET conference 2006.
- Bush T & Smith E 2007 Group training organisations: bellwethers or shepherds?, AVETRA conference 2007.
- Curtis D 2007 Pathways through vocational education and training for school leavers, AVETRA conference 2007.
- Curtis D 2006 *Inter sectoral transfers: sense, status, prevalence and purpose*, No frills conference, July 2006, Mooloolaba, Queensland.
- Curtis D 2006 Post compulsory VET sector participation: who benefits? AARE conference paper, 2006.
- Dumbrell T 2007 Pre-apprenticeships in Australia 2006, AVETRA conference 2007.
- Morgan C 2006 *Statistical foundations for understanding workforce change*, paper presented to the ABS Census Analysis Conference, Canberra, July 2006.
- Rothman S, Hillman K, Curtis D & McMillan J 2008 *Career advice and career plans: Sources, satisfaction and realisation*, paper given at AVETRA conference, Adelaide, 2008.
- Smith E 2007 Experiencing pre-apprenticeships: participants' views of a program with dual purposes, AVETRA conference 2007.

### *Media*

Career in short: A trade of nots in *Herald Sun*, 15 October 2005

### *Parliament database*

Hardgrave G 2005 NCVER report shows government on right track with New Apprenticeships programme, press release, 12<sup>th</sup> August.

ALP 2006 skills account: no TAFE fees for traditional trades apprentices, online text, 1 January.

Macklin J 2005 Fewer traditional apprentices complete training under Howard, press release, 12 August.

### *Other*

Karmel T 2007 Anticipating NCVER's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in P Curtain & P Loveder (Eds.) *Informing policy and practice in Australia's vocational education and training sector: reflections and futures*, NCVER, Adelaide.

NSW Department of Education and Training 2006 Submission to the independent pricing and regulatory tribunal, see [www.ipart.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au)

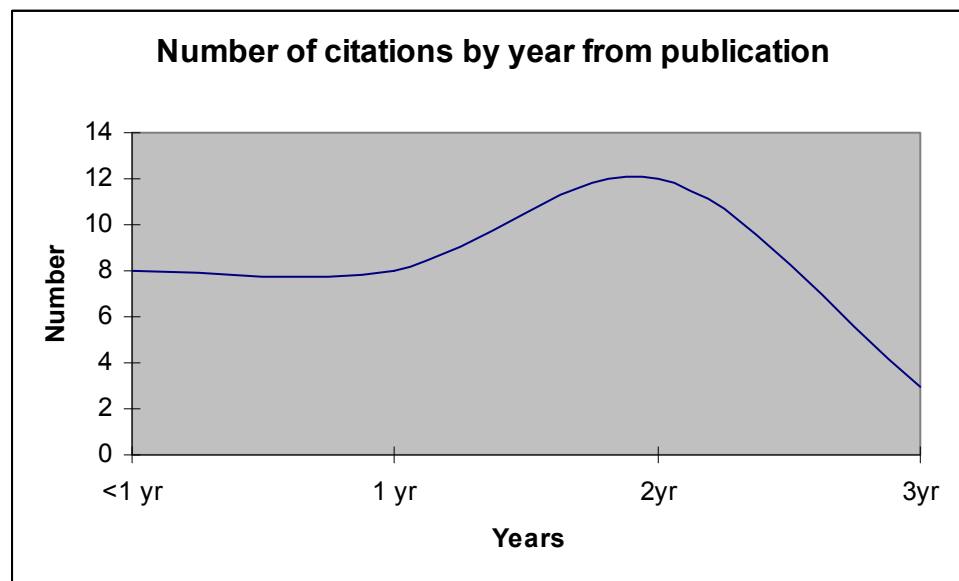
**Table 5: Summary of citations**

Citation type	Number
Journal articles	3
Reports	13
Conference papers	9
Media	1
Parliamentary database	3
Other	2
Total	31

Number quoted in other NCVER publications - 4

We can also chart when the citations took place in terms from time of the publication of the report. For the purposes of this exercise we used the categorisation less than one year from publication of report, about 1 year from publication, about 2 years from publication, and about 3 years from publication.

**Figure 2: Number of citations by time from publication**



We see that the number of citations peaked after two years as was the situation with Case study A. However, we may well see more citations in the 3 years and more category.

In addition to citations, this report was mentioned in other places such as Reframing the Future action plans, the Government education portal, the CEDEFOP new acquisitions list and the KRIVET website (Korea).

#### *Media citations*

- ✧ Education equips trainees for work, *Redcliffe & Bayside Herald*, 17 October 2007, p 28
- ✧ Will we ever learn?, *HR Monthly*, July 2006, p16-20
- ✧ NCVER sums up 2005 research, *Training Packages @ Work*, June 2006
- ✧ A rate of nots, *Herald Sun*, 15 October 2005, p 49
- ✧ NCVER report shows Government on right track with New Apprenticeships Programme, *The Communicator*, Issue 25, 22 August 2005, p 2

In addition, as of December 2008, this report was downloaded from NCVER's website 11,951 times.

## 4.2 Capacity building

This report has been used for further research in the area such as the *What is happening to traditional apprentice completions?*, report by Karmel and Virk.

## 4.3 Informing policy

The research has been used by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to develop Requests for Tenders and purchasing contracts for Australian Apprenticeship Centres. Previously contracts had been aligned to inputs whereas now they are aligned to completions and outcomes. The end user said that:

It highlighted some of the barriers in relation to retention and completion which helps shape what should be purchased in the market and how third party suppliers can address some of the barriers.

The end user that was interviewed from the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) mentioned that they have used it in informing their policy. For example, they are about to release a report on “non-completion from a business perspective” which used the Ball and John study to inform their work. ACCI has also used it to inform their policies, see for example their document “Skills for a nation”. This end user had also seen the report referenced in government documents.

It is quite possible that this research has had other indirect policy influences as part of a body of work on completion rates. One respondent made it quite clear that completion rates should be looked at in terms of a body of work rather than individual reports.

#### 4.4 Informing practice

The principal researcher interviewed said that the report was aimed more at policy makers rather than at practice. However, the respondent from DEEWR mentioned that the work has been used to inform the tender process for Australian Apprenticeship Centres. As a result this affects the way practitioners working in the field engage with apprentices. The end user from ACCI thought that it informed practice but could not give specific examples. They said that the figures had been used at Reframing the Future forums and the like and that there were a number of strategies developed at the local level but that these were not known nationally.

### 5. Overall observations

This report has had a fairly high number of citations in other documents meaning that it is having an impact in this sense. Possibly because it was one of the first attempts to measure completion rates it is referred to by other work in the area. It has also led to further work being conducted on completion rates.

As the report was mainly aimed at the policy arena it has appeared to have made more impact on policy than on practice. In particular, it has been used by DEEWR in relation to contracts for apprenticeship centres and also by ACCI to inform their policy position.

Respondents were also asked to rate on a scale from 1-5 how important various forms of dissemination were to facilitating impact. While not all respondents provided answers to all of the categories and also some qualified their responses the averages were:

Project reports	4.8
Seminars	4.4
Briefing papers	3.3
Media coverage	2.5
Academic publications	2.5
Discussions with policy makers	4.5

We see that project reports, seminars and discussions with policy makers were seen as very important forms of dissemination. In contrast media releases and academic publications were not thought of as being important forms of dissemination. In addition, the following were also mentioned as useful forms of dissemination:

- ✧ Email alerts to new reports;
- ✧ NCVET material at stands at forums and conferences;
- ✧ Targeting public policy organisations that draw on the work;

- ✧ Media releases and opinion pieces;
- ✧ In person meetings; and
- ✧ Breakfast and lunchtime meetings.

In addition, one respondent mentioned that there were ‘communication barriers’ in finding out about new research.

In retrospect, it may have been better to examine the body of NCVER’s work on completion rates as a couple of the end users found it difficult to separate this work out from NCVER’s other work on completion rates. This project was chosen as it was the first attempt at calculating apprentice and trainee completion rates.

The area of completion rates has also been vexed by measurement issues. One respondent said that it is important to get a proper methodology on completion rates. In addition, the data in this report is starting to get out of date. The respondent from ACCI said that it would be good to renew the project by updating the data in it.

# Case study C: Aspects of training that meet Indigenous Australians' aspirations

---

Full citation: Miller C 2005 **Aspects of training that meet Indigenous Australians' aspirations: A systematic review of research**, NCVER, Adelaide.

## Key informants

The key informants identified for this case study were:

### *Researchers*

- ✧ The principal researcher.

### *End-users*

- ✧ A team leader from a TAFE institute;
- ✧ A state government official; and
- ✧ A commonwealth government official.

## 1. The research purpose

The systematic review was undertaken as it was believed that the critical aspects of good practice in VET for Indigenous people were already out there, but that the evidence for them needed some kind of systematic evaluation.

This systematic review was a central component of *Indigenous Australians in vocational education and training: National research strategy for 2003-2006* which was developed by NCVER and the Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council (AITAC) in 2004.

### 1.1 Project specification

The specific question for the review was developed by NCVER and AITAC. The actual question was:

For Indigenous Australians, what are the key features required in the planning, design and delivery of VET and ACE learning programs to ensure positive educational, employment and social outcomes?

### 1.2 Selection and funding source

NCVER was originally contracted to undertake systematic reviews of research in 2004 by the former Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). The topic area was mature-aged workers and was the first systematic review of research in the area of vocational education and training in Australia. As part of the contract with ANTA, NCVER was required to develop a framework in which further systematic reviews could be conducted.

The funding source for this systematic review was a combination of funds received from ANTA to conduct systematic reviews and NCVER research funds.

## 2. Project details

### 2.1 Methodology

Systematic reviews of research are research projects themselves. The review is based around a clearly specified policy question and the methodology for answering this question is clearly defined. As mentioned in section 1.2, NCVER developed an approach in which to undertake systematic reviews of research suitable to NCVER's context (see Anlezark, Dawe & Hayman, 2005). This systematic review followed this approach and the main steps were:

- ✧ Identify the review question;
- ✧ Develop a framework document;
- ✧ Search for all relevant research;
- ✧ Select studies to be included;
- ✧ Appraise the studies;
- ✧ Synthesise the evidence;
- ✧ Present findings to stakeholders; and
- ✧ Disseminate the findings.

According to the principal researcher, there was also end-user involvement in the design of the project. These were members of the Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council (AITAC). The members came from state and federal government departments, and Indigenous controlled training providers.

The project was undertaken by:

- ✧ The project coordinator;
- ✧ Two information services staff (technical assistance); and
- ✧ Seventeen reviewers of reports used in the systematic review.

### 2.2 Dissemination plan

The main planned dissemination for this project was a formal report in the NCVER 1:3:25 style. There were also articles in NCVER's *Insight* magazine, a media release and presentations.

### 2.3 Main findings

Evidence was found for seven key factors that can lead to improved outcomes through training for Indigenous Australians. They are:

- ✧ community ownership and involvement;
- ✧ the incorporation of Indigenous identities, cultures, knowledge and values;
- ✧ the establishment of 'true' partnerships;
- ✧ flexibility in course design, content and delivery;
- ✧ quality staff and committed advocacy;

- ✧ extensive student support services; and
- ✧ appropriate funding that allows for sustainability.

(Cited from page 5 of the report)

### 3. Analysis of immediate indicators

#### 3.1 Knowledge production

We could identify one publication and an extensive support document coming from the research. There were also several presentations by the researcher associated with this project, including at:

- ✧ The NCVET Indigenous research forum in August 2005;
- ✧ The NCVET national conference in July 2005;
- ✧ NCVET to visitors from the then Department of Education, Science & Training (DEST) in 2006;
- ✧ An ACPEP conference and delivered by the General Manager, research;
- ✧ A forum held by TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) on a National Indigenous Charter; and
- ✧ A presentation to DEEWR on invitation in 2007.

The principal researcher believed that a good practice guide based on the results of the research would have been good. This would have been a smaller resource that would have made the findings easier to digest. The researcher also thought that broader media coverage would have been helpful.

In addition there was also some more informal dissemination that took place by one of the end users of the report. This end user promulgated the research to other parties such as the Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers.

### 4. Analysis of less immediate indicators

#### 4.1 Knowledge production

*Citations (as of July 2008)*

##### *Journal articles*

Hossain D et al (submitted) Bridging the gap: identifying needs and aspirations of Indigenous students to facilitate their entry into university, *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

##### *Reports*

Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council 2006 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in vocational education and training – research*, Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council.

Dawe S & Nguyen N 2007 *Education and training needs that meet the needs of small business: a systematic review of research*, NCVET, Adelaide.

McDonald R, O’Callaghan, K, Walker A & Fyffe J 2006 *Indigenous Engagement Project report*, Australian Flexible Learning Framework.

McDonald R & O’Callaghan K 2007 *Indigenous engagement project 2006 end of year forum: ‘Working toward better practice’*, Australian Flexible Learning Framework.

Rea N, Meener J & Gipey C 2008 *The character of Aboriginal training pathways: A local perspective*, DKCRC Research Report 34, Desert Knowledge CRC, Alice Springs.

Stanwick J, Ong K & Karmel T 2006 *Vocational education and training, health and wellbeing: is there a relationship?* NCVET, Adelaide.

- TAFE Directors Australia 2007 *Investing in productivity: engaging TAFE to accelerate workforce development and job participation: response to the Council of Australian Governments' (GOAG) human capital reform agenda*, TAFE Directors Australia, Canberra.
- Volkoff V, Keating J, Walstab A & Marr B 2006 *Effective TAFE, ACE and private provider delivery to young people, 15-24 years old, project 11*, Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission
- Wihak C et al 2005 *State of the field review: prior learning assessment and recognition*, Canadian Council of Learning.

#### *Conference paper*

- Boyle A & Wall R 2008 The role of e-learning in 'holistic' approaches to VET in remote Australian Indigenous contexts AVETRA 2008 conference, Adelaide.
- Bowman K 2007 Recognising the diversity of adult learners in performance management in a learner-centred system in Engagement and participation in a learner-centred system: four papers by ALA visiting research fellows, Adult Learning Australia.
- Choy S & Woodlock J 2006 When tensions lead to change: Meeting the training needs of Indigenous learners and communities. Conference paper given at (Re)contesting Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous studies conference, June 28-30, 2006, Gold Coast.
- Wallace R 2008 Working from our strengths: Indigenous enterprise and training in action and research, conference paper given to AVETRA 2008.

#### *Other*

- Appo R & Newman A 2007 *Opening doors, building capacity and changing lives: Improving outcomes in Indigenous education, training and employment*, Presentation by Australian Flexible Learning Framework at 2007 Indigenous Engagement Project ACPET – Perth.
- Bowman K 2008 *Achieving inclusive adult education and training practice*, Occasional paper for Adult Learning Australia.
- Karmel T 2007 Anticipating NCVER's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in P Curtain & P Loveder (Eds.) *Informing policy and practice in Australia's vocational education and training sector: reflections and futures*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Miller C 2007 Education and training for Indigenous people in prisons in Dawe S (Ed.) *VET for adult prisoners and offenders in Australia: Research readings*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- O'Callaghan K 2005 *Indigenous vocational education and training: at a glance*, NCVER, Adelaide.

#### *In summary*

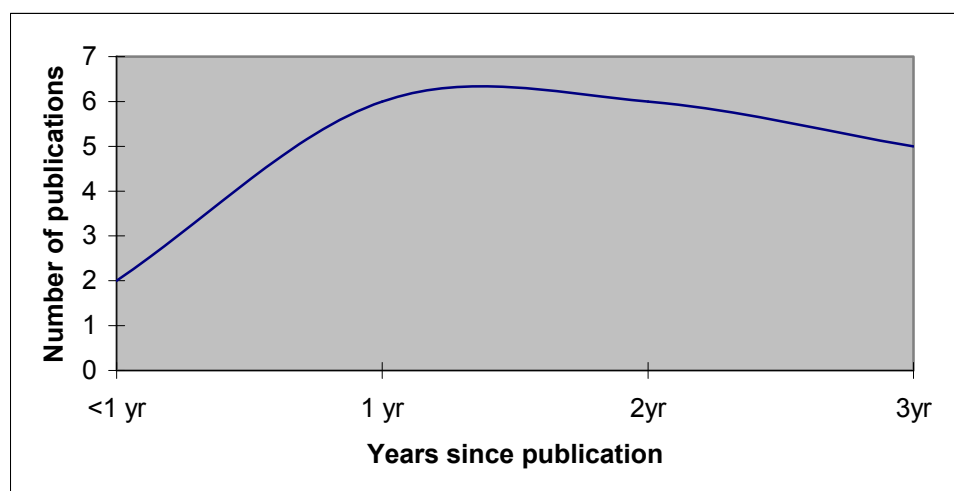
**Table 6: Summary of citations**

Citation type	Number
Journal articles	1
Reports	9
Conference papers	4
Other	5
Total	19

Number cited in NCVER publications – 4

We can also chart when the citations took place in terms from time of the publication of the report. For the purposes of this exercise we used the categorisation less than one year from publication of report, about 1 year from publication, about 2 years from publication, and about 3 years from publication.

**Figure 3: Number of citations by time from publication**



Numbers of citations peaked after the first year and have levelled out since.

The report was also mentioned in the foreword to two other reports – *Growing in the desert: educational pathways for remote Indigenous people* (2007) and *Advancing equity: merging 'bottom up' initiatives with top down strategies* (2007).

#### *Media citations*

- ✧ Getting on with it, *Campus Review*, 15 July 2008, p 13
- ✧ 7 elements for success, *Campus Review*, 23 August 2006, p 10
- ✧ Considerations for Indigenous Australians in vocational education and training (part 2), *Training Packages @ Work*, March 2006
- ✧ Research on training that meets aspirations, *Indigenous Studies Product Development Unit (ISPDU)*, March 2006, p 4-6
- ✧ Considerations for Indigenous Australians in vocational education and training (part 1) *Training Packages @ Work*, January/February 2006
- ✧ Does training benefit older workers & what works for Indigenous learners?, *The Australian TAFE Teacher*, Winter 2005, p 30
- ✧ New NCVER Publications, *e.Alert*, December 2005, p 4
- ✧ Research aims to inform Indigenous VET decision makers, *Indigenous Studies Product Development Unit Newsletter*, November-December 2005, p1
- ✧ Publications from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), *Australian Training Fast Facts*, November 2005

In addition to the above citations, as of December 2008, this report has been downloaded 15,951 times.

## 4.2 Capacity building

The presentations listed above could be thought of as capacity building in as far as it provides new learning to people in the VET sector on vocational education and training for Indigenous people. The reviewers were VET practitioners who reflected very positively on their experience and what they learnt during the process.

The principal researcher believed that the seven factors may have been used in formulating other research. For instance, the 2005-2006 Australian Flexible Learning Framework's Indigenous Engagement Project used the seven factors to evaluate the program (See McDonald et al reference under citations above). The 2005 O'Callaghan at-a-glance cited above used the seven factors as a framework for reporting other Indigenous VET research. In Addition, Bowman (2008, cited above) used the seven factors as a basis for developing an operational framework for inclusive adult learning practice.

The principal researcher also said that there was a network of interested people (including AITAC members and reviewers for the project) at the time. Due to various reasons however the networks no longer exist in a strongly functioning way. Some of the reasons include the disbandment of AITAC and the two major proponents of the work at NCVER no longer being employed there. There has been an attempt to maintain some network but the principal researcher has essentially moved on now.

The principal researcher also mentioned that two of the reviewers for the research project obtained jobs partly based on their work for the role. NCVER provided references for these two reviewers.

There was little evidence about capacity building obtained from our discussions with end users. One end user thought that there had been some staff development benefits and that they had personally used the research to develop further work but did not pinpoint anything specifically.

### 4.3 Informing policy

The interviews indicated that it is hard to pinpoint any causal links between the research and policy outcomes. This is consistent with messages from previous research on impacts. Nevertheless, there were indications that the research was at least being used to inform policy. In particular an end-user interviewee from the Indigenous area in DEEWR indicated that they use the seven factors that resulted from the research in their work on Indigenous engagement:

The research has become a touchstone in the Indigenous area in the development of policy  
(DEEWR end user)

The end user has seen the research referenced in other departmental documents. This interviewee also mentioned that they believe the success factors are so useful that they are also relevant to other equity areas such as disability.

The principal researcher also believed that the seven success factors had been used to inform TAFE Directors Australia's proposed Indigenous charter, although could not find any evidence of this. The proposed charter was aimed at promoting wider community training for Indigenous people.

The principal researcher also thought that the main form of influence in informing policy was briefing papers to the former Department of Education, Science and Training, and presentations at various forums such as the Indigenous forum held in Adelaide in 2005. The principal researcher thought that personal contact was pivotal in getting the message out there:

The value of personal contact in following up and promoting the outcomes cannot be underestimated, and I believe is something NCVER should build into its research process. From what I can tell it seems to be moving more towards 'interpreting outcomes' to end users rather than relying on them to trawl through the output themselves (principal researcher)

### 4.4 Informing practice

The principal researcher believed that two of the reviewers, both of whom had worked in a Queensland TAFE institute, had promoted and used the seven factors in their work. The researcher believed that their engagement in the research process gave them ownership and understanding of the outcomes of the

project hence they were more likely to use it in their work. However, these two people had moved on so we were not able to verify this information with them.

I believe their actual engagement in the research process itself is what helped them to have ownership and understanding of the outcomes (principal researcher).

The researcher saw the main type of practice impact as being the engagement of people, say in an action research project, and involvement of end-users. This was thought to be particularly important in the Indigenous and disability area.

The end users that were contacted did not have direct evidence that the research was being used in practice however they thought that it was.

Some of the research has re-affirmed in a more concise manner what people think is good practice. The research can and does influence. It points out gaps in practice. People can look at it and say we do this, this and this but not that (end user)

The end user from DEEWR said that Indigenous VET providers are encouraged to use the seven factors in their training plans, and feedback received by DEEWR is that they do (although there is no hard evidence of this).

The seven factors derived from the research have also been used in developing the selection criteria for tenders to run training programs in the “Training Initiatives for Indigenous Adults in Regional and Remote Communities Program”. This program is aimed at assisting to build up the capacity of the training market in meeting training needs for Indigenous adults in regional and remote areas.

## 5. Other comments and overall observations

The respondents were asked for their thoughts about impact and what dissemination strategies are useful in facilitating impact. Respondents provided thoughts on several different types of dissemination including:

- ✧ Researchers following up on their own research;
- ✧ Newsletters with links to reports;
- ✧ Dissemination products that get the message across succinctly and quickly;
- ✧ Embargoed copies of reports;
- ✧ Media releases;
- ✧ Research forums;
- ✧ Targeted information about the research to senior people in government agencies;
- ✧ Presenting jointly with Aboriginal advisory entities. This would lend the research more credence.

Respondents were also asked to rate on a scale from 1-5 how important various forms of dissemination were to facilitating impact. While not all respondents provided answers to all of the categories and also some qualified their responses the averages were:

Project reports	4.6
Seminars	4.8
Briefing papers	4.4
Media coverage	4.0
Academic publications	2.4
Discussions with policy makers	4.6

We see that seminars and the like, discussions with policy makers and project reports are seen as being particularly important forms of dissemination. Academic publications are not seen as being as important. This is supported by the preferred forms of dissemination described above. Actual face to face contact – be it in seminars or discussions with policy people and the like is seen as being very important in the Indigenous area.

Overall there is some evidence that this project has had an impact but the causal links are hard to pin down. In terms of knowledge production there were presentations given on the project in various forums. This is in addition to the formal report produced for this project. There have been several citations to the project report – 17 in all – since the report was released in 2005.

There was some evidence of capacity building. This was in terms of using it for further research, as an evaluation framework, networks and also the engagement of reviewers for the systematic review. In particular, it was thought that involvement in the systematic review had in part led to jobs for two of the reviewers. It was noted though that the networks established have not been maintained in the longer term, partly due to the two NCVET proponents of the research leaving the organisation.

There was also some evidence that the research has been used in informing policy and practice. The strongest evidence came from an end user in a federal government department (DEEWR). In particular, the seven factors derived from the research are used in all their work in Indigenous engagement. The respondent was able to point to the “Training Initiatives for Indigenous Adults in Regional and Remote Communities Program” as an example of where the research has been used.

When assessing impact, the context of the research needs to be carefully considered. This means approaches to dissemination and ways of making impact can differ according to the project. The indications from this case study are that in the area of Indigenous engagement personal contact is critical. Having the involvement of Indigenous people in the research process is also critical.

# Case study D: Recognition of prior learning

---

This case study, in contrast to the previous three case studies, was based around a theme (namely RPL). However, report B cited below seems to have been the principal report in this group of reports in terms of usage.

## Full citations

A – Knight B & Bateman A 2003 *Giving credit: a review of RPL and credit transfer in the VET sector 1995-2001*, NCVET, Adelaide

B – Bowman K, Clayton B & Bateman A et al 2003 *Recognition of prior learning in the vocational education and training sector*, NCVET, Adelaide.

C – Smith L 2004 *Valuing RPL: selected case studies of Australian private providers*, NCVET, Adelaide.

D – Blom K, Clayton B & Bateman A et al 2004 *What's in it for me? RPL in enterprise based RTOs*, NCVET, Adelaide.

E – Hargreaves J 2006 *Recognition of prior learning: At a glance*, NCVET, Adelaide.

F – Misko J, Beddie F & Smith L 2007 *The recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Australia – country background report prepared for the OECD activity on recognition of non-formal and informal learning*; prepared for DEST.

## Key informants

The key informants identified for this case study were:

### *Researchers*

- ✧ Two principal researchers.

### *End-users*

- ✧ A commonwealth government official;
- ✧ A state government official;
- ✧ A respondent working for a professional development program sponsored by government;
- ✧ A manager at a TAFE institute.

# 1. The research purpose

## 1.1 Project specification

A – The purpose of this project was to provide an overview of the research and data on recognition of prior learning from the period 1995-2001.

B – The purpose of this report was to analyse what drives and on the other hand what creates barriers to effective implementation of recognition of prior learning. The report provided advice to the National Training Quality Council on how to support registered training organisation compliance with *Standards for registered training organisations* (in the Australian Quality Training Framework).

C – The aim of this research was to provide an insight into the way private registered training organisations in Australia understood, promoted and used processes for recognition of prior learning.

D – The purpose of this study was to investigate the notion of recognition of prior learning within individual enterprises. It looked at processes employed, strategies for promotion and support of recognition, and perceived benefits for the individual and the organisation.

E – This at-a-glance brings together a range of research into recognition of prior learning and synthesises the main themes arising.

F – The document was prepared to provide an Australian Country Background report to support the OECD's Education Committee activity *Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning*. The specific issues to be addressed related to the way in which non-formal and informal learning is recognised in order to:

- ✧ Create pathways to accredited training;
- ✧ Accumulate credit in the formal education sector; and
- ✧ Accelerate employment advancement.

## 1.2 Selection and funding sources

Various funding sources including the NCVER statistical services program, NVETRE program commissioned work by the then Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

# 2. Project details

## 2.1 Methodology

A – There were two components to the research. The first was a review of literature on recognition of prior learning for the period 1995-2001. The other component was an analysis of national VET data for the period 1995-2001. This analysis looked at the proportion of students receiving RPL and the results were segmented by factors such as sex, age, provider sector, field of study, qualification level, apprentices and trainees, and equity groups.

B – There were five elements to the method. These were: a literature review; an environmental scan of current policies and practices regarding recognition of prior learning; analysis of NCVER's VET collection data; structured interviews and focus groups with a variety of stakeholders, and a national forum.

C – The method for this project was case study based. Eight registered private training providers from across Australia were chosen for interview. The interviews were around one hour in length and were

undertaken with key personnel involved with recognising prior learning of students. The interviews were based around ten fairly open-ended questions. There was also some informal discussion with students.

D – This project used a semi-structured interview approach with key informants in each of the participating enterprises. The interviews were supplemented with a review of literature on skills recognition in Australia and overseas.

E – The at-a-glance synthesised the main themes arising from Australian research into recognition of prior learning.

F – Information for the report was collected by way of: a literature review; telephone and face to face interviews with a range of stakeholders; and a series of nine case studies conducted on-site which were designed to provide insight into the range of RPL processes operating in Australia. In addition, quantitative data was provided by NCVER's data collection, the then Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), and the ABS Survey of Education and Training.

## 2.2 Main findings

A – The review shows how the concepts of RPL has evolved since 1995 particularly due to the maturing of the assessment environment over that time. The report suggests several proposals based on the review which are aimed at improving the flexibility of the training and assessment system within VET.

B – One of the main drivers for registered training organisations being interested in RPL was found to be compliance with the Australian Quality Training Framework. Another major driver was meeting equity and access obligations to clients. The needs of students were found to be more of an impetus for public registered training organisations in providing RPL, whereas industry was more the focus for private providers and state training authorities. Students were interested in RPL because of work experience they had and did not want to do unnecessary training while industry was interested in identifying skills gaps and avoiding unnecessary training.

Several barriers were identified in implementing RPL. These barriers were to do with issues such as promotion and marketing, processes and client experiences, resourcing arrangements and the language surrounding RPL as well as its definition.

C – This study found that RPL can confer advantages for students, employers and trainees not only in terms of the advance standing it provides, but also in terms of the other sorts of information the process provides. For students it can provide information on their strengths and weaknesses, and improve confidence and motivation to learn. For employers the information can be used to maximise the potential of the employee and in the development of training programs.

There were some issues uncovered however. For instance the process and the supporting information accompanying it needs to be clear and concise. In addition, administrative costs are a disincentive for candidates and providers, and can be a disadvantage to equity groups. In occupations where there is rapid change, the shelf life of qualifications used for the RPL process needs to be examined. There was also concern about the differences in assessment standards among providers.

D – A 'one size fits all' approach was found to be inappropriate for developing recognition processes. They will depend on the needs of the organisation and the enterprises' overall business and training plans. They also found that within the enterprises recognition processes were complex and required commitment from all stakeholders. However, where this commitment existed, there were few complaints. For organisations, there are training efficiencies that can be obtained through the use of recognition of prior learning. For employees there can be a variety of organisational and personal benefits that can be obtained from the recognition processes.

E – One of the findings of the research was that while RPL is a widely supported concept, statistics suggest that participation has not been that great. However, some research indicates that RPL may be more pervasive than suggested by statistics through the VET system and also enterprises. This at a glance also highlighted several factors which may act as deterrents to RPL depending on context.

F – This report was prepared as part of Australia’s participation in the OECD Education Committee Activity on *Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning (RNFIL)* in accordance with *OECD Guidelines on Country Participation*. The report describes a range of innovative and successful policy initiatives that are being trialled by Australian, State and Territory governments, education and training institutions and industry for improving access, decreasing complexity and increasing support for people throughout the RPL process. The report provides evidence of the benefits, barriers, strengths and weaknesses of RPL in Australia and highlights the significant policy challenges. These challenges include limitations with the quantitative data which precludes national and international comparisons.

### 3. Analysis of immediate indicators

#### 3.1 Knowledge production

The publications cited at the beginning of this case study were primary products of the research. There were five research reports and one at-a-glance publication in total. There were also numerous presentations associated with the research. We only interviewed two of the principal researchers so it was difficult to separate out precisely which reports the presentations were about although we noted above that the Bowman et al. was one of the principal reports discussed. The presentations listed refer largely to this report. We did not obtain a full list but they included presentations by one of the principal researchers at:

- ✧ NCVER’s annual research conference (‘no frills’) as a cluster of RPL projects;
- ✧ One the Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Associations’ (AVETRA) conferences;
- ✧ One the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) conferences;
- ✧ South West Sydney Institute of TAFE;
- ✧ Centrelink in Sydney and in South Australia; and
- ✧ An ACT teachers forum.

### 4. Analysis of less immediate indicators

#### 4.1 Knowledge production

##### **A Giving credit: a review of RPL and credit transfer in the VET sector, 1995-2001**

###### *Reports*

- Adult, Community and Further Education Board 2005 *Report on the curriculum strategy for ACFE*, ACFEB.
- Blom K, Clayton B, Clayton A, Bedggood M & Hughes E 2004 *What’s in it for me?: recognition of prior learning in enterprise-based registered training organisations*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Harris R, Rainey L & Sumner R 2006 *Crazy pavings or stepping stones*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Mason J, Perry W & Radford A 2007 *Processes, systems and tools supporting recognition of prior learning survey*, Australian Flexible Learning Framework.
- Mawer G & Jackson E 2005 *Training of existing workers: issues, incentives and models*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- OECD 2003 *Education policy analysis: 2003 edition*, OECD, Paris

- Phillips KPA 2005 *National study to improve outcomes in credit transfer and articulation from vocational education and training to higher education*, DEST.
- Smith L 2004 *Valuing recognition of prior learning: selected case studies from Australian private providers*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Victorian Qualifications Authority 2004 *Qualifications and pathways: emerging themes and new directions*. VQA.
- Whelehan L et al 2003 *Recognition of prior learning: Policy and practice in Australia*, AQFAB.
- Whelehan L et al 2003 *A report on recognition of prior learning (RPL) policy and practice in Australia in 2002, including national principles and operational guidelines for RPL in post-compulsory education and training: final report*, Queensland department of Employment and Training.
- Victorian Qualifications Authority 2004 *Qualifications and pathways: emerging themes and new directions*, VQA
- Wihak C et al 2005 *State of the field review: prior learning assessment and recognition*, Canadian Council of Learning.

#### *Conference papers*

- Bateman A 2003 *Has RPL served its purpose*, 6th AVETRA conference 2003, Sydney.
- Brown M 2003 Professional development and academic credit for VET practitioners through authentic work-based learning? in *Proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Post-Compulsory Education and Training*, Griffith University Centre for Learning Research.
- Smith H 2008 *RPL in Australian Vocational Education and Training: What do we know about it?*, paper presented at AVETRA 2008 conference in Adelaide.
- Whelehan L, Miller P and Newton D 2002 *Thinking about RPL: a framework for discussion*, paper presented at No Frills 2002 conference, Brisbane.

#### *Other*

- Booth R et al 2005 Workplace training practices in the residential aged care sector: support document, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Hargreaves J 2006 Recognition of prior learning: at a glance, NCVER, Adelaide.
- McKenna S & Mitchell J 2006 RPL done well, resources generated for the Reframing the Future national forums conducted in 2006, Reframing the Future.
- Motaung J M 2007 Quality assurance practice in the provisioning of RPL in higher education, Doctoral thesis, University of Pretoria.

#### *Media citations*

- ✧ Recognising existing skills in VET, *The Australian TAFE Teacher*, Autumn 2003, p 30
- ✧ VET courses infrequent at acknowledging RPL, *Campus Review*, 17-23 September 2003, Vol 13, No. 36, p 5
- ✧ Recognising existing skills, *Education and Training Newsletter Australia*, July 2003, Vol. 2 No.4, p 3
- ✧ Recognition of prior learning (RPL), *The Current e-News from ALA*, July 2003, Number 45

## **B Recognition of prior learning in the vocational education and training sector**

#### *Reports*

- Adult, Community and Further Education Board 2005 *Report on the curriculum strategy for ACFE*, ACFEB.
- Blom K et al 2004 *What's in it for me?: recognition of prior learning in enterprise-based registered training organisations*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Cameron R 2004 *RPL and mature age job seekers*, Adult learning Australia, Canberra.
- Coutts J & Roberts J 2007 *Adding value to extension programs: a user's guide to aligning extension programs with vocational education and training (VET): a report for the Cooperative venture for human Capacity Building for Innovation in Rural Industries*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation report.
- Dyson C & Keating J 2005 *Skills, knowledge and employability: recognition of prior learning: policy and practice for skills learned at work*, International Labour Office.
- Misko J 2006 *Vocational education and training in Australia, the United Kingdom and Germany*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Misko J, Beddie F & Smith L 2007 *The recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Australia: country background report prepared for the OECD*, DEST, Canberra.
- Mitchell J & McKenna S 2006 *Engaging VET practitioners forum RPL – done well*, Reframing the future.
- NCVER (date) *Addressing barriers to employment and training of traditional trade apprentices in the Australian mining industry: Final report*.
- Wihak C et al 2005 *State of the field review: prior learning assessment and recognition*, Canadian Council of Learning.

### *Journal articles*

- Clark T 2005 Lifelong, life-wide or life sentence, in *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, vol 45(1), pp. 47-62.  
Shaolai P 2006 The exploration and analysis of RPL/RCC in TAFE in Australia *Chinese Vocational Education and Training*, no. 17, pp.58-60.

### *Conference papers*

- Azemikhah H 2008 The question of competency certainty: moving from quality to excellence in vocational education, paper presented at 2008 AVETRA conference, Adelaide.  
Daniels J 2006 Tales from the (VET) classroom: researching the meaning of VET through stories of learning, Paper presented at 206 AARE conference.  
Eagles D, Woodward P & Pope M 2005 Indigenous learners in the digital age: recognising skills and knowledge, paper presented at 2005 AVETRA conference.  
Knight B 2006 Assessment and recognition of prior learning in technical and vocational education and training in Australia: where to from here? presented at the 32<sup>nd</sup> conference for the International Association for Educational Assessment in 2006, Singapore.  
Smith H 2008 RPL in Australian Vocational Education and Training: What do we know about it?, paper presented at AVETRA 2008 conference in Adelaide.

### *Other publications*

- Bateman A 2006 RPL: *Yes, we are there!* Think piece presentation at the Engaging VET practitioners forum RPL: done well.  
Booth R et al 2005 *Workplace training practices in the residential aged care sector: support document*, NCVER, Adelaide.  
Cameron R & Miller P 2004 RPL: *Why has it failed to act as a mechanism for social change?*, Paper presented at 'Social change in the 21st Century conference'.  
Dickie M & Fitzgerald I 2004 Choice, participation and outcomes: women in VET 2003 in K Bowman (Ed.) *Equity in vocational education and training: research readings*, NCVER, Adelaide.  
Hargreaves J 2006 *Recognition of prior learning: at a glance*, NCVER, Adelaide.  
Mitchell J & McKenna S 2006 *Using appreciative inquiry to increase the practice of recognition of prior learning*, 3 pager in Engaging VET practitioners forum, RPL dove well.  
Mitchell J, Chappell C, Bateman A & Roy S 2005 *Critical issues: a draft literature review on critical issues in teaching, learning and assessment in vocational education and training*, NCVER Consortium program 'supporting vocational education and training providers in building capability for the future'.  
Victorian Qualifications Authority 2004 *Qualifications and pathways: emerging themes and new directions*, Victorian Qualifications Authority, Melbourne.  
Van der Kamp M 2006 The contribution of APEL to lifelong learning, in Corradi C, Evans N & Valk A *Recognising experiential learning: practices in European universities*, Tartu University Press.

### *Media citations*

- ✧ Recognition of prior learning in the vocational education and training sector, *ATO News*, 15 August 2003, Vol. 5, Issue 7

## **C Valuing RPL: selected case studies of Australian private providers**

### *Journal articles*

- ✧ Fox T, 2005 'Adult learning and recognition of prior learning: the 'white elephant' in Australian universities' in *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 54(3): pp.352-370  
✧ Van Kleef J 2007 Strengthening PLAR: integrating theory and practice in post-secondary education in *Journal of applied research on learning*, vol 1(2), 22p.

### *Reports*

- Adult, Community and Further Education Board 2005 *Report on the curriculum strategy for ACFE*, ACFEB.  
Blom K et al 2004 *What's in it for me?: recognition of prior learning in enterprise-based registered training organisations*, NCVER, Adelaide.  
Callan V 2007 *Understanding and resolving the skill shortage in the Australian printing industry*, NCVER, Adelaide.  
Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning 2006 *PLAR Report and recommendations: a prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) model for nursing*, prepared for the College of Nurses of Ontario by the Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning (CIRL).

- Coutts J & Roberts J 2007 *Adding value to extension programs: a user's guide to aligning extension programs with vocational education and training (VET): a report for the Cooperative venture for human Capacity Building for Innovation in Rural Industries*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation report.
- Elsegood S 2004 *Bridging the great divide: towards flexible delivery and effective partnerships in apprentice training*, Australian Flexible Learning Framework.
- Kingsbury N 2006 *Report of the tertiary education commission strategic review of pathways and staircasing*, New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission Strategic Review.(recheck)
- Lyon A, Macdonald F, Davies M & Turner K 2004 *Women at the crossroads: Mapping effective pathways through VET for adult women returning to work: Report to the Victorian Office of Training and Tertiary Education*, Equity Research Centre.
- Mason J, Perry W & Radford A 2008 *Processes, systems and tools supporting recognition of prior learning survey: Final report*, Australian Flexible Learning Framework.
- Misko J 2006 *Vocational education and training in Australia, the United Kingdom and Germany*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- NCVER (date) *Addressing barriers to employment and training of traditional trade apprentices in the Australian mining industry: Final report*.
- Wihak C et al 2005 *State of the field review: prior learning assessment and recognition*, Canadian Council of Learning.

#### *Conference papers*

- Callan V 2006 A case study in understanding and responding to the skills shortage: the Australian printing industry, paper presented at 2006 no frills conference, Mooloolabah, Queensland.
- Knight B 2006 *Assessment and recognition of prior learning in technical and vocational education and training in Australia: where to from here?* presented at the 32<sup>nd</sup> conference for the International Association for Educational Assessment in 2006, Singapore.
- Smith H 2008 *RPL in Australian Vocational Education and Training: What do we know about it?*, paper presented at AVETRA 2008 conference in Adelaide.

#### *Other*

- Calvert G 2006 International education: career paths in science and engineering, PhD thesis.
- Cameron, R 2004 Older workers: a snapshot, A paper developed as part of the ALA-ANTA Innovation Grant 2004.
- Hargreaves J 2006 Recognition of prior learning: at a glance, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Mitchell J 2006 Ideas for practitioners, Reframing the future.

#### *Media citations*

- Valuing recognition of prior learning: selected case studies of Australian private providers of training, What's new Australian Policy Online, 15 May 2004

## **D What's in it for me? RPL in enterprise based RTOs**

#### *Reports*

- Mitchell J & McKenna S 2006 *Engaging VET practitioners forum RPL – done well*, Reframing the future.
- Mitchell J, Chappell C, Bateman A & Roy S 2006 *Quality is the key: critical issues in teaching, learning and assessment in vocational education and training*, NCVER, Adelaide.

#### *Other*

- Hargreaves J 2006 Recognition of prior learning: at a glance, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Bateman A 2006 RPL: Yes, we are there! Think piece presentation at the Engaging VET practitioners forum RPL: done well.

#### *Media citations*

- ✧ None

## **E Recognition of prior learning: at a glance**

#### *Reports*

- Andersson I, Andersson I, Gran G & Mossberg A 2007 *Competence development for growth: international outlook and analysis*, Organisation for Knowledge Economy and Enterprise Development.
- Bowman K 2006 *The value of ACE providers: a guide to the evidence base*, Adult Learning Australia Inc.
- Callan V 2008 *Accelerated apprenticeships: apprentice, employer and teaching staff perceptions*, NCVER, Adelaide.

- Callan V 2006 *Ready, willing and capable: Teaching capabilities for the Queensland Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector*, Department of Education, Training and the Arts, Queensland.
- Choy S, Bowman K, Billett S, Wignall L & Huakka S 2008 *Effective models of employment-based training*, support document, NCVET, Adelaide.
- Kilpatrick S & Millar P 2006 *Aligning the extension and vocational, education and training sectors: a report for the Cooperative Venture for Capacity Building*, Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.
- Mason J, Perry W & Radford A 2008 *Processes, systems and tools supporting recognition of prior learning survey – Final Report*, Australian Flexible Learning Framework.
- McKenna S & Mitchell J 2006 *RPL done well in VET*, Reframing the future.
- Van Kleef J 2007 *Quality assurance in PLAR: issues and strategies for post-secondary institutions*, Canadian Council on Learning.

#### Conference papers

- Knight B 2006 Assessment for recognition of prior learning in technical and vocational education and training in Australia: where to from here? Paper presented at the 32nd International Association for Educational Assessment conference, Singapore 2006.
- Smith H 2008 RPL in Australian Vocational Education and Training: what do we know (about it?), paper given at AVETRA conference held in Adelaide, April 2008.

#### Other

- South East Melbourne skills store 2007 *Recognise your skills: Build your future*, RPL Assessor Training powerpoint slides.

#### Media citations

- ✧ Recognition of prior learning, *ACPET National Monday Update*, 26 June, 2008
- ✧ Recognition of prior learning: At a glance, *VET and ACE e-News*, 29 March – 11 April 2006, Issue 4, p 4
- ✧ Recognition of prior learning: At a glance (new report) (23 February 2006), *Study in Australia Media Release Summaries*, 3 March 2005, Edition 4/06, p 7

**Table 7: Summary of citations**

Citation type	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Journal articles		2	2			4
Reports	13	10	12	2	9	46
Conference papers	4	5	3		2	14
Other	4	9	4	2	1	20
Total	21	26	21	4	11	84
<i>Cited in NCVET publications</i>	5	5	6	2	2	20

Note that there have been no citations for report F. This is in part due to it being a consultancy report that was not for general release. We see that the report with the overall greatest number of citations is report B *Recognition of prior learning in the vocational education and training sector*. This was seen by one of the principal researchers interviewed as the main report in this suite. Having said that, report A (*Giving credit: a review of RPL and credit transfer in the VET sector 1995-2001*) and report C (*Valuing RPL: selected case studies of Australian private providers*) have also been cited by quite a few other sources.

In terms of where they were cited, over a half were cited in other reports. There were few citations in journal articles, emphasising the policy and practice intents of these reports.

We can also look at when the citations took place in terms from time of the publication of the report. For the purposes of this exercise we used the categorisation less than one year from publication of report, about 1 year from publication, about 2 years from publication, and about 3 years from publication.

**Table 8: Number of citations since time of publication**

	A	B	C	D	E	Total
<1 yr	6	0	4	0	5	15
1 yr	3	5	3	0	3	14
2yr	5	7	9	4	4	29
3yr	3	10	3	0	n/a	16
>3yr	4	4	2	0	n/a	10

In addition to the citations, we gathered information on the number of times the reports have been downloaded from NCVER's website up to December 2008.

**Table 9: Numbers of times reports downloaded**

A	B	C	D	E
12,719	37,944	6,905	4,154	16,479

We see that report B (*Recognition of prior learning in the education and training sector*) has been downloaded over more than 20,000 more times than any of the other RPL reports.

## 4.2 Capacity building

There have been various impacts from the project related to capacity building. These include networks, professional development and further work as a result of the research.

The two principal researchers that were interviewed both mentioned networks and collaborations that were formed as a result of or used as a basis the RPL projects. One of the researchers mentioned that they have kept up contact with DEEWR about RPL issues following the completion of the research. They also pointed to collaboration with Reframing the Future on an RPL road show and also collaboration with the OECD on an RPL project. The other researcher mentioned that the Korean Research Institute of Vocational Education and Training (KRIVET) used these RPL projects in their work on RPL. This researcher also chaired a forum on RPL at one of the AVETRA conferences.

The end-users of the research also mentioned networks that resulted from or used the research. Examples include:

- ✧ Networks and partnerships through Reframing the Future although the respondent from this organisation said that we need to consider how much of these networks are attributable to NCVER's work. They believed however that the NCVER projects have provided important synergies for Reframing the Futures' networks.
- ✧ A trainers and assessors network in 2007 that involved a consultant in the area – John Mitchell.
- ✧ The COAG RPL network uses the NCVER research in the network; and
- ✧ An RPL network in Victoria that used the NCVER suite of projects as a starting point.

There were also professional development benefits as a result of the NCVER RPL projects. For instance, the projects are being used in DEEWR for professional development purposes. A respondent from a large TAFE institute said that the projects had been used in staff workshops on skills recognition. Another end user said that they believe that the projects have been used for workforce development for practitioners.

It has been used in the development of their own professional development framework and to inform different stakeholder groups

There is some indication that the projects have led to further research, publications and further work. The *What's in it for me: Recognition of prior learning in enterprise based RTOs* and the *Valuing RPL: selected case studies of Australian private providers* were a result of the earlier *RPL in vocational education and training report*. A project at the then CURVE located at the Canberra Institute of Technology also followed on from this earlier project. The *RPL done well project* produced by Reframing the Future used the NCVER products as a basis for the publication. The respondent from reframing the future stated that in the last eighteen months there had been over 48,000 PDFs on this publication downloaded.

A researcher for a couple of the projects has also obtained ongoing consulting work in the area of RPL. Additionally, the respondent from a large TAFE Institute said that NCVER's RPL projects were used as key documents for a tender which was won by the institute.

One end user mentioned that the research process itself had benefits (in terms of research impact).

Focus groups or professional conversations around the research are beneficial – sometimes the benefits are in the research process not just the end products.

### 4.3 Informing policy

Respondents strongly believed that the RPL projects, in particular the Bowman et al project, had been used in informing policy.

The research has definitely led to better information (end user).

More particularly, most respondents mentioned that the projects had been used to inform the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) RPL initiative. Under this initiative, COAG invested approximately \$15 million to support projects by RTOs across Australia aimed at establishing or improving RPL processes.

COAG are pouring \$15 million into RPL. NCVER's research would have played a role in influencing this but the 4% RPL figure derived from NCVER's data would have been a big driver for policy (end user).

There were also several other areas where respondents believe the projects may have been used to inform policy including:

- ✧ The “RPL action” initiative formulated by the Queensland Department of Education and Training;
- ✧ The Department of Human Services in Victoria in relation to articulation to higher education;
- ✧ The Enterprise RTO Association (ERTO) used the “RPL in Enterprises” report to help in informing best practice in implementing RPL in enterprise RTO. Centrelink was also believed to have used this report; and
- ✧ Various other State governments Education and Training Departments are believed to have used the reports to inform their policies on RPL.

Presentations and networking by one of the principal researchers for these projects was said to have helped to facilitate these projects informing policy on RPL. In addition, one end user respondent from a large TAFE Institute believed that the reports helped to influence RPL funding models.

### 4.4 Informing practice

There was evidence that the RPL projects were used in informing practice, although not always in linear fashion. For instance, one end user from a state government department said that while she did not think that practitioners generally read research reports, they could be informed about the research indirectly through professional development programs. Another said that

It has influenced the design of our approach to internal staff development and to tackling skills recognition.

One end user also thought that short synthesis products were more likely to be accessed by practitioners.

There were also some specific examples where the research has been used in practice:

- ✧ The report done for ANTA by Bowman et. al. was used by *Reframing the Future* to inform RPL practice – see for example their publication RPL done well;
- ✧ A few of the reports in this theme were part of recommended reading for VET practitioners attending an TAFE NSW International Centre for VET (ICVET) colloquium on RPL;
- ✧ The reports have been used as a basis for informing about 60 action research projects on RPL in NSW DET. In particular one of the principal researchers has been used as a facilitator in these projects.
- ✧ The research has been specified in practitioners’ professional development calendars in Western Australia; and
- ✧ The research has also influenced the design of the approach to internal staff Professional Development and in tackling skills recognition at a TAFE Institute.

It is worth noting from the above list that a couple of the researchers themselves have been involved in implementation of practice and informing explicit practice, for example in NSW DET. The use of these researchers to inform practice was believed by one respondent to give the research credibility.

...was needed on the RPL road shows ... the researcher has strong credibility with both practitioners and policy makers.

One end user also thought that the research had higher level influence as touchstones and verification for what people were doing in practice.

The reports have had a higher level influence – they have provided context and starting points. They also provided triangulation in that the reports are touchstones and provide verification for what people are doing.

## 5. Other comments and overall observations

The respondents were asked for their thoughts about impact and what dissemination strategies are useful in facilitating impact. Respondents provided thoughts on several different types of dissemination. It is interesting to note the respondents generally mentioned dissemination that involves face to face contact. More specific types of dissemination that were mentioned included:

- ✧ Personal networks as a significant medium of influence;
- ✧ At-a-glance publications – these give a succinct overview of the research and for RPL in particular it was thought to give the research new life;
- ✧ Presentations at forums and conferences and the NCVER stand at these conferences;
- ✧ Road shows and one on one discussions with researchers; and
- ✧ Key message pages.

Respondents were also asked to rate on a scale from 1-5 how important various forms of dissemination were to facilitating impact. While not all respondents provided answers to all of the categories and also some qualified their responses the averages were:

Project reports	4.0
Seminars	4.3
Briefing papers	3.5
Media coverage	1.8

Academic publications	2.5
Discussions with policy makers	4.5

We see that discussions with policy makers and seminars were seen as the most effective forms of dissemination, emphasising the researcher contact aspect of the research. Media releases and academic publications were not highly regarded as forms of dissemination.

Overall, there is evidence that the body of research on RPL has made an impact. Note that because we only interviewed a small sample of people we are not picking up all impacts however we see examples of where it has been used. There have been numerous citations to these reports. Respondents to interviews claimed that there are numerous networks that have been established or are ongoing either at least in part due to the research or which refer to the research. Some examples of this were able to be cited.

There were also several examples provided by those interviewed of where the projects had been used to inform policy and practice. The Clayton et al report commissioned by ANTA in particular was thought to have impact. One of the significant avenues through which the reports have had an impact on policy and practice is the COAG RPL initiative aimed at improving RPL practice in RTOs.

In terms of impact for these projects it is important to note the role the researchers themselves have had in facilitating impact. Two of the principal researchers involved in some of the projects are highly respected in the area of Vocational Education and Training and their efforts in getting the message 'out there' through numerous presentations and the like would seem to have increased the impact of the research. The at-a-glance which was produced and summarised succinctly the other research appears also to have assisted in the research making an impact. When thinking about dissemination it is these two sources - personal contact with researchers or the human element, and short succinct overview pieces – that really facilitate impact.

# References

---

- Anlezark A, Dawe S & Hayman S 2005 *An aid to systematic review of research in vocational education and training in Australia*, NCVER, Adelaide.
- Wooding S, Hanney S, Buxton M and Grant J 2005 Payback arising from research funding: evaluation of the Arthritis Research Campaign, *Rheumatology*, vol. 44, pp. 1145-1156.

# Attachment 1: Case study questionnaires

---

## Researcher questionnaire

### *Introduction*

Interviewer: ..... Date:.....

Research project(s):.....

Names of researchers and organisation:.....

Date project(s) published:.....

1. What was the purpose of the research and where was it aimed at? Were potential users involved in the design of the project? If so, please provide details.

### *Knowledge production and contributions to literature*

2. What dissemination strategy was there for the research? e.g.

✧ formal reports;

✧ articles;

✧ presentations;

✧ media releases.

3. What primary publications resulted from this research project(s)?

4. Were there any other publications, workshops or presentations as a result of the research?

5. Are you aware of whether the findings from the research have been featured anywhere in the media?

### *Capacity building/informing future research*

6. Has the project helped to generate subsequent research?

By your research team?

By others?

7. Have there been any benefits of the research in terms of attracting further research funding?

8. Has the research led to the development of networks or ongoing collaborations? For example with;

✧ people involved in the policy process;

✧ people involved in the practical side of VET;

✧ other researchers;

✧ funders of the research.

9. Are you aware of any promotions, secondments or any other benefits as a result of the research for researchers involved in the project?

*Informing policy*

10. Are you aware of your research having influence in informing policy in any way?

11. If so, what kind of influence? What was the main medium of influence? For example:

- ✧ formal reports;
- ✧ briefing papers;
- ✧ workshops and seminars;
- ✧ media reports.

*Informing practice*

12. Are you aware of your research having influence in informing practice in any way?

13. If so, what kind of influence? What was the main medium of influence? For example:

- ✧ formal reports;
- ✧ briefing papers;
- ✧ workshops and seminars;
- ✧ media reports;
- ✧ Best practice guides.

*Workforce skills in industry and society*

14. Do you know whether this research has had an impact more broadly (through its impact on policy and practice)?

*Rating scale of impacts*

15. On a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being of no importance to 5 being of great importance could you please rate how important each of the following are in facilitating the impact of your research.

Project reports and working papers	1	2	3	4	5
Seminars and conferences	1	2	3	4	5
Briefing papers	1	2	3	4	5
Media coverage	1	2	3	4	5
Academic publications	1	2	3	4	5
Discussions with policy makers	1	2	3	4	5
Other sources	1	2	3	4	5

*Documentary sources*

16. Can you suggest any documentary sources which may provide evidence of research impact? Examples may include:

- ✧ Impacts on research e.g. citations, other research resulting from this research, acknowledgements;
- ✧ Impacts on policy e.g. policy papers, discussion papers, parliamentary papers and media;
- ✧ Impacts on practice e.g. good practice guides, systematic reviews, educational resources, newsletters.

*Other comments*

17. Have there been any other impacts of the research not covered by the previous questions?
18. Do you have any other opinions on research impact in a more broad sense?
19. Can you supply us with details of any potential end users for this research?

## End user questionnaire

*Introduction*

Interviewer: ..... Date:.....

Research project(s):.....

Names of end users, position and organisation:.....

Referred from main researcher?.....

(If so, provide name)

1. Can you recall how you first became aware of this research?
2. In what capacity have you used this research?
3. Did you play any role in the design or conduct of the research (e.g. on reference group or steering committee)? If yes, was this useful to you? If no, do you think that you would find that a useful process?
4. Have you had any involvement with the researcher/researchers over this or subsequent work?

*Dissemination*

5. Are you aware of any, or have you developed any, publications from the research such as reports, journal articles, articles in newsletters, media releases? Please give details.
6. Have you attended any presentations on this research?
7. What dissemination strategies do you think are particularly useful in raising awareness/or leading to use of the research findings?
8. Are you aware of any other outputs from this research project e.g. websites, good practice guides etc?

*Capacity building/informing future research*

9. Are you aware as to whether the research has had any staff development or other educational benefits?
10. Have there been any benefits in terms of developing networks or partnerships?
11. Have you been interested or able to develop further research based on this research?

*Informing policy*

12. Do you think that this research has led to better information by which to inform or influence policy?

13. Have you used the results of this research in any way? If so, please provide details.

14. Are you aware of the research leading to any changes in policy, or influencing government programs and initiatives?

15. Are you aware whether the research has resulted in more strategic targeting (in terms of policy) of future research?

16. Are you aware of any other policy outcomes from the research?

*Informing practice*

17. Are you aware of your research having influence in informing practice in any way?

18. If so, what kind of influence? What was the main medium of influence? Examples include:

- ✧ Good practice guides
- ✧ Training packages
- ✧ Other educational materials

19. Are you aware of whether the research has led to any improvements in VET practice?

*Workforce skills in industry and society*

20. Do you know whether this research has had an impact more broadly (through its impact on policy and practice)?

*Documentary sources*

21. Can you suggest any documentary sources which may provide evidence of research impact? Example may include:

- ✧ impacts on research e.g. citations, other research resulting from this research, acknowledgements;
- ✧ Impacts on policy e.g. policy papers, discussion papers, parliamentary papers and media;
- ✧ Impacts on practice e.g. good practice guides, systematic reviews, educational resources, newsletters.

*Other*

22. On a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being of no importance to 5 being of great importance could you please rate how important each of the following are in facilitating the impact of research.

Project reports and working papers	1	2	3	4	5
Seminars and conferences	1	2	3	4	5
Briefing papers	1	2	3	4	5
Media coverage	1	2	3	4	5
Academic publications	1	2	3	4	5
Discussions with policy makers	1	2	3	4	5
Other sources	1	2	3	4	5

23. Do you think that the research is continuing to make an impact now?

Into the future? If so, how?

24. Have there been any other impacts of the research not covered by the previous questions?

25. Do you have any other opinions on research impact in a more broad sense?