Getting qualified

JOSIE MISKO

Dealing with lack of access to workplace training for apprentices and trainees

NCVER

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Glossary

Definition of terms

Apprentice/trainee: An individual undertaking vocational training through a contract of training or training agreement arrangements.

Cancellation: A contract of training/training agreement is said to be cancelled when it is terminated after the probationary period.

Contract of training/training agreement: A legal agreement between an employer and an apprentice/trainee and, where appropriate, the apprentice/trainee's legal guardian. Under the terms of the contract the employer agrees to provide employment, on-the-job training and agrees to release the apprentice/trainee to attend formal off-the-job training. The apprentice or trainee agrees to complete the training that is appropriate for the trade or non-trade area to the best of his or her ability.

Downtime: The term used by group training companies to identify the time that an apprentice is not in a work placement or in training.

Out-of-trade or out-of-vocation (OOV) apprentice: A term used in South Australia and Victoria. It refers to apprentices who have lost their jobs due to an employer's inability to keep them on, but who still wish to complete their training and gain trade status. Temporarily out of trade (TOT) is the Victorian and Queensland term for an apprentice in the same predicament. In this report, the South Australian OOV acronym will be adopted to identify these apprentices.

Special assistance programs: Three special assistance programs (SAP-1, SAP-2, SAP-3) were established by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) to help apprentices and trainees complete their qualifications.

The SAP-1 program provided a training allowance to apprentices and trainees for the payment of formal training.

The SAP-2 program provided an allowance to training providers to assist OOV trade apprentices to complete their trade qualifications.

The SAP-3 program provided wage subsidy assistance to employers to retain second, third or fourth year apprentices when employers had requested termination of contracts for reasons of economic hardship.

Today, the only special assistance program that is still in existence is very like the SAP-1 program and provides financial assistance to trainees and apprentices to complete their formal training.

Suspension: Suspension refers to a contract of training which is held in abeyance until an apprentice/trainee is able to return to work.

Vocational placement: A vocational placement entails structured workplace learning which is part of an accredited or recognised vocational course or program. It can include work observation, work experience and other forms of workplace learning. This form of vocational placement is generally unpaid. The skills to be learnt, enhanced or demonstrated are agreed on and clearly specified by vocational placement hosts and training providers. A workplace supervisor is assigned to train and in some cases assess a student's progress towards attaining the skills.

Work experience: This form of workplace learning is aimed at improving a student's experience of a work setting. It can include work sampling, work shadowing, research work experience and negotiated work experience. It is generally not a required part of the curriculum and is not necessarily assessed. It is usually undertaken by secondary school students as part of their general education.

Workplace learning: The way students learn about the world of work if they are not in paid employment can be classified under two major headings—vocational placements and work experience.

Acronyms

ACVETS	Australian Committee on Vocational Education and Training Statistics
ASCO	Australian Standard of Classification of Occupations
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
AVETMISS	Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard
COSTAC	Commonwealth State Training Advisory Committee
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DEETYA	Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
GTC	Group training company
GTS	Group training scheme
ICTC	Industrial and Commercial Training Commission
ITAB	Industry Training Advisory Body
NESB	Non-English-speaking background
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OOV	Out-of-trade or out-of-vocation apprentice
RTO	Regional training officers
SAP	Special Assistance Programs
TDO	Training development officers
TOT	Temporarily-out-of-trade apprentice
TQ	Training Queensland

Executive summary

Aims of the study

The purpose of this study was to examine the processes used by TAFE institutions, State training authorities, group training companies and employers to ensure that apprentices and trainees who have been suspended or cancelled due to lack of work have access to on-the-job training. In addition, it will investigate the provision of this training for other students who require work experience to complete a qualification.

Methodology

1 Data on apprenticeship and traineeship commencements and cancellations was collected from the national training statistics collection held at the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. These data were used to explore the extent of the problem of lack of access in terms of commencements and cancellations. It was also used to identify the five industries to be used in the study. These were the building, engineering, electrical/electronic, automotive and food industries.

2 Information was also collected by way of face-to-face and telephone interviews with participants from Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. These included:

- 27 training officers from metropolitan and regional branches of State training authorities
- managers or their representatives of 43 group training companies
- managers of 17 industry bodies including industry training advisory boards, unions and other industry associations
- managers, supervisors or trainers from 79 enterprises across the five industries
- 38 apprentices and trainees
- 47 providers of formal training.

Training statistics

Information from national training statistics shows that the number of apprentices entering the trades has declined considerably since the early 1980s. This decline has generally coincided with economic recessions. At the same time, however, the number of traineeship commencements in non-trade areas has steadily been increasing.

In addition, the overwhelming majority of apprentices and trainees are employed by private sector employers, with group training companies increasingly accounting for a greater proportion of apprentice and trainee commencements.

Apprenticeship and traineeship displacements—State processes

State governments, through their State training authorities, have responsibility for the administration and monitoring of apprenticeship and traineeship training. Training officers attached to these bodies have local responsibility for advising on and overseeing contracts of training. They must also ensure that employers are honouring their obligations under the relevant awards and contracts of training. That is, that they have the ability to provide appropriate training and facilities in which the training could occur.

State processes for commencing and cancelling contracts of training follow similar lines. Employers and apprentices and trainees or their guardians are required to sign a contract of training or training agreement which can only be broken by mutual consent. This means that both parties must agree to the cancellation and why it occurred. If there is any dispute about the reasons for the cancellation, a special tribunal will provide arbitration.

In all States, employers who consider displacing an apprentice for reasons of economic hardship and work shortages are asked to do their best to find another employer willing to take on the apprentice. They are also asked to discuss the matter with training officers, prior to raising the issue with apprentices or trainees. This allows training officers to present employers with alternative options to cancellation. These alternatives include the reduction of hours, suspension of the contract until more work is available, using annual leave, and continuing with formal training.

In practice, however, this process does not always occur. Training officers often only discovered displacements when apprentices informed them they no longer had a job. When employers did get in touch with training officers, it was often too late for training officers to suggest any alternatives to cancellation. The employers had often tried their best to keep on the apprentice until it was no longer

financially viable. In many cases, however, apprentices and employers had failed to notify anyone that the apprentice no longer had a job with the contracted employer, or that the employer's company had ceased to exist. This is one reason why statistics on apprenticeship or traineeship cancellations may not always reflect what actually occurred during the reporting period.

Sometimes, apprentices or trainees become unemployed because of employer economic hardship or work shortages and still wish to complete their apprenticeships. At this point, they are identified as 'out of vocation' (OOV) or 'temporarily out of trade' (TOT). The names of such apprentices or trainees are then circulated to relevant government agencies or industry bodies, in an effort to have them placed with other employers.

The monitoring of commencement and cancellation processes and the ability of employers to provide apprentices and trainees with appropriate working conditions and training supervision is a vital function of any system of training. This is especially the case when there is a possibility for exploitation. It is for this reason that a centralised State system should continue to carry the major responsibility for monitoring and overseeing training of apprentices and trainees. This is not to say that some of this responsibility cannot be devolved to local industries or their associations. It is important, however, that employers, apprentices, trainees and their guardians are given enough information on contract commencement about their duties and obligations under the contracts of training. In this way, they will know the correct procedures to follow in case of cancellations. Maintaining a centralised government agency with ultimate responsibility for overseeing the contracts of training continues to be essential.

Group training companies

Group training companies are increasingly playing a greater part in the employment of apprentices and trainees. They are second to private enterprises in providing employment for apprentices and trainees. Their survival is critically dependent on their ability to keep employees in regular paid work. That is, having enough host employers prepared to take apprentices and trainees on a regular basis. In April 1997 the Minister for Vocational Education and Training announced another $22 000 000 to be allocated to group training companies to double their employment of apprentices/trainees by the year 2000 (Kemp 1997).

At the time of the interview, just under half the group companies in the study had all their apprentices and trainees in work placements. The largest group training company employed 540 apprentices and 60 trainees. At the time of the interview, it had 70 apprentices (mostly in the building trades) not in work placements. One building industry-specific company had 45 apprentices not in work, and two regional

schemes both had 15 apprentices not in work placements. The remainder had an average of about four apprentices or trainees out of work.

Those companies who had very high rates of regular employment for their apprentices or trainees reported being highly selective and conservative in their recruiting processes. That is, they hired suitable applicants and only when they could find them regular work. There were very few problems in accessing work placements for group training companies in the electrical/electronic, engineering, food and automotive industries. Most of the problems in accessing work placements were experienced by group training companies seeking placements for apprentices and trainees in the building trades.

Problems in accessing placements in this industry are mainly due to the downturn in the industry in all three States and the general state of the national economy. In regional areas, the lack of activity in the building sector also has repercussions for the availability of placements for apprentices and trainees in related trades.

In South Australia, there is a building industry levy on all projects over $5000. This has meant that funds have been made available to building industry group training schemes to subsidise their hourly rates to keep charges down. South Australia has also implemented the UPSKILL program, in which companies winning government projects in excess of $500 000 have to guarantee that they will provide training opportunities to the value of 10 per cent of their total labour hours. It is still too early to say how effective the program has been, but at face value it seems a step in the right direction.

In the past, State and federal funds have been allocated to group schemes to provide 'live work' for apprentices and trainees. In some cases, these have also been commercial ventures. Such projects have been invaluable in providing on-the-job training for apprentices and trainees who happened to be without work placements for the odd day. The phasing out of programs like the federal HIYESTP program and the Queensland government's HIT program has meant that group schemes can no longer rely on these programs for providing 'live work' when host employers were not available.

The high cost of third and fourth-year apprentices

Almost half the group training companies looking for placements for apprentices in the building trades reported finding it especially difficult to place third and fourth-year carpenters with host employers. This was largely due to the high charge-out rates required. It was also due to the flooding of the employment market by qualified tradespeople who were willing to work for lower hourly rates because of the scarcity of jobs.

Some group training companies also found it difficult, at times, to place third and fourth-year cooks in regular work. This is due to high charge-out rates, weekend penalty rates, and the availability in many

areas of young tourists with experience in kitchens and restaurants to work for lower wages.

Keeping apprentices and trainees in continuous work requires substantial effort on the part of group training companies. Almost all the companies in this study employed field officers, whose major role was to cultivate and maintain a source of host employers. To do this, they were constantly 'on the road', visiting host employers to monitor how apprentices were going and speaking with supervisors. Their work also involved selling the group training concept to other potential host employers. This activity is vital to the survival and success of group training companies.

The employment of OOV apprentices and trainees

In many instances, OOV apprentices are picked up by group training companies. Information from some group training companies reveals that in many cases this is proving a costly exercise, because many of these OOV apprentices have a history of being behind in their formal training. Some have not completed the required hours for the length of time they have been employed, while others have had difficulties in coping with formal training. This has led some group training managers to question whether it is poor performance, rather than employer economic hardship or work shortage, which has been responsible for them becoming out of trade. If this is the case with the majority of OOV apprentices and trainees, then it is imperative that more stringent screening of the real reasons for cancellations be implemented.

Prevocational apprentices

It is the general perception that prevocational apprentices are preferred by employers, because they have been better prepared for the workplace. However, a few group training companies have found that some employers are especially unwilling to host carpentry apprentices who have completed their prevocational training. The main reason for this is that their charge-out rates are higher than the 'ordinary' first-year apprentice, yet they have not had adequate on-site experience or their own tools to warrant the employer's extra expense.

Dealing with lack of work placements

Group training companies who were unable to keep apprentices and trainees in regular work used a variety of strategies to deal with the problem. This included:

- discounting or fully subsidising charge-out rates
- allowing apprentices or trainees to take the day off
- engaging the apprentice or trainee in trade-related 'live work' programs
- engaging the apprentice or trainee in maintenance-type activities in or around group training buildings
- requiring apprentices to use annual or rostered days off.

When all options had been exhausted, group training companies opted for suspension until more work became available.

Accessing on-the-job training—training colleges

There were few instances where colleges had major problems in accessing work experience or vocational placements for their students. However, this is not to say that placements were easy to come by. All colleges reported that locating employers who were willing to take their students took considerable time and effort. The appointment of work placement officers, whose job it was to help students locate placements or jobs during and on completion of their formal training, had been a great help to faculties in training colleges. However, it was extremely important for these officers to have well-developed links with industry.

More problems in placing students were experienced by providers of training in the building trades. Placing students was becoming increasingly difficult, because employers who had traditionally taken on students were now finding that they had little work for their own employees. However, it was less difficult accessing on-the-job training for students at institutes with their own 'live work' programs.

A flexible approach for ensuring that students in the furnishing trades were able to locate work placements has been introduced in one institute. Here, students can undertake work experience or work placements whenever they are able to arrange them. In this way, there is less competition from high school students who generally have work experience during school holidays. In addition, students are asked to keep a diary of any work they perform outside college hours. This, too, can be counted towards the work placement requirement.

Other programs have experienced difficulties in finding vocational placements (also called field placements) for students undertaking child-care studies. Traditionally, these have had high field-placement requirements. Competition from other colleges and universities for accessing placements, which allow their students to work with pre-school students at similar times during the year, has also exacerbated the problem. South Australia has tried to reduce the impact of this competition through informal zoning arrangements for TAFE child-care programs. Metropolitan Victorian institutes have set up a centralised system for co-ordinating the times at which they will be placing demands on industry providers. Queensland institutes have regular meetings with representatives from the industry.

Some providers of programs with high field-placement requirements have found a way to deal with the problem of accessing suitable field placements. This involves broadening the range of activities and service providers that can be used. All providers indicated that there was no substitute for practical on-the-job experience. However,

almost half the child-care programs reported in this study made use of role play and simulations. Two institutes were also experimenting with interactive video delivery. Increased recognition of prior learning was also suggested as one way to reduce the number of field placements required.

If the location of field placements is resource and time intensive, so too is the monitoring of students in the workplace by lecturers. Visits to the workplace also put a strain on scarce resources, which is further exacerbated if the college services a large regional area.

Institute strategies for dealing with the displacement of apprentices and trainees

The majority of institutes reported that dealing with the displacement of apprentices and trainees was a rare occurrence. However, all the institutes in this study indicated that they would allow unemployed apprentices and trainees to continue their formal training if they were to become unemployed. Information from training officers attached to State training authorities shows, however, that this approach is not universal. In some States there are a number of faculties in institutes which do not allow unemployed apprentices to continue their formal training.

In the electrical/electronics field, training providers generally believed that unemployed apprentices could only continue formal training for the current year in which they were enrolled. This restriction was considered important, because extended lack of on-the-job training would severely limit the apprentice's ability to understand concepts covered by the course.

It was also difficult for institutes with block training in place to know the exact time when the apprentice had become unemployed. When they became aware of the situation, all institutes used their extensive networks with industry to introduce OOV apprentices to other employers. Regional training officers from State training authorities also provide assistance and support to OOV apprentices.

The courses which experience the most unemployed apprentices were generally in the building trades. The overall number of apprentices or trainees becoming unemployed through no fault of their own in other courses was relatively small. This may be a reflection of the decreasing number of apprentice commencements in the first place.

On-the-job training—industry providers

Interviews with managers of enterprises and industry bodies provided extra information on the extent of the unemployment problem of apprentices and trainees through employer economic hardship or work shortages. Industry bodies provided information on the strategies used to deal with the problem in the past. In addition, data was collected about the willingness and ability of enterprises to provide jobs, vocational placements and work experience for all

apprentices, trainees and students, including those from disadvantaged groups.

The overwhelming majority of companies in this study believed in the training of apprentices to avert any future skill shortages. The findings show that only a small number of employers had ever experienced displacing an apprentice or trainee because of work shortages or economic hardship. However, employers had also reduced the number of apprentices actually being employed. In some cases, companies had decided not to employ apprentices at all. These findings are supported by data from national training statistics, which show a reduction in the number of apprenticeship commencements. Although traineeship commencements have increased dramatically, it is important to note that apprentices and trainees continue to form a small percentage of the total labour force.

Very few companies surveyed currently employed or had previously employed apprentices or trainees with any reported disabilities. The major reason for this was that none had ever applied for positions. When asked to discuss any special problems such groups might present, the majority of employers indicated that sight or mobility impairment might restrict an individual's ability to work in often hazardous conditions.

There were also very few companies who currently employed or had previously employed any apprentices or trainees of either ATSI background or who did not speak English. Again, the major reason for the low employment of ATSI apprentices and trainees was that none had ever applied. The reason for not employing any apprentices or trainees who did not speak English was that basic language and literacy skills would be required to pass formal training.

Almost half the companies had provided vocational placements for students in TAFE, universities or secondary schools. No major concerns were voiced about the value of vocational placements. A small number of companies used work experience or vocational placements as a means of recruiting staff. However, the majority voiced concerns about occupational health and safety issues and not being able to provide meaningful tasks for students to perform.

Very few female apprentices were employed by companies in this study. National training statistics continue to show that the employment of females in traditionally male occupations has not improved. This is notwithstanding the considerable time, effort and money that has gone into promoting these occupations to students in high schools and women in workplaces. The question here is not why employers do not currently employ many female apprentices in these trades. Rather, it is why are females choosing not to select these trades as careers anyway?

Conclusions and recommendations

This study has shown that lack of access to on-the-job training for apprentices, trainees or students increases when the industries in which they are employed or would like to join are experiencing downturn. From the employers sampled in this study, cancellations for reasons of employer economic hardship or work shortages account for a very small proportion of the total cancellation rates. However, sometimes apprentices and trainees are in danger of becoming or do become unemployed through no fault of their own. The findings of this study show that training providers, State training authorities, group training companies and industry bodies will do everything possible to find them new positions.

The major problem, however, is not that apprentices or trainees are becoming unemployed during recessionary times (although this does occur to some extent), or that TAFE colleges are unable to access placements. It is that employers are not prepared to put on apprentices or trainees in the first place. This seems to be the case whether industries are experiencing work shortages or not. Employers need to be made aware that when fewer apprentices are commenced during recessionary times, the skill shortages may be felt four years down the track.

Group training companies have also played their part in helping industries train skilled workers in various trades. However, they can only continue to do so if they are able to access enough host employers to keep their apprentices and trainees in regular work. In addition, they must engage apprentices or trainees in meaningful work or formal training when this is not possible. For this reason, it is important that resources are made available for them to continue these activities. Reinstatement of funds for important 'live work' training programs, or Special Assistance Programs (SAP) to allow apprentices or trainees to complete their trades or programs, may need to be considered.

The employment of apprentices and trainees from disadvantaged or designated minority groups (ATSI background, females, people with disabilities) continues to be low. This is despite the considerable funding that has been allocated to improve the participation of these minority groups in the past. Research needs to be conducted into strategies to increase ATSI students and female numbers in apprenticeships or traineeships in these traditional white male-dominated trades. There also needs to be greater emphasis on informing employers about how they can modify work environments to enable them to employ apprentices or trainees with disabilities, and to promote their employment in these trades.

The *New Apprenticeships* arrangements aim to enhance the linkages between training and education providers and industry and provide students with real work opportunities. It will be important to evaluate the extent to which this goal can be achieved.

So far, this study has tended to support the right of apprentices or trainees to complete a course of training if they wish to do so. However, we must not lose sight of the economic conditions which control availability or non-availability of work. It may be that allowing unemployed apprentices or trainees to complete their training will further increase competition for already scarce employment. These are issues that must also be taken into consideration when looking for appropriate solutions. The hypothesis that there is a lack of access to on-the-job training for OOV trainees/apprentices has not been sustained by this study.

Summary of recommend-ations

The findings of this study point to five major strategies to expand the numbers and improve the training of skilled workers.

Recommended strategy 1

Encourage business and industry to increase their uptake of apprentices and trainees

Recommended actions

1 Encourage large manufacturing building and electrical/electronic firms and hotels to take responsibility for helping displaced apprentices/trainees complete their indentures.

2 Encourage industries to establish training levy schemes similar to those operating in the building industries in South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia to foster sustained numbers in training.

3 Encourage employers to take on more apprentices and trainees.

4 Promote the employment of apprentices and trainees from disadvantaged groups in the existing and emerging industries.

Recommended strategy 2

Improve the quality of work experience and vocational placement programs

Recommended actions

1 Examine the ways that work experience programs for Years 10, 11, and 12 can be made more meaningful for employers and students.

2 Expand the provision of induction programs which emphasise appropriate work behaviours and attitudes in students.

3 Promote benefits to enterprises of non-paid vocational placements and work experience to students.

Recommended strategy 3

Improve funding arrangements

Recommended actions

1 Encourage DEETYA (Department of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs) to re-establish SAP-1, 2, 3 arrangements.

2 Revamp employer incentive arrangements so that they are contingent on apprentices having completed the appropriate training.

3 Establish government policies that require the uptake of apprentices/trainees through the use of contract compliance measures.

4 Set up or reinstate programs which will provide assistance to group training companies to keep apprentices in 'live work' while they are on downtime.

5 Continue English language, literacy and numeracy programs to ensure that students are prepared for working in the trades and associated formal training.

Recommended strategy 4

Improving and increasing the information available to employers and apprentices and trainees

Recommended actions

1 Expand the provision of induction programs which emphasise the obligations and rights of parties to contracts of training or training agreements, including how to structure workplace training and the requirements of apprentices/trainees in the workplace.

2 Provide greater support for employers and supervisors of apprentices to participate in workplace trainer courses.

3 Implement cost-effective processes for the monitoring of contracts of training and training agreements.

4 Ensure that other group training companies and potential providers are clear about registration requirements.

5 Ensure that training providers examine the number of vocational placements for institutional pathways that are required to complete qualifications, and explore alternative ways to achieve similar outcomes when placements are scarce.

6 Improve information about support services available to employers, apprentices and trainees under the contracts of training or training agreements.

7 Raise awareness with industry groups of workplace needs of people from designated groups, and incentives available to employers who employ apprentices/trainees.

Recommended strategy 5

Promote more research into vocational choices

Recommended actions

1 Conduct research into effective strategies to encourage females into non-traditional occupations.

2 Conduct further research into reasons for low participation rates of females in managerial positions in female-dominated occupations.

3 Conduct research into reasons for the low rate of applications to enter the trades by all students, including ATSI students.

Background

The purpose of this study was to examine how TAFE institutions, State training authorities, group training companies and employers deal with lack of access to on-the-job training for apprentices and trainees who have been suspended or cancelled due to lack of work. In addition, the study investigated concerns that these apprentices and trainees may have significant problems in accessing further structured on-the-job training.

The project was expanded to include access to on-the-job training (work experience and vocational placements) for non-trade students in institutes of TAFE and students in secondary schools. A secondary aim was to document any innovative practices that are implemented to ensure that those who commence a traineeship/apprenticeship are able to complete it when they are suspended or cancelled due to lack of work.

Apprentice/trainee statistics

The number of apprentices entering the trades has declined considerably since the early 1980s. This decline has generally coincided with economic recession, declining emphasis on the trades as career paths for high school students, and a reluctance of small business to commit to the costs required to service a four-year apprenticeship contract.

From information on training statistics collected on an annual basis from each State, preliminary information on apprenticeship commencements in industries which have experienced considerable economic upheaval may be derived. The data can also be used to show that fluctuations in apprenticeships are generally linked to those in the business cycle. In times of economic well-being, apprenticeships increase. Employers feel they require extra workers and are optimistic about committing themselves to what is, in most cases, a four-year contract for an apprenticeship. When the economy is depressed, the situation is reversed and employers experience work shortages and increased pessimism about their ability to employ apprentices.

National apprenticeship statistics have been collected by the following groups: The Department of Employment and Youth Affairs for the financial year 1980–81; the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations for the financial years 1981–82 to 1985–86; the Department of Employment Education and Training for the financial

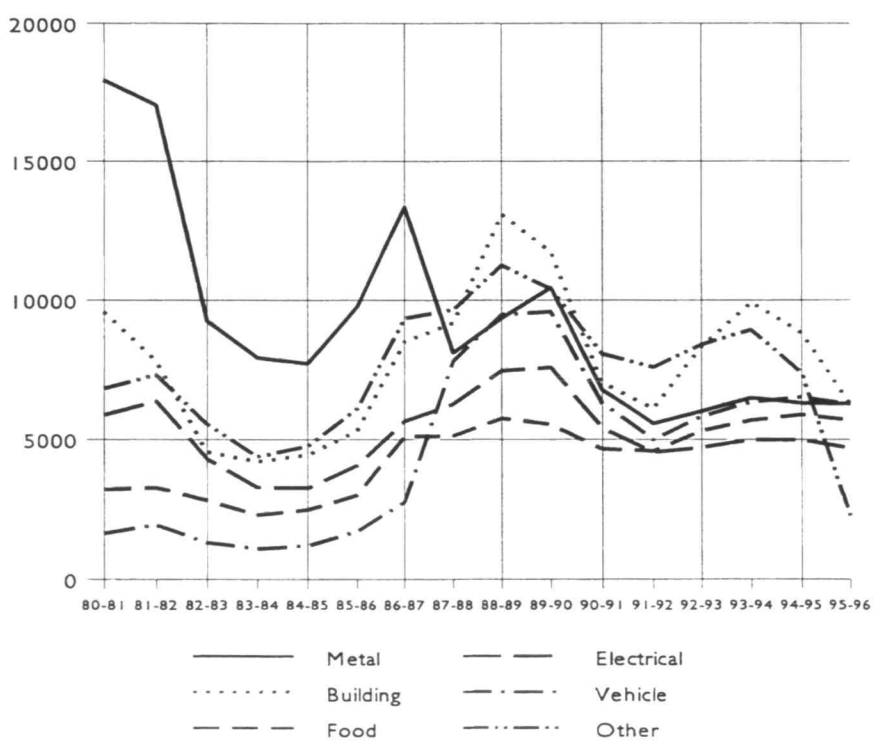
years 1986–87 to 1991–92; and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research for the financial years 1992–93 to 1995–96.

When comparing national apprenticeship data between 1980 and 1996, it should be noted that there have been several breaks in the series. These occurred most notably in 1988, when Australian Standard of Classification of Occupations (ASCO) trade classifications replaced the Commonwealth State Training Advisory Committee (COSTAC) trade groups and in 1994, when the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) was adopted. It should be further noted that, prior to 1 July 1994, data were collected using a variety of methods. For example: in the past, some States provided information on apprenticeship commencements according to when contracts were processed; others provided information according to when contracts took effect. Some States included recommencements with new commencements; others did not. In addition, information from some States was not always made available to collection agencies for every year. Therefore, it is often difficult to make reliable comparisons between data from States, industries and financial years.

Consistent data collection

Since 1 July 1994, all State training authorities now report data according to one standard, AVETMISS. This means that there is a greater consistency between the ways that data are recorded and reported.

Figure 1: Apprenticeship commencements for major trades July 1 1980 to June 30 1996



These statistics, along with indicators of economic well-being or decline, can at best be used to form a rudimentary idea of how apprenticeship commencements and economic activity are linked. These data are presented in table 1. A pictorial representation of the same data is presented in figure 1.

When examining data on commencements, it is important to note that up to 1987–88 COSTAC trade classifications were used and the vehicle mechanics were included in the metal trade statistics. Since then they have been reported using ASCO trade classifications and included in the calculations for the vehicle industry. It is this change which distorts the low figures in the vehicle industry prior to 1987–88 and magnifies the number of commencements experienced in the following years. Not all collections are complete for all financial years for all States. South Australia did not provide information for 1982–83 to 1985–86. Victoria did not provide information for 1984–85. Tasmania did not provide information in 1985–86 and between 1987–88 and 1990–91. Queensland did not provide information in 1989–90, and the Northern Territory did not provide information in 1980–81 and 1993–94.

Data from table 1 show that the sharpest drop in apprenticeship numbers was experienced across all industries in 1982–83.

The statistics also show that commencements in the engineering, building, vehicle and printing industries at this time had dropped by about half. In the food industries, they had dropped by about a third. The data also show that commencements seem to rally in 1986–87 and 1988–89, and drop again in 1990–91 and 1991–92. Figure 1 demonstrates that these fluctuations mirrored buoyancy or downturn in economic activity.

The economy and apprentice/trainee statistics

When fluctuations in indicators of economic well-being are examined, a relationship between the economy and numbers in vocational training is evident. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conducts annual reviews for member countries. Its 1991–92 review (OECD 1992) provides an economic analysis of activity prior to, during and after the financial year 1990–91. This information has been revisited here.

The metal trades were heavily affected by the 1982–83 recession and about 100 000 workers lost their jobs. In addition, industrial production fell, average earnings plummeted and retail sales decreased. For businesses who managed to survive, it also meant a loss of confidence in their ability to hire new staff. This was especially reflected in the commencements of apprentices. The OECD (1992) review reports that the economy began to overheat again by late 1987, experiencing its highest growth of domestic demand from mid-1988 to mid-1989 since the early 1970s.

Table 1: Total apprenticeship commencements from July 1 1980 to June 30 1996

	80–81	81–82	82–83	83–84	84–85	85–86	86–87	87–88	88–89	89–90	90–91	91–92	92–93	93–94	94–95	95–96
Metal	17 936	17 034	9 245	7 909	7 711	9 747	13 366	8 094	9 349	10 447	6 750	5 564	6 002	6 473	6 298	6 267
Electrical	5 865	6 357	4 301	3 273	3 251	4 069	5 646	6 252	7 450	7 572	5 397	4 526	4 702	4 975	4 990	4 681
Building	9 564	7 799	4 546	4 193	4 439	5 305	8 495	9 166	13 095	11 716	7 025	6 090	8 321	9 913	8 811	6 258
Printing	791	736	526	294	568	909	1 025	1 043	1 176	1 025	851	675	568	690	943	732
Vehicle	1 635	1 944	1 312	1 085	1 194	1 707	2 757	7 815	9 475	9 569	6 279	4 985	5 822	6 323	6 497	6 258
Food	3 199	3 269	2816	2 291	2 475	3 002	5 101	5 120	5 742	5 529	4 656	4 573	5 305	5 683	5 878	5 677
Other	6 819	7 314	5 536	4 371	4 748	6 089	9 328									
Horticulture								1 094	1 170	1207	1005	964	1 117	1 200	1 033	939
Miscellaneous								8 549	10 089	9 193	7047	6 613	7 278	7 720	6 319	5 443
Hairdressing										*4 764*	*4 318*	*3 936*	*4 155*	*3 969*	*3 426*	3 169
'Other'										*4 429*	*2 729*	*2 677*	*3 123*	*3 751*	*2 893*	*2 274*
Total	**45 809**	**44 453**	**28 282**	**23 416**	**24 386**	**30 828**	**45 718**	**47 133**	**57 546**	**56 258**	**39 010**	**33 990**	**39 915**	**42 977**	**40 836** **	**36 255** ***
Male	*	*	*	*	21 183	26 799	39 862	41 278	43 321	49 389	33 232	28 539	10 250	36 987	35 608	31 263
Female	*	*	*	*	3 203	4 029	5 856	5 855	5 717	6 869	5 778	5 451	2 042	5 990	5 228	4 992

* Gender breakdown not available for these years

** Does not include 403 male and 31 female apprentices classified as engineering apprentices

*** Does not include 57 male and 7 female apprentices classified as engineering apprentices

------ Break in series

This was brought about by a sharp increase in the terms of trade, increased investments (especially in commercial property), positive business and consumer confidence and the 1987 easing of monetary policy.

During this time, lending to the business sector grew rapidly and personal credit was also expanded. Investment in buildings and equipment increased, as did the value of corporate debt. In April 1988, there was a tightening of monetary policy; short-term interest rates rose to 18 per cent and long-term bond-yields rose to 14 per cent. By mid-1989, there was evidence of reduced investment in building and machinery and equipment. The review concluded 'all in all, given the build up of private and notably corporate debt, a correction in spending appeared inevitable' (p. 13). In this case, it meant a reduction in spending.

According to the OECD review, the next recession began in mid-1990. It was signalled by a fall in prices of commercial property, terms of trade and destocking. When commercial property prices crumbled and cash flow waned, it stretched the ability of the debt-ridden corporations to service their debts. This pushed down business confidence and impacted strongly on a number of financial institutions.

This recession reduced the output of all sectors of the economy. Manufacturing fell by about 15 per cent and construction fell by about eight per cent between the quarter of March 1990 and September 1991. Businesses retrenched staff, investment was cut back and stock levels were reduced. Such cost-saving measures were also reflected in the employment of apprentices and cancellation and suspension of contracts for economic hardship and work shortages.

This recession was particularly bad for Victoria, which was heavily reliant on manufacturing and had been exposed to over-supply of commercial property. Its banks were also heavily involved in property loans. In addition, the failure of the Pyramid Building Society and mortgage trusts compounded the State's financial problems. Victoria also experienced the largest falls in employment and, according to the OECD review, accounted for over two-thirds of the national decline in 1990–91.

All States' revenues and government-run enterprises have been heavily affected by this recession. Strategies that were used include out-sourcing many government services, retrenching staff and cutting back employment. Where, in the past, government enterprises would largely take responsibility for the training of apprentices, this is no longer the case.

According to Sweet (1991), another marked aspect of the 1990–91 recession was that more males lost jobs than females. This is because the largest job reduction and losses have been in the construction and manufacturing industries. This is also reflected in the fall in

apprenticeship commencements, which have been traditionally occupied by males. Although traditional apprenticeships have declined since 1990–91, the number of people in other contracts of training overall has grown due to increased numbers in traineeships.

Increasing traineeship commencements

There has been a steady increase in the number of traineeships offered in a range of occupations during the last two years. Traineeships (ATS) were first offered under the Australian Traineeship System, which was introduced in August 1985 as a joint federal/State government initiative.

In these cases, businesses were given incentives to provide employment for a trainee who would attend formal training for two days during the week and work for the remainder of the week. Although legislation governing the employment of trainees varied between the States, most ATS traineeships were of one year's duration. At the end of the traineeship, the employer had the option of retaining the trainee on a full-time basis. The first ATS traineeships were offered in non-trade areas of office/clerical, financial/banking, retail, hospital assistants, telecommunication and hospitality. They were also gradually introduced into a number of trade areas (automotive, food, construction). Today, traineeships are offered in many areas and may exceed 12 months duration. In addition, training can be delivered using a purely on-the-job training model.

The first stage of a national evaluation of the ATS was conducted in 1989. This comprised a survey of former trainees. This survey showed that 87 per cent of the 774 trainees who completed the traineeship were employed at the time of the survey. Of these, 65 per cent were employed by their traineeship employer.

National statistics on traineeship commencements were first collected in 1994. These show that where apprenticeship numbers have remained static and decreased somewhat in a few areas, the proportion of trainees under contracts of training has increased dramatically. Table 2 presents a breakdown of these figures for the period June 1 1994 to June 30 1996.

The employment of female apprentices and trainees

The Australian Committee on Vocational Education and Training Statistics (ACVETS) national training statistics can also be used to show the female commencements in apprenticeships and traineeships across occupations since mid-1994. By far the greatest number of commencements for females was in the clerical area. Here, they out-numbered males by more than half. However, the greatest proportion

Table 2: Number of apprenticeship and traineeship commencements for July 1 1994 to June 30 1996

	1994–1995				1995–1996			
	All contracts	**Apprentice**	**Trainee**	**Unknown**	**All contracts**	**Apprentice**	**Trainee**	**Unknown**
Managers and administrators	587	238	57	292	845	256	171	418
Professionals	30	0	30	0	77	0	77	0
Para professionals	616	434	177	5	2031	87	1938	6
Tradespersons (not further classified)	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
Metal/fitting and machining	3083	3083	0	0	3401	3372	0	29
Other metal	3215	3215	0	0	2911	2895	13	3
Electrical/electronics	4990	4990	0	0	4681	4681	0	0
Building	8811	8811	0	0	6258	6258	0	0
Printing	979	943	36	0	732	732	0	0
Vehicle	6504	6492	12	0	6260	6258	2	0
Food	5878	5878	0	0	5884	5677	0	207
Horticulture	1033	1033	0	0	939	939	0	0
Miscellaneous	6105	6105	0	0	5190	5187	0	3
'Hairdressing'	3426	3426	0	0	3169	3169	0	0
'Other'	2679	2679	0	0	2021	2018	0	3
Clerks	7254	0	7254	0	11167	0	11159	8
Salespersons and personal service workers	4248	322	3853	73	13585	122	13333	130
Plant/machine operators and drivers	373	25	347	1	1379	2	1265	112
Labourers and related workers	1741	0	1713	28	5588	0	5507	81
	55448	**41570**	**13479**	**399**	**70929**	**36466**	**33465**	**998**

* These commencements are due to apprentices and trainees in some declared vocations sharing the same ASCO codes

Source: *Australian Training Statistics—Annual 1994/95 and 1995/96* publications

of females in any occupational area was in hairdressing, where they accounted for about 90 per cent of all commencements.

Female apprenticeship and traineeship commencements in the metal, electrical/electronics, building, printing, vehicle and horticultural trades were low. This suggests that females are still not entering non-traditional areas to any great extent and that higher commencements are being concentrated in the non-trade level traineeships. A more detailed breakdown of these commencements is provided in table 3.

More information on the percentage of females in non-traditional occupations for this period can also be obtained from training statistics for these periods (ACVETS 1995).

Table 3: Male and female commencements in apprenticeships and traineeships between July 1 1994 and 30 June 1996

	1994–1995			1995–1996		
	Males	**Females**	**Total**	**Males**	**Females**	**Total**
Managers and administrators	506	81	587	750	95	845
Professionals	22	8	30	59	18	77
Para professionals	543	73	616	1 727	304	2 31
Tradespersons (not further classified)	0	1	1	1	0	1
Metal/fitting and machining	3 032	51	3 083	3 343	58	3 401
Other metal	3 174	41	3 215	2 873	38	2 911
Electrical/electronics	4 904	8	4 990	4 578	103	4 681
Building	8 686	125	8 811	6 170	88	6 258
Printing	863	116	979	641	91	732
Vehicle	6 436	68	6 504	6 177	83	6 260
Food	4 484	1 394	5 878	4 463	1 421	5 884
Horticulture	908	125	1 033	834	105	939
Miscellaneous	2 900	3 205	6 105	2 204	2 986	5 190
'Hairdressing'	396	3 030	3 426	351	2 818	3 169
'Other'	2 504	175	2 679	1 853	168	2 021
Clerks	1 849	5 405	7 254	3 123	8 044	11 167
Salespersons and personal service workers	1 717	2 531	4 248	6 387	7 198	13 585
Plant/machine operators and drivers	287	86	373	1 168	211	1 379
Labourers and related workers	1 300	441	1 741	4 945	643	5 588
Total	**41 611**	**13 837**	**55 448**	**49 443**	**21 486**	**70 929**

Source: *Australian Training Statistics—Annual 1994/95 and 1995/96* publications

From table 3, we can see that traineeships have increased at a great rate for paraprofessionals, clerks, salespersons and personal service workers, plant and machine operators, and drivers and labourers and related workers. A number of those areas also have a greater proportion of female representation.

Employers of apprentices and trainees

Employer groups

The national training statistics for mid-1994 to early 1995 show that the overwhelming majority (78.4%) of these commencing apprentices and trainees were employed in the private sector. About 20 per cent were employed in group training companies, about four per cent in State governments and minimal percentages in local and federal governments. These data are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Employment of commencing apprentices and trainees, July 1 1994 to June 30 1995

Employers	1994–1995		1995–1996	
	No.	%	No.	%
Private sector	43 484	78.4	55 058	77.6
Group training scheme	8 188	14.8	10 303	14.5
Government business enterprise	246	.4	168	.2
Local government	601	1.1	954	1.3
State government	2 339	4.2	2 918	4.1
Commonwealth government	590	1.1	1 528	2.2
	55 448	**100.0**	**70 929**	**100.0**

Note: Totals do not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding
Source: *Australian Training Statistics—Annual 1994/95 and 1995/96* publications

Contracts of training/training agreements

A contract of training is a legal agreement between an employer and a trainee or apprentice. Under the terms of the contract, the employer agrees to provide employment, on-the-job training and release the apprentice to attend formal off-the-job training. The apprentice or trainee agrees to complete the training which is appropriate for the trade or non-trade area. In all States, apprentices and trainees are required to serve a probationary period (generally three months for an apprentice and four weeks for a trainee).

Cancellations of contracts of training

Contracts of training can be cancelled through mutual consent for a number of reasons. These include the apprentice's or trainee's:

- lack of aptitude to cope with the program or with other people
- unsatisfactory work record
- dissatisfaction with the income
- dissatisfacton with the technical college course
- dissatisfaction with the working conditions
- misconduct

- financial problems
- health condition not related to work.

Alternatively, contracts may be cancelled through mutual consent with the trainee due to the employer's inability to provide a range of work or training, business closure, work-related health condition or death, and dissatisfaction with the training that the employer was able to provide (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1990). Cancellations can also occur by a determination of a disputes resolution tribunal if not mutually agreed.

Between June 1980 and July 31 1995, 114 535 contracts of training were cancelled. Table 5 provides details of cancellations that were reported by States for the different years in the metal, electrical, building, printing, vehicle, food, horticulture and miscellaneous trades.

Table 5 shows that between mid-1982–83 to mid-1983 and 1984, the greatest number of cancellations occurred in the metal and building trades. (At this time, metal trades also included vehicle mechanics). Large numbers of cancellations are also seen in the financial years 1990–91 and 1992–93.

A pictorial representation of these data is presented in figure 2.

Figure 2: Number of contract cancellations between July 1 1980 and June 30 1996

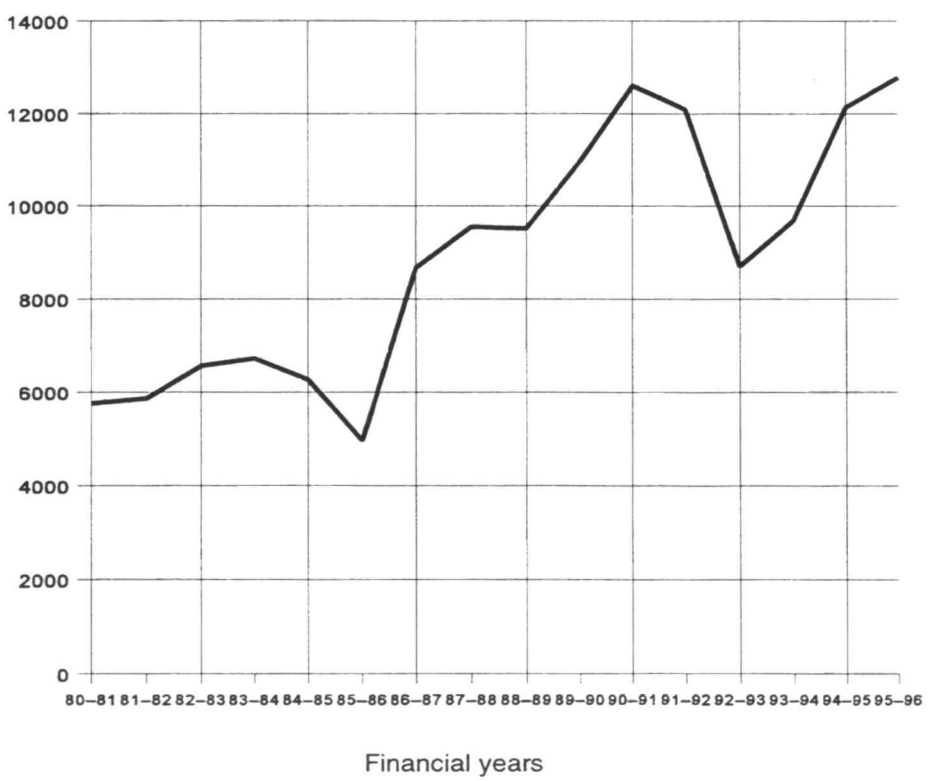


Table 5: Cancellation of contracts reported by States July 1 1980—July 30 1996

	Metal	Elec.	Building	Printing	Vehicle	Food	Other	Hort.	Misc.	Hair	Other	Total
80–81	1906	505	799	113	421	621	1392					5757
81–82	1956	609	917	128	362	665	1219					5856
82–83	2327	615	1202	93	313	666	1349					6565
83–84	2357	638	1143	114	371	761	1340					6724
84–85	1950	591	970	84	345	830	1494					6264
85–86	1365	394	794	64	273	734	1 328					4952
86–87	2270	694	1199	124	586	1379	2412					8664
87–88	1378	856	1344	150	1660	1370		218	2572			9548
88–89	1313	994	1312	154	1706	1499		210	2324			9512
89–90	1541	1140	1660	236	1886	1530		248	2722	1717	1005	10963
90–91	1721	1236	2212	228	2339	1805		268	2796	1619	1117	12605
91–92	1599	1201	2217	211	2258	1838		203	2559	1602	957	12086
92–93	1086	878	1444	81	1461	1613		180	1961	1390	571	8704
93–94	1026	860	1545	99	1433	2072		207	2450	1746	704	9692
94–95	1110	1021	2758	113	1570	2635		242	2635	1786	849	12134*
95-96	1146	1110	2822	103	1831	2585		255	2585	1796	789	12773**

* Does not include 58 engineering apprentices

** Does not include 12 apprentices classified as engineering apprentices

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Cancellation of contracts due to work shortages and employer financial hardship

This report only focusses on contracts of training cancelled because of employer economic hardship or work shortages. When employers can no longer provide employment or training, they may apply to have the contracts of training cancelled or suspended. Cancellation is based on the mutual agreement of both parties or, in cases of disagreement, by a tribunal of the State training authority. National statistics on the numbers of apprentices who lost their jobs for these reasons were collected between the financial years 1980–81 and 1989–90. They are presented in table 6. The figures show that during this time there were 7367 reported incidents of these cancellations with almost half (46.7%) occurring between the financial years 1981–82 and 1983–84. As we have noted before, these are the years which include the 1982–83 recession. Large numbers of apprentices also lost their jobs for these reasons from mid-1990 to mid-1991, which encompassed most of the 1990–91 recession. This was the last year that statistics on reasons for cancellations were reported. A more detailed description of these cancellations for the different States is reported in table 6.

Table 6: Number of apprentices losing jobs through employer economic hardship or work shortages from July 1 1980 to June 30 1991

States and Territories	80–81	81–82	82–83	83–84	84–85	85–86	86–87	87–88	88–89	89–90	90-91
NSW	268	152	320	361	332	112	197	78	4	4	nr
VIC	99	71	96	253	94	nr	28	80	42	26	155
QLD	234	205	576	767	93	184	231	nr	65	16	244
SA	23	19	21	13	16	2	7	nr	4	130	nr
WA	30	36	15	14	12	6	9	95	85	300	400
TAS	30	20	58	18	40	40	12	42	nr	nr	nr
ACT	55	32	66	11	nr	7	6	17	24	26	24
NT	4	6	27	7	14	7	26	20	22	6	nr
Totals	743	541	1179	1444	601	421	516	246	642	211	823

* nr = not reported
* Total number of cancellations from July 1 1980 to June 30 1991 = 7367

Access to formal vocational training

When apprentices and trainees lose their jobs through no fault of their own, the question of their continuing access to on- and off-the-job training emerges. When institutionally-based vocational education students cannot gain the industry experience required to complete their credentials, the issue of their access to on-the-job training becomes important.

The major purpose of this study is to report on the experience of State training authorities, employers, employees and training providers for five major industries, with a view to providing some analysis of the

present situation and recommendation for strategies to ensure that all are able to complete the credentials and training they began.

The *New Apprenticeships*

In May 1996, the federal Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training announced the implementation of Modern Apprenticeship and Traineeship Scheme (MAATS). At the time of publication this system has been renamed the *New Apprenticeships* system. These reforms are to be combined with and build upon those of the previous government's Australian Vocational and Training system (AVTS). The development and implementation of *New Apprenticeships* will be industry led with collaborative effort between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories. This will ensure that training better reflects the skill needs of industry and leads to real jobs, especially for young people. In addition, it will help to improve international economic competitiveness for Australian companies.

The new system is founded on the following principles.

1 **An industry-led system with collaborative and flexible training arrangements:** Employers and employees will enter a training arrangement as partners, and decide how and when this training is to be delivered to suit employer needs and develop the skills of apprentices or trainees. Employers will be guaranteed an increased ability to exercise choice in the selection of training providers, purchase of products and services and the mode, time and place of delivery. This will provide greater flexibility in when and how training can be accessed. Employers will be able to develop their own training packages in partnership with registered training providers.

2 **Improved vocational training in schools:** *New Apprenticeships* will require schools to offer students who do not go on to tertiary studies a broader range of vocational training which will lead to further training or a job. Increasing links between schools, training and work will provide students with a logical and recognised progression to apprenticeships and traineeships. It will also ensure that the system meets the needs of small to medium-sized businesses.

   The new system also aims to expand apprenticeships and traineeships into newer industries with prospects for growth. It will also target those industries in which there are skill shortages and a low level of training.

3 **Devolved responsibility for local training arrangements:** Regional groups of employers, apprentices, training providers and schools will be able to negotiate training delivery so that it is timely and responds to local needs.

4 **National training framework:** The system will be based on a national training framework which is focussed on national competency standards and qualifications.

5 **Improved access and equity:** The new system aims to provide special training for disadvantaged groups including unemployed people.

6 **Streamlined regulation requirements:** Regulation will only be used to ensure the effective allocation of resources and funds, provision of quality training, protection of trainees and apprentices and safeguarding of their rights.

In August 1996, the Minister announced the implementation of new school-based apprenticeships. These new apprenticeships will allow Year 11 and 12 students to start an apprenticeship or traineeship while completing their secondary school certificates. Under this scheme, school, employers, training providers and students would decide the best arrangement for combining school, work and training. Students would also be paid for time spent in the workplace.

On April 10 1997, the Minister announced to the Bendigo Business Expo 1977 in Victoria that the federal government would provide $22 000 000 to help group training companies expand job opportunities for apprentices and trainees. This is aimed at increasing the number of trainees/apprentices in group training companies to 40 000 by the year 2000. According to the Minister, this expansion will directly help young people in regional areas and assist small businesses to host group training apprentices/trainees.

The *New Apprenticeships* system promises stronger links between schools and businesses, in the hope that the new arrangements will deliver better and genuine work opportunities for students. Its success will be dependent on the ability of people in schools and businesses to access resources which will help them develop and maintain these links. Success will also depend on the economic reality of businesses being able to provide training and jobs. Success will also depend on the economic reality of businesses being able to provide training and jobs.

Methodology

The project comprised three distinct phases. These phases involved:

- the collection of data on apprenticeship and trainee commencements and cancellations from national data bases
- the collection of qualitative information from all relevant stakeholders
- the analysis and reporting of research findings.

Phase 1 Collection of data from national trainee statistics

Data on apprenticeship commencements and cancellations for all States and Territories were collected from national training statistics. From the data, particular industry sectors were chosen for the surveys. Industry sectors identified were building, engineering, electrical/electronic, automotive and food.

Phase 2 Collection of qualitative information

Information by way of face-to-face and in-person interviews was collected from:

- 27 training officers from 14 metropolitan and regional branches of the State training authorities of South Australia, Queensland and Victoria
- managers or their representatives of 43 group training companies in South Australia, Queensland and Victoria
- managers of 17 ITABs and other industry associations in South Australia, Queensland and Victoria
- managers, supervisors, or trainers from 79 enterprises in the five industries selected for the study
- 38 apprentices and trainees from a number of these enterprises
- 47 providers of formal training.

Providers of formal programs outside these five industries which entailed substantial amounts of work experience were also interviewed.

A breakdown of the numbers of participants in each of these groups from each State appears in appendix A. Interview schedules for each group appears in appendix B.

Phase 3 Analysis of data

During this phase, data from national training statistics and interviews were analysed. National statistics provided information for tracking variations in apprenticeship and traineeship commencements, according to variations in the business cycle. They also provided information on profiles of these apprentices in terms of gender.

Information from interviews with the different groups was used to gauge the extent to which lack of access to on-the-job training was a major problem for each of the different industries. This entailed looking at the willingness of companies to provide on-the-job training or work experience, and difficulties experienced by group training companies in accessing work placements for their apprentices. It also invoved looking at difficulties experienced by training providers in accessing work experience for their students.

Information from training officers in the three State training authorities was used to gauge the extent of the problem of apprenticeship displacement. It was also used to describe everyday strategies adopted by training officers in State training authorities to monitor the training system.

Apprenticeship and traineeship displacements—State processes

State governments have taken on responsibility for the monitoring of apprenticeship and traineeship training, and the overseeing of contracts between employers and their contracted apprentices and trainees. In this study, we have reported on the processes used by South Australia, Victoria and Queensland.

In South Australia, the Accreditation and Registration Council (formerly the Industrial and Commercial Training Commission and, before that, the Apprenticeship Board) oversees the contracts of training. Supporting the work of the council are regional training officers and clerical officers based in regional branches. Their job is to ensure that employers are honouring the relevant industrial awards at the local level, and assist the parties to deal with any problems apprentices/trainees or their employers may have during the apprenticeship. Regional training officers must also ensure that apprentices and trainees receive high quality training, employers are qualified and able to deliver the training, and maximum numbers commence and complete their contract of training. Officers from the Department of Industrial Affairs have responsibility for ensuring that appropriate awards/agreements are observed.

In Queensland, this is the role of Training Queensland (TQ), a branch of the State training authority. Here, too, staff based in regional offices are charged with overseeing contracts of training and ensuring employers are appropriately qualified to deliver training. Training consultants are employed to monitor the apprenticeship and traineeship system at the local level. The Awards Management Branch of the Department of Training and Industrial Relations (DTIR) has responsibility for making sure apprentices are adequately paid.

The Office of Training and Further Education (OTFE), through its Regulated Training Services branch, is charged with a similar role in Victoria. Training development officers (TDOs), attached to metropolitan and country regions, carry out the functions of overseeing the system.

In all three States, it seems that the ability of personnel to oversee contracts of training and training agreements and the quality of training being delivered is heavily dependent on the number of

apprentices and trainees in their care and the knowledge they have of the local area.

These training personnel are entrusted with overseeing contracts of training and training agreements. Because of this, they are also an important source of information regarding what happens when employers can no longer provide jobs or training to apprentices and trainees in their care.

When employers take on apprentices or trainees in South Australia, Queensland and Victoria, they must satisfy requirements that they are able to provide appropriate training. This means that the employer can deliver structured on-the-job training and has the required ratio of qualified staff to apprentices, and appropriate facilities and equipment. Once this is satisfied, the employer and apprentice sign a contract of training or training agreement. In Queensland and Victoria, employers carry out a self-assessment of their capacity for training and make a written declaration to that effect. Training consultants in Queensland and Victoria carry out random audits to ensure that training meets the required standards. In all States, the contract can only be broken by mutual consent after the probationary period. This means that employers and employees must both agree to terminate the contract and about reasons for the termination. In the case of disagreement between the parties, a special tribunal will provide arbitration. In South Australia, apprentices and trainees have access to the same dispute resolution mechanism. In Queensland, contracts can also be cancelled if the State Training Council approves a request for cancellation by one of the parties.

This study focusses on cancellation of contracts of training or training agreements because of employer economic hardship or employer inability to provide appropriate training.

Findings

Twenty-seven training officers and consultants from 10 metropolitan and regional branches of the State training authorities in South Australia, Queensland and Victoria were interviewed. These interviews sought to obtain information about processes they followed in dealing with apprentices and trainees facing displacement. In all States, these processes were dependent on whether or not the apprentice, trainee or employer had contacted the training officer prior to the apprentice or trainee being displaced.

It is very evident that training officers in all three States have had extensive experience with the issue of displacement and out-of-trade apprentices. Between them, they had experienced many thousands of cases of apprentices being displaced and employers considering displacement because of financial difficulties.

South Australia

All training officers in South Australia generally followed similar procedures in dealing with employers requesting termination of a contract of training due to economic hardship or shortage of work. These procedures are adjusted according to whether or not the training officer has been informed that the employer is considering requesting a cancellation or suspension of the contract, before the apprentice has been dismissed.

The following advice is given to employers requesting a cancellation of a contract of training because of lack of work or financial difficulties. Before an application will be accepted, employers must make a maximum effort to transfer or otherwise place the trainee with another employer. This may mean contacting five or six other employers. Should these contacts not prove fruitful, other options are presented.

If the apprentice is in his/her final year, has completed all off-the-job training and 75 per cent of on-the job training and the employer certifies that all competencies have been achieved, the employer and apprentice can request an early sign-off. This means that on approval of the council or delegate, the apprentice will be given tradesperson status earlier than the nominal term of the contract.

Training officers also suggest that the employer considers the possibility of temporary suspension instead of cancellation. If the employer has more than one apprentice in the same vocation, however, then he/she is also informed that the suspension must be shared on a rotational basis between apprentices.

In some awards, it may be possible for the apprentice to go on a four-day week. In others, like hairdressing, the apprentice may also continue with the apprenticeship on a part-time basis.

Although employers are obliged under legislation to contact the State training authority training officers when they are considering displacement, this does not always occur. If the employer does contact training officers before displacement occurs or the apprentice is made aware of any impending changes, training officers generally advise employers to include trainees and apprentices in discussions as early as possible. Knowing that displacement may be a possibility will allow the apprentice or trainee to seek and take advantage of any opportunity that may arise outside the company. For example, he/she may be able to transfer to another employer, take extended time off, or accept any other work that is available.

Employers are also advised that if their business improves in the future, they cannot sign on any other apprentice, as long as the apprentice they wish to cancel is still looking to finish his/her vocational training.

Another option for employers who may be experiencing difficulties in providing work for apprentices is to encourage the apprentice to

complete any outstanding off-the-job training. If the employer chooses this option, he/she is still responsible for paying the apprentice's wages while he/she is completing the training.

In addition, when a company is sold, the contract of training is transferred to new owners. Training officers also advise employers who are selling a business to make sure they have fulfilled all their obligations to the apprentice in terms of holiday pay, annual leave and superannuation. If the company is being liquidated, the liquidators also have responsibility to continue to employ, train or place the apprentice with another employer.

When all avenues for prolonging the agreement have been exhausted, and it is clear that cancellation is the only option, it may be processed if mutually agreed to by the parties. Should the apprentice not want to sign the cancellation, the matter goes before the Disputes Resolution Committee for determination.

Training officers have no formal obligation to find alternative employment for apprentices or trainees who have been or are being displaced. They do this as a matter of course and use their extensive networks with local businesses and close co-operation with training officers from other regions to assist apprentices and trainees in finding jobs.

Some training officers recommended restricted approval to tradespeople who were willing to help apprentices complete the requirements. For example, a cabinet maker may be given restricted approval to deliver on-the-job training for joinery apprentices who find themselves out of trade. Once the apprentice has been signed off, the restricted approval is removed. At times, however, if the approval has been successful, it may be extended and allow the tradesperson to be responsible for training other apprentices who face the same predicament. When an OOV apprentice is hired by a new employer, credit for the contract term is at the employer's discretion.

Once an apprentice's contract of training is cancelled, he/she is deemed out of vocation (OOV) and is placed on an OOV list. This list is circulated to industry training advisory boards, unions, employer associations, group training schemes and other prospective employers. The problem with such lists is that they are not always comprehensive or accurate. Under legislation, employers are required to contact the council prior to cancellation. An apprentice will only appear on the list if, in fact, the employer or apprentice contacts the council. In many cases, when companies close down, there is no contact from employers or apprentices. This lack of notification somewhat distorts apprenticeship displacement figures.

Queensland

In Queensland, the processes followed by training consultants are similar to those followed by training officers in South Australia. There must be mutual consent by apprentice and employer to any

cancellation and disputes go to a sub-committee of the State Training Council for arbitration. However, one of the parties can also request that the training council approve a cancellation.

When an employer calls a training consultant to apply for cancellation of an agreement, he/she is given a set of options which may help reduce the pressure felt while looking for appropriate solutions. The first options may be to consider if the apprentice can accelerate their off-the-job training, or if there is any outstanding recreation leave the apprentice can use up.

If employers feel that the work shortage is temporary, they may be given approval for their apprentices to go on stand-down or suspension. If stand-down is approved for one apprentice, employers are also required to share the stand-down equally between other apprentices and tradespeople. This means that there must be fairness and equity in sharing the reduction of working hours.

Stand-down is usually approved for about six to eight weeks. If the availability of work improves for the employer, the apprentice can be recalled from stand-down and resume employment. With the dramatic downturn of the building industry presently being experienced in Queensland, it is very likely that some employers in this industry will only have work for small periods of time. That is, the apprentice may be recalled from stand-down for one or two days at a time. In these cases, it is up to the training officer to visit the employer to record the numbers of days that have been worked during the stand-down period. This is then recorded on the Direct Entry-level Training Administration (DELTA) data base.

However, if things have not picked up after the stand-down period, the employer can reapply to extend this time. This rarely happens and, more often than not, the agreement is terminated at this stage. A termination of the agreement allows the apprentice to access the Special Assistance Program which pays for formal training and books. If the apprentice has to access training from a college away from home, Training Queensland (TQ) will pay travel to and from the college concerned and provide an accommodation subsidy of up to $67 per week.

In times of economic hardship, employers may also explore the options of temporary transfer to another employer who has work available. This transfer can last for up to six months and requires a signed agreement. The new employer is then responsible for paying the apprentice's wages. Alternatively, the employer experiencing hardship may hire the apprentice out to another employer.

Once a contract has been cancelled with one employer and the apprentice has been indentured to a new employer, the new employer is asked to credit all time served. Should the new employer refuse, a legitimate reason for doing so must be shown. However,

usually employers do not have a problem with agreeing to give credit for time served.

Victoria

In Victoria, contracts of training are administered by the Regulated Training Services branch of the Office of Training and Further Education (OTFE). Its training development officers (TDOs) are responsible for the overseeing of apprenticeship and traineeship training in metropolitan and country regions. The processes followed by these officers, in dealing with the displacement of apprentices and trainees because of employer economic hardship or work shortage, are not unlike those followed by their counterparts in South Australia and Queensland.

The Victorian Vocational Education and Training Act (1990) states that a contract of training between two parties can be cancelled, suspended or varied with the mutual consent of both parties. Accordingly, when employers find they have temporarily insufficient work, they can apply for a reduction of hours that the apprentice works in a week or a month. The wages are then reduced in proportion to the reduction of hours. Fairness and equity principles also apply in cases where an employer has more than one apprentice in the same vocation. This means that if the employer has four apprentices and wants to suspend one, the employer must either suspend them all or share the reduced hours between them.

When an employer informs TDOs of an inability to keep on an apprentice, the employer is advised of all the available options. The first action taken by most TDOs is to find out whether the employer is able to provide reduced hours. This is called rationing. Here, the employer will pay for the time that the apprentice is at work. In the past, employers also had to pay for the time the apprentice being 'rationed' was at school.

Historically, employers could also apply for temporary transfer of the apprentice to another employer. Today, such formal temporary transfers are no longer possible. Transfers now take the form of an unwritten agreement between two employers. The employer who is party to the contract retains responsibility for the training and continued attendance at school of the apprentice.

If apprentices have completed 75 per cent of their apprenticeship, and all formal off-the-job training, the employer and apprentice are informed that the employer can sign the apprentice off for early completion. If apprentices have completed all formal training and almost 75 per cent of their apprenticeship, the TDO will check on their progress. The TDO will visit the apprentice at the workplace, interview and observe him/her at work to ensure that the apprentice has the required competencies for early completion. If the work can be classed as being of tradesperson standard, then the contract of training is signed off. If none of these conditions apply and the

employer cannot reduce hours or approve early completion, the contract of training is suspended.

Provided the suspension is for work shortage or financial difficulties, the first three months of suspension of the contract with the existing employer does not affect the apprentice's time served. During a suspension period, he/she can access unemployment benefits or work in other non-related trade work. If the employer obtains more work during this suspension period, he/she may ask the apprentice to return to work. If during the period of suspension the apprentice finds employment elsewhere, he/she can seek to cancel from the existing employer and sign on with the new employer.

Although it is customary for the new employer to recognise the time the apprentice has served with the previous employer, he/she may choose not to do so. This is especially the case if the apprentice has been unemployed for a long period of time. For example, the apprentice may have been unemployed for about two years and have already completed 18 months of the apprenticeship. In this case, the TDO may suggest that the employer credit 12 months of time served to take into account the substantial lack of continuous on-the-job training. The new employer may also decide not to grant credit for time served if he/she considers the apprentice not to have the required competencies.

During the period of suspension, there is a strong argument for the apprentice attending trade school on a full-time basis and receiving a training allowance available under the Special Assistance (SAP-1) program. This program assists unemployed apprentices to complete their theoretical training.

Practical issues

In this section, the term 'training officer' is used when referring to training development officers or training consultants. The displacement of apprentices or trainees for reasons of economic hardship or work shortage is governed by legislation in all three States. The way each training officer presents options consistent with the legislation may vary. Some officers outline cancellation requirements to employers as a first option before detailing the rationing, suspension or early completion alternatives. Others focus on the reduced hours or suspension options before they suggest cancellation. Officers in all three States are very committed to doing their best to preserve the apprenticeship or traineeship. They will encourage the apprentice either to find alternative work or continue formal off-the-job training.

Circumstances vary and unfortunately not all employers contact training officers before they inform the apprentice that he/she is no longer required. They may be genuinely unaware that this procedure is necessary or they may have tried to keep on the apprentice until the

last moment. Officers report that, in many cases, employers have tried to avoid displacing the apprentice until the last possible moment, in the hope that business might improve. Often, they will also have attempted to find alternative employment for the apprentice. By the time these employers do, in fact, apply for cancellation of the contract or contact the authority, other options are often no longer viable.

Training officers report that there are also cases where individuals who are in structured training, working and being paid as apprentices do not have training contracts. This could be because the employer never got around to it, or because the 'apprentice' was not aware of his/her rights. When officers are approached (usually after the apprentice has lost their job) and find that no contract of training has been signed, they will investigate the employer and create a 'retrospective' contract. This new contract is then cancelled. In this way, the time that the apprentice has served is formally recognised. The apprentice has been given a registration number and can either proceed to TAFE, or sign up with another employer. Having a registration number is essential in the Victorian TAFE system and, without one, an apprentice may not attend trade school.

Officers in all three States reported that some employers may be using shortage of work and economic hardship as reasons for terminating apprentices who were not performing. This also distorts the picture of the number of apprentices being put off because of economic problems.

In all States, there is no formal obligation for officers to find or negotiate jobs for apprentices who do not have jobs. But in all States, officers reported that they attempted to access their own networks with industry, CES, group training schemes and training officers in other branches, to assist apprentices in finding work. While this was occurring, they encouraged apprentices to complete their formal training. This would ensure that the apprentice had the best chance of winning another contract of training, by decreasing the amount of school time that a new employer would have to pay, and making sure that the apprentice's skills were maintained.

Under the *New Apprenticeships* system, there will be an increased push for streamlining the responsibilities of State training authorities in monitoring contracts of training, so that more power is devolved to local areas. This will mean that local monitoring processes will also become more important.

If the monitoring of contracts of training is going to be effective, then it is especially important that the experience of State training authority officers is considered. It is important to ensure that contracts of training are in place, high quality training is being delivered, employers are paying correct award rates and entitlements, and apprentices are not being discriminated against. However, to date this has been difficult to monitor without numbers of officers to carry out on-site visits, inform apprentices of their rights and

entitlements and help employers develop high quality training programs for their apprentices. According to one officer of some 20 years experience in the job, they are now tending to base the advice they give to employers and apprentices on their considerable previous experience, rather than on an intimate knowledge of the current problems confronting companies.

Although officers in all States believed that most employers had the best interests of their apprentices at heart, there were at least two reports in which an officer had to deal with victimisation of apprentices in the workplace.

A favoured method for dealing with displaced apprentices is to encourage them to complete or continue their formal training with the assistance of the Commonwealth-funded Special Assistance Program scheme. However, Victorian TDOs have found that this can only be possible if the TAFE institute is willing for students to undertake full-time training. Officers have found institute staff generally sympathetic to allowing apprentices without jobs to attend the institute, even though they don't have access to on-the-job training. This arrangement can vary between departments and institutes and between institutes.

In theory, OOV apprentices can keep attending TAFE for the current year in which they are enrolled, because they have already paid their fees. In practice, however, if they do not inform TAFE that they have no employment, enrol in the following year's program and pay their fees, the TAFE college will be unaware of any changes to the apprentice's status and will continue to train him/her. Sometimes, apprentices who have good skills and knowledge lose their jobs because of economic hardship or work shortages being experienced by their employer. In these cases, everything is done by the institute to get them through their formal training, whether or not they are employed.

In Queensland, officers have found that even though colleges will take on OOV apprentices to accelerate their training, OOV apprentices have to be accommodated in regular blocks according to available vacancies. To deal with the problem of access to training at the time of stand-down or cancellation, officers in country Queensland will try to enrol the apprentice in any college which is providing the required course. They will also arrange for the payment of travel, accommodation and school fees.

In South Australia, training officers encourage OOV apprentices to accelerate their training. No clear policy on whether they have the right to attend training is presently in place.

Where the contract has been transferred to a new employer, officers in all three States must also make sure that new employers do not inherit the fees that should be paid by previous employers. This means that any outstanding wages, holiday pay, superannuation, tool

allowances, penalty rates, travelling time and college fees must be paid out by the relinquishing employer. There are plenty of cases, however, where this has not occurred. In such situations, officers need to look for solutions to this problem. In South Australia these cases are referred to the Department for Industrial Affairs.

> One Queensland officer reported a case where an apprentice electrician with a wife and baby had completed his time but had not completed 20 weeks of training. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) was not an option in the electrical trade. The new employer was not prepared to pay for the apprentice to attend formal off-the-job training and the SAP allowances were not sufficient to maintain the apprentice's wife and baby. Because of this, the possibility of accessing other social security benefits had to be investigated. In another case, a plumber who was suffering economic hardship had to terminate the contract of training so that the apprentice could access allowances under the SAP scheme. The plumber would then re-sign the apprentice once work picked up.

In talking to training officers in regional and metropolitan areas in South Australia, Victoria and Queensland, a picture emerges of a group of people who are sympathetic to the needs of displaced apprentices. They will obviously do their best to ensure that the apprentice acquires further training, picks up employment and completes his/her apprenticeship. It is also evident that while the majority of employers will comply with the legislation, a number of them are unaware or ignore their obligations under the contract of training. It is for this reason that the monitoring role of these officers continues to be especially important.

On-the-job training—group training companies

Group schemes have a strong connection to what is occurring in industry and rely on their ability to build networks to find jobs for apprentices and trainees. Thus, they are a good barometer of the availability of positions for on-the-job training.

Forty-three group training companies were interviewed for this study, including 10 from South Australia, 15 from Victoria and 19 from Queensland. Of these, 25 were regionally based and 18 based in the metropolitan area.

Background

The group training companies concept was first proposed in the 1970s in the building and motor repair industries. This was in response to growing specialisation and sub-contracting in industries being dominated by small employers. It was also seen as one way of ensuring a steady flow of skilled personnel for industries which were becoming less able, or willing, to train apprentices. The concept was to create a company which would take on the major responsibilities for the employment of apprentices. That is, responsibility for the contract, paying wages, superannuation, annual leave and WorkCover costs. The group training company hired out apprentices to host employers. The host employers provided on-the-job training and pay the group scheme a fee for the apprentice. The first formal group training scheme was the Master Builders' Association Group Training Scheme in Canberra, established in 1979.

The concept was particularly attractive to most industries, as it relieved employers of the obligation to commit themselves to an apprentice for the full term of the contract. It also allowed them to use apprentices when they had the work and time available to train them.

Originally set up to protect the quality of skills development, group training schemes also absorbed many out-of-work apprentices who came onto the market during the 1982–83 recession. Their expansion during the 1980s was driven by pressures to create job opportunities. By the mid-1980s, the schemes had expanded their traditional apprenticeship base to include trainees.

As at September 13 1996, there were 112 group training schemes in the country servicing metropolitan and regional areas. These include 107 companies affiliated with the national body Group Training Australia (GTA) and five non-affiliated companies. The executive officer of the GTA advised that as of June 30 1996, these companies employed 21 182 apprentices and trainees.

Although group training companies receive some subsidies from State and federal governments, they themselves are not guaranteed survival. They are vulnerable to fluctuations in the economy, with industry-specific schemes especially at risk if their industry is in downturn. Non-industry specific schemes, generally operating in regional areas, seem to be especially affected by what is happening in the building industry. Downturn in this industry often influences the fortunes of other industries in regional areas, which rely on construction for the creation of jobs.

From Whyalla to Cairns, the story is the same. When the building industry is in recession, problems increase for hiring out apprentices in building and related trades. Where group schemes service an agricultural region, they are also affected by seasonal problems. For example, the drought in Northern Queensland has had a major impact on local group schemes. The group schemes in the Murray Mallee, Wimmera, Grampians and Bundaberg all rely on the well-being of the agricultural sector to provide positions for their apprentices and trainees.

The activities of major companies like BHP or Mt Isa Mines will also affect group schemes operating in nearby regions. If they are not subcontracting much work to local businesses, then group schemes operating in these areas experience difficulties in hiring out apprentices or trainees.

Accessing on-the-job training

Of the 43 South Australian, Queensland and Victorian group training companies interviewed for this study, only six reported no difficulties in finding work placements. For the majority (86%) of the companies, finding work placements required constant attention. All but one company employed field officers, whose job was to solicit positions for apprentices and build up the numbers of companies who would act as host companies in the future. (Two-thirds of the companies employed between one and four field officers.) Accordingly, company field officers were generally 'on the road', seeking out work for apprentices and trainees, marketing company services and maintaining these networks. Keeping apprentices and trainees in regular work and recruiting additional host employers was even harder when group schemes covered large areas and few field officers were available to do the work. Almost half the companies (44%) had also implemented other marketing strategies to promote their

services. These included advertising on television, in newspapers and in the *Yellow Pages*.

The building industry is currently experiencing one of its worst downturns for many years. This is supported by over two-thirds (67.4%) of the group training companies in this study, who are experiencing difficulties in placing apprentices.

It is still difficult for Victorian companies to find placements for many apprentices in the building trades. However, they are not generally experiencing the difficulties of companies in South Australia and Queensland, where building activity in metropolitan and regional centres has decreased far more dramatically. To deal with these problems, group training companies in all States who hire building trade apprentices have reduced the number of apprentices they are taking on. This makes them less vulnerable to the unpredictability of the building industry. At least 11 (25.5%) of the companies in the study reported that they only tend to employ the number of apprentices they feel confident about placing in work.

At the time of interviews, just under half (46.5%) of the group training companies in the study had all their employees in work placements. The largest group training scheme in the three States was GTCV1 group training scheme in Victoria, which employed 540 apprentices and 60 trainees. It had 70 apprentices who were not in a work placement at the time of interview. Queensland's GTCQ1 scheme had 45 apprentices on downtime and the regional GTCQ2 group training scheme in Bundaberg and the GTCV2 scheme in Central Victoria both had 15 apprentices on downtime. The remainder had an average of about four trainees on downtime. However, these figures may not always give a true picture of what happens on a regular basis in group training companies.

Six companies indicated that they found it easy to place their apprentices and trainees. In addition, at least 12 companies indicated that the number of calls they had to make to obtain work placements had increased dramatically.

Group training companies tend to cite a range of reasons for their difficulties in finding jobs for their employees. These include the downturn of the economy, the bottom falling out of the building industry and the lack of confidence and optimism in the business community.

Companies used a variety of strategies to keep apprentices and trainees in regular work placements. It was not unusual for group companies to discount or fully subsidise the wages of apprentices to keep the apprentice in work. More than two-thirds (67.4%) of companies in this study indicated that they subsidised charge-out rates of apprentices to help keep them in regular work. Of these, at least 20 per cent reported that they would, at times, fully subsidise

the charge-out rates. Victorian companies were much less likely to discount apprentices.

Only a few (11.6%) companies would allow their apprentices to have the odd day off if they were unable to locate a work placement. The remainder would make them use up their annual leave or rostered days off, continue their training, or keep them occupied in 'live work' which may or may not be related to their trades. Fourteen of the companies would move to suspend their apprentices when leave had been used up or relevant training had been completed.

Although, to date, only a few group training schemes have closed because of economic hardship and inability to make ends meet, group training apprentices may be in a slightly better position than apprentices who are employed by small businesses. Although not completely immune to economic hardship themselves, group training companies can help stave off unemployment for apprentices in the short term. That is, apprentices are less likely to lose their jobs because of temporary lack of work placements. The situation will change if the temporary lack of work placement becomes long term. Even group training companies cannot afford to carry apprentices for long periods of time.

Dealing with lack of access to on-the-job training

Building and construction trades

Thirty-two companies employed apprentices and trainees in the building trades. These included five industry-specific group schemes, which only employed building trades apprentices and trainees.

When group training apprentices and trainees lose their access to on-the-job training in the construction industry in Queensland, South Australia and Victoria, everything is done to access other employment which will count as on-the-job training. This means that they may work on GTS housing projects, community and public buildings, or work within the GTS complex. Alternatively, it may mean discounting charge-out rates. Over half (53.1%) of these companies indicated they would discount charge-out rates, with six reporting they would subsidise the charge-out rate fully.

Apprentices may also complete any outstanding formal training. When this is not available, they may be asked to take any annual leave that is owing or any rostered days off. Just less than half (43.8%) encouraged apprentices to take annual leave. Just over half (56.3%) involved them in formal training or kept apprentices gainfully employed in government-funded housing projects, working on community projects or on building projects within the GTS complex. When opportunities for all live work are exhausted, apprentices may be placed on stand-down in Queensland or suspended in South Australia and Victoria.

Difficulties experienced by group training companies in placing apprentices are also affected by the cyclical nature of the industry. Builders want apprentices when they win contracts; they send them back to the group schemes when they do not. For group training apprentices in South Australia, Victoria and Queensland, the length of work placements is becoming increasingly shorter. According to the GTCV3 group training scheme in Victoria, in the past field officers had to find three jobs for an apprentice per year. However, now they have to find at least eight jobs for an apprentice per year. In the Murray Mallee in Victoria, builders also want apprentices for short periods of time. For GTCQ3 Queensland, finding six hours work for one apprentice may require field officers to make telephone calls to as many as four or five companies. A total of 12 companies reported a dramatic increase in the number of calls that had to be made to place apprentices in work.

In addition, at least 14 companies (43.75%) complained about difficulties in hiring out fourth-year apprentices. This was because their high charge-out rates were not competitive in the depressed building market, where tradesmen were able to work for as much as $4 per hour less than the charge-out rate for fourth-year apprentices.

Government programs

State funds have been made available to group schemes to build houses, renovate public buildings and houses and be involved in community projects in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. In Queensland, the Housing Industry Training Program (HIT) sponsored by the Public Works Department, has made funds available to group training schemes to build a small number of its housing commission houses. These funds include a small training component to allow for the construction being used to train apprentices. These projects have been especially useful for group training companies with large numbers of apprentices in the building trades. They have provided a steady source of work for apprentices when they were not in external work placements. All but two of the group training companies hiring building apprentices in Queensland were very supportive of the HIT program and had used it as a holding bay for apprentices on downtime.

Not all group schemes used the HIT program to occupy apprentices in downtime, however. One regional group training scheme in Central Queensland, GTCQ4, preferred to involve its downtime apprentices in community projects. These involved providing maintenance work on student villages, local nursing homes and general hospitals. In another Queensland group training company, GTCQ5, it was felt that having too many apprentices in the HIT projects would also increase the cost of houses. This could mean that houses would no longer be marketable at going rates.

The HIT project is dependant on State funding. Recently, group training companies in Queensland have been told that they may no

longer access such funds after June 30 1997, because the program is being phased out.

The Housing Industry Youth Employment and Skills Training Program (HIYESTP) was a joint State and federally-funded program, which also allowed group schemes to build their own houses for sale. Federal funds were available to pay the wages and on-costs of a building supervisor or any ancillary support services. Materials, equipment and land were provided by State governments. In the past, such projects also provided work for OOV apprentices and apprentices on downtime. HIYESTP programs were no longer funded after June 30 1995.

Many group schemes have been disadvantaged by the demise of HIYESTP and the gradual winding down of State programs. According to the manager of GTCV3 in Victoria, HIYESTP was a 'terrific counter-cyclical' program which targeted out-of-trade apprentices and made it possible for them to complete their training.

Industry levies

In South Australia, an industry training levy has been imposed on all construction work of $5000 or more. This levy provides funds to reduce the on-costs of apprentices, establish skill centres and provide training for existing workers. The use of these levies has allowed group training companies to reduce the charge-out rate of their building trade apprentices.

South Australia has also recently introduced UPSKILL, a pilot program aimed at increasing jobs for trainees and apprentices. This program, implemented in mid-July, requires winners of State government contribution projects over $500 000 to guarantee that they will provide training opportunities to the value of 10 per cent of their total labour hours. Although there are at least three projects being considered under the new scheme at the time of writing this report, it is still too early to tell whether the program will help improve job opportunities.

Engineering trades

All but one of the group training companies employing engineering apprentices reported they rarely experienced problems placing their engineering apprentices with host companies. The GTCV4 Group Training Scheme, which specialises in engineering, electrical and vehicle trades in Victoria, has experienced a minimum amount of downtime in the past ten years. One of the main reasons for this is that the company has been extremely selective in its choice of apprentices and very conservative in the number of apprentices it has taken on. At times, it has also been prepared to discount the wages of fourth-year apprentices if this meant securing a placement.

The GTCV5 Group Scheme in Victoria mainly employs metal trades or engineering apprentices. It, too, has found few problems in placing apprentices since its inception in 1992. Recently, however, one field

officer with the scheme has noticed that there is a small increase in the number of apprentices and trainees who are being returned to the scheme, due to companies not winning contracts they had expected to. This has led the officer to believe that things may be slowing down in the sector.

The South Australian GTCSA1 Group Training Scheme also has few problems with locating work placements for their engineering apprentices. They, too, have stringent selection procedures and are conservative in the number of apprentices they employ.

In Queensland the GTCQ6 scheme, which is 48 per cent engineering based, has found it difficult to fill engineering vacancies in companies because of the shortage of boiler-maker apprentices. The scheme is also greatly affected by any industrial relations problems experienced at the Mount Isa Mines. Any lock-outs or strikes may affect the work that local contractors can access. When local contractors have work shortages, it signals problems for placing apprentices. However, during the most recent industrial problems at Mt Isa, the group scheme was not affected to any great degree. It was also able to survive during the 1991–92 recession. The most difficult problem experienced by the group company is finding enough suitable apprentices who have the ability and desire to become fitters and turners. This has been a particular problem for the GTCQ7 scheme in Queensland, where they have more vacancies for metal trade apprentices than they can fill and few students are entering these trades.

Difficulties in placing metal trades apprentices have been experienced in places where there is not a large manufacturing base. In Albury Wodonga, the local GTCV6 scheme has found some difficulties in placing metal trades apprentices. According to the manager of this scheme, this may also be because the scheme is not well-known by the metal trades industry in the area.

Electrical trades

No group training companies complained about difficulties in accessing on-the-job training for their apprentices in the electrical/electronic trades. The three industry-specific group training companies, GTCSA2 (SA), GTCQ8 (Qld) and GTCV7 (Vic), generally had all their electrical/electronic apprentices in work. GTCV7, which employs 345 electrical apprentices, had ten apprentices on downtime on Friday afternoon the week they were interviewed. Their most difficult time was December 1995 to March 1996, when they had 20 apprentices on downtime. At the present time, however, GTCV7 has 30 of its apprentices working on the Melbourne Casino project. The Casino is now to be finished in the new year. This will have a major impact on downtime if contracts due to be started in March and April do not go ahead.

GTCQ8 in Queensland has about 75 electrical apprentices and has rarely experienced downtime. GTCSA2 in South Australia employs

about 140 plumbing and electrical apprentices. It found placing all its apprentices during the 1991–92 recession especially difficult. As a result, it was constrained to place about 12 apprentices on a six-week rotation schedule. During 1992, no apprentices were employed. During the recession, however, the group scheme mounted an aggressive marketing campaign. Today, the scheme seldom chases companies to take on its apprentices and is very effective in finding placements through requests from companies.

When apprentices are not in work, the group companies try to encourage them to do extra training. GTCQ8 tries to send apprentices to college or involve them in other 'live' work. In the past, they have worked in the company's new facilities, on projects to make pensioners' houses more secure, and helped build and maintain small irrigation motors. When GTCSA2 apprentices are on downtime, they are either put through short courses at the electrical industry's skill centre, or an odd day can be taken off. When GTCV7 apprentices are on downtime, they stay home. If they are on downtime for more than ten days at a time, they are then suspended. This, however, has never happened.

Automotive trades

Industry-specific group training schemes include the South Australian GTCSA3 and the Victorian GTCV10, along with other regional and suburban group training companies which hire automotive apprentices in the three States. These companies experienced few difficulties in placing automotive apprentices in work.

Although almost all group training apprentices were currently in work placements, only the South Australian GTCSA3 scheme and the Queensland GTCQ7 scheme said that it was relatively easy to find these placements. The manager of the GTCQ7 scheme had problems filling available vacancies. The others found that it took a lot of marketing and promotional activities by its field officers to ensure that they maintained few apprentices on downtime. When apprentices were on downtime, the training companies either subsidised the payments to make sure that apprentices were in work, allowed them to have the odd day off, or arranged for them to attend short courses run by industry skill centres or by TAFE.

Food trades

As a rule, all group training companies employing apprentices in the food trades experienced few problems in placing apprentices and trainees in work. The GTCQ9 in Queensland has found that there are plenty of places for first and second-year apprentice cooks throughout the year, except for just after Christmas and Easter. Fourth and third-year cooks, however, are harder to place. This is because their wages are a burden and weekend penalty rates are too high.

The GTCQ10 scheme in the southern coastal region and the GTCQ11 scheme in northern Queensland have also found that establishments only want first and second-year apprentices. In the GTCQ11 region, jobs are also being taken by tourists with experience in kitchens and restaurants, who are able to work for less than the charge-out rate for apprentices. For another group training scheme in far north Queensland, which services a region which is not a popular tourist area, finding places for its apprentice chefs can sometimes be difficult. To deal with this problem, the scheme used to send apprentices to restaurants in the Whitsundays; now it sends them to Brisbane or McKay.

At the time this study was conducted, no other training schemes mentioned difficulties in finding work placements for their food trade apprentices or trainees.

Out-of-trade apprentices

Traditionally, many OOV apprentices have been picked up by group training companies. However, at least five group training companies indicated concerns about employing OOV apprentices. The managers of five group training companies GTCQ12 and GTCQ13 in Queensland and GTCV8, GTCV3, and GTCV9 in Victoria believe that few employers like to put on OOV apprentices because of the costs involved. It has been their experience that many of the OOV apprentices who are picked up by their companies have not completed their college training, even though their previous employers have received the $1500 commencement incentive under the CRAFT ATI scheme. This means that although new employers picking up the OOV apprentice will receive a $500 recommencement subsidy, they will still be liable for paying wages while the apprentice is in formal training.

According to one of these managers, the OOV apprentices he has employed have also had more problems completing their formal training. This leads him to believe that they may be out of trade because of low performance. Their previous employer may have tried to be kind in releasing them by using reasons of financial hardship or work shortage, rather than citing non-performance. Although the majority of companies did not raise this issue, it was also substantiated by officers of State training authorities.

From December 1996, however, the recommencement fee for employing OOV apprentices is due to be phased out. According to the manager of one group training scheme, GTCQ12 in Queensland, this will make it even harder for OOV apprentices to be picked up.

Prevocational apprentices

A number of industries have found that prevocational apprentices are preferred, because they already have some of the basic skills and knowledge required in their chosen fields and are committed to working in them. However, at least six Queensland group training companies and one Victorian group training company voiced

concerns about their ability to place apprentices who had completed prevocational training. This was because some employers were reluctant to pay the higher wage rates these apprentices attracted during their first year in employment. These employers believed that the apprentices had had very little on-site experience and often lacked their own tools. These concerns were not raised by other group training companies.

Accessing on-the-job training—training colleges

Interviews with 47 providers of formal training for the different areas were used to gather information on the extent of the problem of lack of access to on-the-job training for students.

Building

Accessing vocational placements for formal training providers servicing the building industry depends to a large extent on what is occurring in the industry at the time and on the number of students that require placements. Seven providers of formal training for the building trades were interviewed. They provided information on their ability to access vocational placements for trainees and other students in their programs, and their experience with OOV apprentices.

TQ1, an institute of TAFE in Queensland, and TV1 and TV2, institutes of TAFE in Victoria, reported little difficulty in locating these placements for prevocational students. However, at TQ1 TAFE, this was not always the case. According to one construction faculty member, accessing work placements was far more problematic when students were required to find their own placements. Now that a work placement officer has taken on the task of arranging these placements for prevocational students, it has been far more successful. TV1 institute of TAFE has trainees and associate diploma students in fit-out and finish trades. Although they have little difficulty in placing prevocational students, more difficulties are experienced in finding vocational placements for associate diploma students in architecture and draughting.

TV2 institute of TAFE provides programs in plumbing, plastering, bricklaying, carpentry and joinery, shop fitting and painting. There are few problems in students accessing on-the-job training. This is partly because the college provides its own 'live work' programs. One program comprises making full size components for a charitable organisation program that provides shelter for homeless youth. Another involves performing maintenance work around the college.

The building program at the TV3 institute of TAFE in regional Victoria provides training for plumbing, carpentry and joinery, bricklaying, steel fixing and concreting trades. Although it can be difficult to find vocational placements for all these trades, it has been easier to access vocational placements in the commercial and

renovation sectors than in the domestic sector. The college is also involved in providing its own commercial 'live' work projects. Transportables for caravan parks, granny flats or scout camps have all been built by prevocational students in vocational placements. These projects can be used to provide students with on-the-job training. In addition, their products can be sold when the project is completed.

It is becoming harder for colleges in South Australia to access vocational placements for their prevocational trainees. This has been the experience at TSA1, TSA2 and TSA3 institutes of TAFE. TSA1 institute of TAFE provides training in carpentry and joinery for apprentices and trainees; and draughting, building inspection and building supervision for associate diploma students. Although prevocational students experience some problems in accessing placements, it is always difficult to find placements for the associate diploma students.

TSA3 institute of TAFE provides training in the building and furniture industries. Although its carpentry and joinery trainees can pick up placements on the college transportables building program, it is very difficult for those in furnishing courses to find placements. In the past, the alignment of public schools and institute holidays also meant that students from both sectors were looking for work experience at the same time and flooding the market. To ensure that its students are able to access on-the-job training, the institute has adopted a more flexible approach.

As a result, work experience for the furniture trainees needs only to be employment-related training rather than industry-specific training. Because about 30–40 per cent of trainees looking for placements will not find them in their chosen field, they have the option of taking up placements whenever they are available. Students are also encouraged to keep a diary of the work they perform outside college hours. This can also be used to fulfil on-the-job training requirements.

TSA2 institute of TAFE provides training in bricklaying, floor and wall tiling, glass work, sign writing, plastering, and ceiling and wall fixing. Although it was relatively easy to find vocational placements for tilers and fit-out and finish trainees in 1995, the downturn in the whole industry has meant that it is far more difficult in 1996. The college has found that many employers have no work for their own people, let alone for trainees.

Displaced apprentices

When apprentices or trainees lose their jobs through economic hardship or work shortage, all the institutes in this study reported they would allow them to continue their studies even if they were not employed. They all believed that the more formal training an apprentice could complete, the more attractive he/she would be to a prospective employer. At TSA2 TAFE, attempts are also being made to entice all those who have not completed their training to come back and complete their certificates. Three of the institutes reported that they would help apprentices complete their training by providing work for them with tradespeople employed at the college.

Engineering

Seven training providers of formal training in engineering courses were interviewed. They generally had very few problems in accessing vocational placements for their students. However, some problems in locating placements for students in fitting and machining and maintenance fitting and metal fabrication have been experienced by one Brisbane TAFE college, TQ2. According to the manager of the department at this college, this is because Queensland does not have a large manufacturing base and is more heavily involved in the repair and service industry.

All providers experienced few cases of apprenticeship displacement and all were quite willing to allow any OOV apprentices to continue their formal training until they found a job. Where OOV apprentices could not find work in order to complete their credentials, on-the-job experience within the college was also provided.

According to the education manager of the mechanical engineering department at TSA1 institute of TAFE in South Australia, one of the reasons that displacement has not become a major problem is because enrolments have declined over a long period of time. This decrease has meant that the issue of displacement has become less obvious. It is also his belief that the decline in engineering enrolments has been brought about by fewer apprenticeships being offered and fewer students choosing to enter the trade. In his opinion, the education system is not providing students with the skills to succeed in engineering at a time when the trades are becoming far more 'academic'. A smaller pool of students with reduced skills means that employers are selecting students from the lower ranges of ability. Because colleges must accept employer choices, they have to increase the learning support required for these students to complete and pass their formal training. This extra work required of staff is not given recognition in terms of productivity and funding.

Well-developed networks with industry have also reduced the problems of accessing vocational placements for students or finding jobs for displaced apprentices. The appointment of job placement officers has also been helpful. They are employed to help students find work experience during their studies and jobs when they have graduated.

Electrical/electronics

Five providers of formal training in electrical/electronics were interviewed. Providers in all three States confirm the low incidence of displacement among their electrical/electronic apprentices. Figures as low as one to three per year are reported by TQ2 and TQ3 institutes of TAFE in Queensland, TSA4 institute of TAFE in South Australia and TV4 in Victoria. When displacements do occur, these institutes are able to use their extensive industry networks to place students with other employers.

Few major problems are also experienced in locating vocational placements for prevocational students. At TQ3 and TQ2 institutes of TAFE in Queensland, the placements are located for students by the college job placement officers or an educational assistant. At TSA4 in South Australia, students are given lists of employers to contact. If students are unable to set up their own work experience in this way, the college will contact organisations they have used before. If this is also unsuccessful, students are placed with tradespeople who are employed in maintenance positions in the college itself. This approach has always delivered work experience placements for all students requiring them. In Victoria, there is no formal requirement for pre-apprenticeship students in the electrical trades to access vocational placements. However, there are indicators that a 60–80 hours vocational placement component will be introduced into the program by 1997.

The colleges interviewed in this study all said they were willing to allow students to continue their formal training while they looked for other jobs. They were also prepared to help them locate other positions through their substantial industry networks if they felt the apprentice could be recommended. Providers would also allow them to continue off-the-job training for the current year or block. Limiting the completion of training to the current year was considered to be important. An extended lack of on-the-job skills would severely limit the apprentice's ability to understand the concepts being covered in the course.

Automotive

Ten providers of formal training for automotive apprentices were interviewed. Their policy for dealing with OOV apprentices was to allow apprentices to continue their off-the-job training. Efforts were

made to ensure that 'good' OOVs were able to continue all off-the-job training. However, the majority of OOVs at TV10 institute of TAFE were allowed to complete only one block of training before their contract was put on hold. At TV5 in country Victoria, OOVs are also able to continue their off-the job training. In addition, their names are listed on a register and provided to employers who call the college looking for employees.

At TV6 institute of TAFE in Victoria, students are encouraged to bring in their own work to the college to fulfil their on-the job training requirements. In addition, they may also work on the vehicles of staff and students at the college. Here, the cost of materials and teacher resources are paid for by these customers. However, staff made an effort to use their own industry contacts to link OOVs with new employers.

TAFE institutes in South Australia also allow OOVs to continue their off-the job training. When teachers at both colleges are made aware that a certain student has lost his/her job, they do their best to connect students with new employers.

Queensland institutes of TAFE also allow apprentices to complete their current block of training. They must, however, compete for places with students who are in work. This means that they may have to wait for a position to become available before they can accelerate their training.

Food

Six institutes providing certificate and diploma training for cookery, baking and meat and smallgoods occupations provided information for this study. These were TV7, TV8 and TV9 institutes of TAFE from Victoria, TQ4 and TQ2 institutes of TAFE from Queensland and TSA4 institute of TAFE from South Australia.

None of the institutes had any problems accessing vocational placements for their certificate students in these fields. However, TQ4 institute experienced some problems in locating placements for associate diploma students. When this happened, the college allowed students to defer the completion of their course until they had been able to locate a place in the next semester.

These training providers also experienced few apprenticeship displacements. Where displacements had occurred, however, apprentices were generally able to locate new employers very soon after their displacement. In many cases, the colleges were rarely involved because the apprentice had already been picked up by a new employer by the time they attended their next training session.

This facility in locating vocational placements for trainees and jobs for displaced students is an indication of the relative buoyancy of the industry, and the growth of the hospitality and tourism sectors. The

problem of locating jobs in the food industry seems to be occurring at the front-end of the system. That is, it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain an apprenticeship because few people are leaving the industry.

Colleges are finding few problems in accessing vocational placements at the present time. However, the faculty heads of commercial cookery at TQ4 and TQ2 institutes of TAFE are both concerned that demands for industry placements by high school students will flood the market. In addition, increases in the number of work experience hours planned for commercial cookery credentials in the future may impact adversely on the ability of students to find placements. This was the only time that the competition for vocational placements from high schools and curriculum requirements were reported as potential problems.

Other vocational programs

The purpose of the study was to examine issues affecting apprentices and trainees in the trades that have already been discussed. However it was felt that the ability to access placements could be ascertained by collecting information from providers of programs requiring students to undertake substantial numbers of field placements. This section gives a brief overview of these findings.

Child-care studies

Twelve TAFE providers of child-care training in Victoria, South Australia and Queensland provided information on their programs and their ability to access vocational placements for their students. All provided training for part-time and full-time students and all programs required students to spend substantial periods of time in field placements gaining on-the-job experience.

Accessing placements

The ability of these providers to access field placements in all three States is being made increasingly difficult by demands placed on the industry to provide these placements to higher education institutions. However, Victoria and South Australia have put in place mechanisms to minimise the effects of increased demands for placements.

In South Australia, informal regional zoning restrictions have been drawn up. TAFE institutes may only place requests for placements with centres in their allocated zones. However, this does not preclude students from non-TAFE providers encroaching on these areas. In Victoria, a placement committee, made up of representatives from all metropolitan TAFE providers and Monash, Melbourne and RMIT universities, has been in place for the last few years to co-ordinate the times at which providers will be requiring placements. The Victorian providers interviewed reported that the centralised arrangement seems to provide an efficient method for co-ordinating these times. Providers indicated that finding placements was especially labour

and time intensive for those students who were not already working in the industry. However, they all reported that they managed to acquire placements for students in most of their programs. The only exception to this was experienced by students in maternity programs who were required to work with neo-natal children.

Students in such programs are expected to spend 15 days in hospital field placements learning about what happens to children in their first few hours and days of life. According to one Victorian provider, hospitals are not keen to be involved in such field placements because of occupational health and safety reasons. That is, they fear repercussions should students injure themselves at work.

Half of these training providers attributed their success in finding placements to the shortage of trained workers and the industry's need and desire for qualified personnel. Two providers voiced concerns about problems affecting the availability and quality of placements for students in the future. These problems included providers from all sectors flooding the market with requests for placements and the recent funding restrictions placed on child-care centres.

One Victorian institute has reduced the number of days students are expected to spend in a hospital field placement by half. Students are able to complete the 15-day field placement required for the program by either spending time with neo-natals and their mothers in their homes or nannying for that period of time.

Strategies for accessing practical experience

Broadening the range of field placements

Although all colleges reported they had somehow managed to find placements, this had actually occurred by broadening the type of experience which can qualify as a field placement for students in child-care studies. Centres providing long-day care, before and after-school care, vacation care and family-day care can be used by students to access field placements. In Queensland, one college also accepts field placements in special needs units.

Using simulations and role plays

Although all providers indicated there is no substitute for practical on-the-job experience, at least five colleges reported that they provided simulated experiences for students. This also reduced the pressure on field placements and included giving students practice in changing diapers on dummies and opportunities for viewing videos.

Two colleges are trialing a multi-media project which will enable students to acquire knowledge about the behaviour of children through a variety of media. This may also help reduce the amount of time required in actual field placements.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

One provider, TV 10 institute of TAFE, believed that implementing an RPL process may help minimise problems experienced in accessing field placements. This college is presently looking at implementing a better RPL process to reduce the amount of time that students have to spend in field placements by recognising the practical experience they already have.

Resource issues

A strain on available resources is placed by the multiplication of providers requiring field placement. In addition, the problems in locating field placements are compounded because children's environments cannot be 'invaded' by too many observers at one time. Problems are also experienced when centres with special children's needs or centres with new section leaders request not to have students involved.

The question of students not being able to complete credentials due to lack of access to on-the-job training has been addressed by the child-care faculty members at one institute of TAFE TSA1. They have examined the curriculum document to see if field placements can be undertaken in any other way. One solution has been to redefine the major emphasis of the program. Rather than aim at child-care services, the program now also targets children's services. This encompasses pre-school centres, child-parent centres, family-day-care centres, creches (in neighbourhood houses) and casual-care centres (shopping centres, large stores).

Another answer to this problem is for students to go on a waiting list to undertake the field placement. This means that it would take longer than two years for the student to complete the credential. Going to small country areas and staying with friends and family may be another way to obtain field placements when they are scarce.

The field placement component of most programs requires lecturers to visit students during their placements. This also puts extra weight on lecturers' workloads. Another problem is that the field placement component is not counted in the ANTA hours in terms of productivity outcomes. One education manager felt that should the ANTA funding be withdrawn, it will be difficult for the college to pay for the supervision of placements. If colleges are no longer able to supervise students, then the question of who will monitor the quality of field placements and counsel students will need to be addressed.

One solution may be to give this role to the centre conducting the vocational placement. This will increase the burden on staff at these centres and may eventually lead to centres withdrawing their participation. Another solution is to cut down the number of 'live' tasks that students have to perform in the program. For example, rather than having to observe how children communicate, play or interact with each other in child-care centres for one component of the

program, students may be asked to view video-tapes of the children's behaviour instead. They may also be asked to observe their own children or children in shopping centres. Alternatively, presenting musical experiences to adults would be substituted for similar activities with children. These are all activities that do not require a field placement.

Retail/clerical industry

Traineeship in business studies

The business studies department of TSA1 institute of TAFE conducts training for business studies traineeship programs. These 26 week programs provide formal off-the-job training and include a 110 hours vocational placement component. Accordingly, students attend a work experience placement every Friday during the program.

A co-ordinator monitors the vocational placements by getting in touch with the workplace supervisors once every two to three weeks. They find out how students are progressing and answer any queries from supervisors or students.

At one stage, the program co-ordinator produced a list of stores willing to have work experience and provided these lists to students. This no longer occurs because such enterprises were found to accept students with no intention of keeping them on once the traineeship was completed.

Today, vocational placements are generally located by the students themselves. The co-ordinator of the program believes it is far better for students to target small businesses in the area in the hope that a vacancy will open up once the work experience is over. This approach has been successful. Until 1995, the program had a 93 per cent outcome in terms of students obtaining employment. In 1996, the rate has been 78 per cent. In addition, the co-ordinator has found that the good reputation of the program means that businesses are now calling the college for trainees to perform work experience in their companies.

One way that the college maintains the program's good image is to recall students who may be experiencing difficulties in their placements for more intensive training in areas where they need assistance. In addition, the college may delay students' vocational placements until they are work ready. This may mean providing the student with more help in communication or organisational skills.

The program co-ordinator has never experienced students being unable to locate vocational placements. However, should this problem ever arise, the co-ordinator would assist the student in locating the placement. Should this also fail, the student would be allowed to complete the formal training but not be awarded a certificate until the placement had been completed at a later date. Students are also offered permanent work before the course is over. When this happens, they are counselled to consider part-time training to complete the formal part of the program. This will ensure that they obtain a certificate which documents their successful completion of the program and can be included as a qualification in their résumés.

Dental studies

TSA2 institute of TAFE in South Australia provides training in dental technology, dental hygiene, dental radiography and oral health education. It also provides training for trainees in the dental assistants' traineeship program. This program is an ANTA-funded pilot program.

Locating vocational placements for students in dental programs has not been a major problem in the past. However, since about 1994 and 1995 as the program has grown, it is proving more time consuming and challenging. As the on-the-job training now requires more effort on the part of employers, the college has found that they need more encouragement to be involved.

Staff members locate vocational placements for students in para-dental studies who are not already employed in the field. This helps to maintain quality control in finding the right type of employer and the right type of work experience for students. A letter is sent out to employers to inform them of the skills they are expected to deliver during the work placement. If the employers cannot provide some of the skills, they are asked to inform the college of this fact. Where employers cannot provide all the skills, arrangements are made for students to obtain them from other employers. The concept is also sold to employers as an opportunity for them to observe students for recruitment purposes.

Furthermore, students will only be placed in external work placements when their skills are good enough to do so. Until that time, they will receive on-the-job training in the college's dental clinics. This is one way to maintain the good reputation of the program and its students.

These policies have been very successful and the majority of students have been able to obtain the experience required to complete their credentials. However, success in locating placements comes at a cost. It takes a great deal of staff time to maintain networks with employers and set up appropriate placements. This time, however, is not counted in terms of formal productivity indicators but is essential for the program's success.

A measure of the placement's success is whether or not trainees obtain employment. Up until now, 98 per cent of dental assisting trainees have obtained employment in places where they have had previous work experience. This is a sure measure of the program's success.

On-the-job training—industry providers

Interviews with managers of 79 enterprises and 17 managers of industry bodies (ITABs, unions, employer associations) provided extra information on the extent of the problem in five different industries—building, engineering, electrical/electronics, automotive and food. Case studies detailing in-depth findings for each of these industries are provided in Appendix C. These case studies provide an overview of programs initiated by industries in dealing with the problem of displacement. They also document the willingness of enterprises to train apprentices and trainees from non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged groups and provide vocational placements. Although the aim of this project was to gather information on the availability of vocational placements, it soon became evident that very few companies had experience with these placements and had more experience with school-based general work experience. Accordingly, information on their willingness to provide this type of experience and evaluate it has also been reported. A brief overview of findings from the case studies is presented here.

Industry initiatives in dealing with displacement

It is evident from the statistics of apprenticeship commencements and cancellations of contracts, as well as information from industry bodies, that all industries have experienced apprenticeship displacement during times of economic recession. The way industries have chosen to deal with this problem varies between industries and across States.

Building

Although there were no specific industry initiatives to ensure that displaced apprentices complete their contracts of training, specific industry group training schemes have been set up by industry bodies in all three States. These have taken some of the responsibility for employing displaced apprentices.

In South Australia, an industry levy has been established. This levy is imposed on constructions over the value of $5000. The levy provides funds for employers to reduce on-costs of apprentices and trainees, provide training for existing workers and establish skill centres.

Although Queensland is considering introducing such a levy, there is still some resistance to the proposal. Levies also exist in the Tasmanian and Western Australian building industry.

The South Australian government has recently implemented a new program aimed at increasing jobs and training for apprentices and trainees and graduates. This is the UPSKILL SA program. All winners of government contracts over $500 000 in South Australia must allocate 10 per cent of their total labour hour costs to training apprentices and trainees.

UPSKILL SA has been implemented in the building and construction industries. If it is successful, it will be extended to other industries.

The Queensland government's HIT (Housing Industry Training Program) provides funds for building or building maintenance projects to group training companies. This program, however, is to be phased out by June 1997.

Engineering

The engineering industry experienced large amounts of apprenticeship displacement during the 1982–83 and 1990–91 recessions. In South Australia, the ITAB established a program which employed displaced apprentices and especially selected boiler makers, ship wrights and electricians to renovate a ketch bought by the State government for the Jubilee celebrations. Funds to pay the wages of these apprentices and tradespeople were provided by the Commonwealth employment program.

Once the ketch was completed, the program was extended to build the two Victor Harbor horse trams. Both projects were extremely successful in helping apprentices complete their contracts of training.

In Victoria, the 1990–91 recession saw many apprentices in the metal trades lose their jobs. The ITAB worked in conjunction with group training companies to accelerate on-the-job training of apprentices through its skill centre.

Electrical/ electronics

Many electrical/electronics apprentices lost their jobs in the 1982–83 and 1990–91 recessions. In Queensland, there has been no formal industry initiative to deal with displaced apprentices. In the main, industry associations have used their considerable networks to place apprentices in work. In Victoria, the industry set up an electrical electronics group scheme to pick up displaced apprentices after the 1990–91 recession. In South Australia, the Electrical Contractors Association and the Communications Electrical and Plumbers Union set up a skills centre to provide live work programs for displaced third and fourth-year apprentices. These programs enabled the apprentices to complete their qualifications and obtain jobs in the trade.

Automotive

In the past, the South Australian automotive ITAB used federally-funded SAP-1, 2 and 3 funds to provide off and on-the-job training to displaced apprentices. Off-the-job training was delivered in the ITAB's training centre. On-the-job training was delivered in workshops owned by the Motor Trades Association. These programs were successful, in that all apprentices completed their contracts of training and found jobs in the industry.

Food

To date, there has been no industry-led initiatives to deal with displaced apprentices. However, the Meat and Allied Trade Federation of Australia (MATFA) in Queensland and South Australia are investigating the possibility of setting up group training companies. In South Australia, the food ITAB is considering setting up a multipurpose centre, which will incorporate a skills centre for training trainees and existing workers.

Willingness to provide training for apprentices

The overwhelming majority (74.6%) of enterprises in the study employed apprentices. Very few (7.5%) employed trainees. In all, 1257 apprentices and 32 trainees were employed. These totals include 50 female apprentices and 17 female trainees. Two major supermarket chains, one State government department and two manufacturers of motor vehicles and components accounted for just half (64%) of the apprentices. One supermarket chain and one large baking firm accounted for more than half of the trainees.

The overwhelming majority of companies (68) in this study reported support for the training of apprentices, and readiness of their supervisors to provide this training. In addition, nine companies reported that the readiness of supervisors to train apprentices was increased if the apprentices were 'good'. A good apprentice was one who was keen, had a good attitude and helped tradespeople achieve their objectives. At least nine companies reported having experienced apprentices with attitude problems.

Support for vocational placements and work experience

Although it was not the major focus of this study, fifteen companies provided vocational placements for university and TAFE students. One company provided vocational placements for high school students. Of the remainder, the majority provided work experience for students from school. At least 11 companies reported that they provided this experience as part of their community obligations.

Value of vocational placements

There were no reported concerns about the value of vocational placements for TAFE or university students. The only concern reported was regarding vocational placement for school students who came to the company for one day per week. It was felt that this did not provide enough time for students to develop real skills.

Value of work experience for school students

Three companies felt that work experience had value, because it allowed students to decide what work interested them. Another six companies reported that they used work experience as a vehicle for recruitment of staff.

At least 29 companies voiced some concerns about the value of work experience. The major concerns related to their inability to give work experience students meaningful tasks to perform and concerns about occupational health and safety of students. At least 11 companies felt that work experience was more of a hindrance than a help. Employer concerns about work experience are provided in table 7.

Table 7: Employer concerns about work experience

Concerns about the occupational health and safety of students	14
Concerns about the inability to engage students in meaningful activities	15
Concerns about employer lack of time for training students	3

Displacement of apprentices

Only six companies had ever been involved in the displacement of apprentices for economic reasons or work shortages. The remainder had kept apprentices on by keeping them busy with odd jobs until work picked up.

Policies on disadvantaged groups

Very few companies in this study currently employed apprentices from disadvantaged groups. Four companies employed five hearing-impaired apprentices, eight companies employed 22 ATSI apprentices. No company employed apprentices who did not have at least a basic command of English.

Employing apprentices/ trainees with disabilities

People with disabilities have traditionally had lower levels of participation in the workforce and post-compulsory education.

The National TAFE Executive Committee commissioned the report *FlexAbility: A strategic framework for people with disabilities 1994–96* (1992). This report identifies three major issues which affect the

provision of vocational education and training to people with disabilities. These were:

- issues in post-compulsory education
- issues associated with the definition of disability, and
- issues in the labour force. In discussing these issues the report refers to a recent Australian Youth Profile Survey showing that people who reported having a disability were twice as likely to leave school before completing Year 12 as people without disabilities.

It also refers to 1993 data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This showed that people with disabilities continue to have lower levels of participation in post-compulsory education, lower levels of qualifications and lower rates of participation in the labour force. People with disabilities are also more likely to be in non-accredited courses and work in unskilled jobs. They have higher unemployment rates and are more likely to be among the long-term unemployed.

Commonwealth and State governments have implemented incentive schemes to increase the number of people with disabilities who obtain jobs. For apprentices, there is a Disabled Apprentice Wage subsidy which is made available to employers who indenture a person assessed as having a disability in a CRAFT-approved trade. The subsidy may be provided for the duration of the apprenticeship and extra funds may be available to allow necessary workplace modifications and tutorial assistance.

As has already been noted, very few companies employed people reporting any major disabilities which, according to employers, would prevent them from doing their jobs. When employers were asked what problems would be presented by apprentices with disabilities to preclude them from being employed, 21 employers indicated that this depended on the nature and extent of the disability. The most frequent responses, however, related to problems of mobility and fitness to do the work, ability to work in hazardous and dangerous environments and with heavy machinery and equipment. These problems were cited by 41 employers. The employers were interested in the ability of individuals to get the work done. However, only four employers actually responded that if workers with disabilities were able to perform duties and get around the workshop, then there should be few problems. Three employers reported that they would have no problems in employing apprentice trainees who lacked mobility in administrative-type jobs. These jobs could be undertaken in areas that were separate from manufacturing construction sites. Details of responses provided appear in table 8.

Table 8: Employer reasons for not hiring apprentices with disabilities

Reason	No. of employers
We don't receive applications from these groups	8
Our work requires mobility and fitness	18
Our work requires ability to climb ladders	9
Manufacturing, construction, and kitchen sites are hazardous for mobility-impaired/sight-impaired/hearing-impaired workers	14
Our work requires an ability to work at heights	3
We are concerned about the occupational health and safety needs of the individual	7
Our work requires the ability to lift and manoeuvre heavy equipment	10
Our work requires manual dexterity and fine motor co-ordination	8
Our work requires the ability to distinguish colour and use sight	6

Employment of NESB apprentices and trainees

Being of non-English-speaking background was not, in itself, considered a relevant issue in the hiring of apprentices or trainees. The problem was not having literacy or language skills to be able to carry out the jobs, complete the program and work with others. Three companies reported that they could get around the problem, two companies indicated they could use interpreters, and eight companies also reported that they had never been approached by students who did not have the necessary English language or literacy skills. One company reported that although English language deficiency could be dealt with in the case of qualified tradespeople, it couldn't in the case of apprentices or trainees.

The most commonly reported reasons for problems presented by such apprentices appear in table 9.

Table 9: Employer reasons for why knowledge of English was important

Reason	No. of employers
Apprentices:	
Must be able to read documentation, plans and understand instructions to do the work	18
Must be able to pass recruitment tests/school programs to succeed in the program	8
Must be able to communicate with clients, bosses and staff in getting work done	17
Occupational health and safety will be a problem if apprentices/trainees don't have a basic command of English	7

Employing ATSI apprentices

A total of eight companies currently employed ATSI apprentices. Another two companies had employed ATSI apprentices in the past.

Two State government enterprises targeted ATSI groups as part of their regular recruitment processes. Four companies had ATSI apprentices complete their contracts of training and four companies had ATSI apprentices who did not complete them. Thirty-six companies reported they had never received applications from ATSI apprentices.

Accessing on-the-job training—apprentices and trainees

Thirty-one apprentices and eight trainees were interviewed for this study. They were involved in the food, building, engineering, automotive, hairdressing and electrical/electronics industries. They included first, second, third and fourth-year apprentices and trainees in the first six months of their traineeships.

Location of jobs

Almost a third of the apprentices (30.76%) had found their jobs through the newspaper and a quarter (25.6%) through relatives and friends. Seven of the trainees had found out about jobs through the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES). Four apprentices had done a pre-vocational course and were told about the vacancy by their TAFE colleges, while two had worked with the company and had applied for a mature-age apprenticeship. One had attended a work expo., two had done work experience and applied when there was a vacancy and one had been told about the job by the school counsellor. Only two had experienced difficulties in locating a work placement, with almost two-thirds of the group (64.10%) claiming that it had been easy to locate the job. The remainder had found the process neither difficult nor easy.

Assistance in finding jobs

Almost half of the apprentices and trainees had been given assistance in finding their jobs. Of these, three quarters had the job arranged for them, with the remainder being given contact details of the company. The majority had had no assistance whatsoever in locating the placement.

Difficulties in locating placements

Well over half (58.9%) did not know of any colleagues or friends who were having trouble in locating placements. Of those who did know of others having difficulty, only four suggested that the difficulties were due to lack of jobs. The remainder placed the blame on the shoulders of the individual looking for work. Reasons given included:

- they don't want to work
- they didn't finish school
- they have no interest in prevocational courses or work experience
- they are inexperienced or not good at what they do

- they are not looking hard enough
- they may not be cut out for it
- they may have the wrong attitude
- they may not be sure they want to be a mechanic.

Displacements

About half (48.8%) of these apprentices or trainees had not heard of any individuals who had been displaced because of economic hardship or work shortage.

When they were asked what they would do if the company they worked for could no longer keep them on, the majority (76.92%) said they would look for another employer. Two of the trainees said they would start their own businesses and two suggested they would contact the Accreditation and Registration Council.

Training options

Apprentices were also asked whether their colleges would allow them to continue if they were no longer employed. Although over three-quarters (76.92%) of the respondents felt that TAFE would let them continue if they were displaced, over a quarter of these were not really confident that this would be the case. Two felt that TAFE should allow them to continue because they had paid their fees. The remainder did not know whether or not TAFE would allow them to continue.

Resources for locating jobs

Two-thirds (66.66%) were unaware of any special groups who would help them find jobs in cases of displacement. The remainder identified the following groups as possible resources:

- the Central Mission
- the Commonwealth Employment Service
- group training schemes
- the Apprenticeship Commission
- TAFE.

When asked what services could be provided, they suggested that these groups could:

- provide counselling services
- contact firms for vacancies
- help find jobs
- pass on details of employers who may be looking for people to employ
- provide contacts for jobs.

Solutions

Apprentices and trainees were also asked for their views on solutions to the problem of displacements. Over a third (35.9%) of the group suggested that it would be best to ensure that training was continued. There were no other general trends. Solutions included the following suggestions:

- *Continuing with training*
  Apprentices could go on with their formal off-the-job training.
- *Sharing the cost between companies*
  Companies could share the cost of apprentices by swapping apprentices and splitting the costs.
- *Using government workshops*
  Government workshops could be used to soak up any displaced apprentices so they could continue on-the-job training.
- *Setting up employer lists centres*
  These centres could provide a central place where registers of employers looking for apprentices and apprentices looking for jobs could be maintained.
- *Increasing government subsidies*
  Government incentives could be used to subsidise employers to take on apprentices.
- *Working at home*
  The apprentice could work on private vehicles. A mobile assessor could be used to evaluate the work.

Discussion and conclusions

Introduction

This study shows that the extent to which apprentices and trainees are losing their jobs through work shortages and employer financial hardship depends very much on the fluctuations of the business cycle. In addition, it has shown that at the present time, the brunt of these difficulties is being borne by apprentices and trainees in the building trades. Difficulties are also being experienced by building industry-specific group training companies and group training companies employing large numbers of building trade apprentices and trainees.

Using cancellations of contracts as indicators of this problem ignores the number of apprentices and trainees who are not being put on in the first place. It is here that the lack of access to on-the-job training becomes a major issue. The *New Apprenticeships* system proposes to address these problems by encouraging the uptake of apprenticeships and traineeships in industries with skill shortages. It remains to be seen if this effort will produce qualified people that can then be returned to industry and provide the necessary skills.

We have seen that traineeships have increased substantially during the last few years. If these are successful in channelling young people into permanent jobs, then we will have progressed some way to opening up positions for people in entry-level training.

The study has also found a general acceptance of the need to provide vocational placements and work experience for trainees and students from the VET sector and school systems. Indeed, the majority of companies showed a willingness to help in this area. This is also reflected by the ability of training providers to place students in vocational placements for the majority of their programs. There were only two programs in which this was not the case—building studies and sections of the child-care studies program. Difficulties in the building studies programs can be directly related to the fact that many companies do not have work for their own people in the building trade. Difficulties experienced by child-care studies programs may be due to courses requiring sizeable field placement components, the increased number of students requiring placements and the limited number of sites available.

Locating and co-ordinating placements for students is time intensive and requires substantial effort. Thus, VET providers should be given funds similar to those that have been recently allocated to meet the cost for co-ordination of vocational placements for students in VET programs in secondary schools (ASTF 1996).

Availability of positions

This study has shown that the number of apprentices being taken on by private and government-run enterprises has generally declined. Private companies are managing with fewer apprentices and are becoming increasingly reliant on hiring apprentices from group training companies on a needs basis.

Government-run enterprises are outsourcing many of their activities and their training requirements have also declined. Although State and federal government departments used to take on a major responsibility for training apprentices in certain trades for the future, this is no longer the case. The *New Apprenticeships* system is a strongly industry-led system, which has minimal interference from government. This reflects the uptake of the management paradigm by governments which promotes outsourcing of services to private enterprises. It also reflects the notion of the government role as one of steering rather than rowing. However, it would still make sense for government enterprises to continue their involvement in the training of substantial numbers of apprentices and trainees. One way they can do this is by adopting a contract compliance approach to outsourcing work. That is, companies will only win contracts if they comply with training apprentices and trainees. This is already being tried in South Australia under the UPSKILL program.

Culture of work—attitudes

Evidence from this research shows that supervisors like to train and work with 'good' apprentices. A 'good' apprentice is seen as someone who is willing to learn, take direction and help tradespeople achieve their deadlines. For these reasons, it is important that a workplace behaviour component is included as an important part of off-the-job and on-the-job training. In this way, apprentices and trainees will realise that their social and communication skills affect how they progress in the workplace. Supervisors or other workers are more likely to pass on their skills to an apprentice who is easy to get along with and willing to learn. Nobody wants to help someone who thinks they 'know it all'. This is an important lesson for apprentices and trainees to learn and should form part of all on- and off-the-job induction programs.

The culture of many workshops is that cleaning and making the workplace tidy is a very important part of the preparation and completion of jobs. All workers are expected to do their share of these basic tasks. However, it is important that apprentices and trainees understand that in many workplaces they will be expected to carry out more of these tasks than their supervisors or more senior workers.

It will be in their interests to co-operate willingly when required to do such work. This will help them bond into the work group more

readily and show they have the maturity to take responsibility for performing essential tasks that may not be interesting, but must be done.

Although trainees and apprentices need to be prepared to take part in work teams, it is also important that employers and supervisors be committed to providing quality training. In addition, they must be prepared to provide the guidance required by young people in their early careers.

The employment of females in non-traditional occupations

Females

It is evident that apart from the clerical/retail and hairdressing areas, the participation of females in traditional male trades is still relatively low. This continues to be the case despite the considerable amount of effort and money that has been put into programs aimed at increasing the representation of females in non-traditional occupations. The socialisation theory proposed by theorists since the early 1970s seems to be out-dated. Twenty years on, this argument may need to be revisited. Females have not been enticed to non-traditional occupations to any great extent, despite substantial efforts by State training authorities and the use of employer incentives to recruit them. This may have less to do with the socialisation of women and more with their making a conscious choice not to be involved in these trades. It seems a waste of time and money to maintain the view that women are victims of socialisation, rather than arbiters of their own destiny.

This is not to say that we do not need to provide role models and appropriate training for females, so that they will make use of their full potential in a wide range of traditional and non-traditional occupations. It seems that females are choosing not to enter non-traditional occupations because they find these occupations unappealing. However, if this is the case, we must ask why there are also less women in supervisory or managerial positions in occupations where they form a substantial part of the labour force and which they are choosing to enter. More studies need to be undertaken into why women in female-dominated occupations do not always progress to managerial positions. These also need to focus on the actual choices that females make.

The employment of designated minority groups in the building, engineering, electrical/electronic, food and automotive industries

Groups with disabilities

This study has shown that a number of companies are prepared to provide some work for operatives with physical or intellectual disabilities. However, no company actually employed, or could see themselves employing, apprentices or trainees who had major physical disabilities which would hinder their ability to learn and work in their trades. The main reason for this was the difficulty the person with physical disabilities would have in moving about often hazardous worksites and being able to manoeuvre equipment which required full use of arms, legs, eyes and hands. A few managers could see the possibility of mobility-impaired individuals working in a workshop or office situation. However, it seems that the prospect of a person gaining a trade qualification in these industries, at least, continues to be remote. It could be that industry bodies have not made a conscious effort to work out which of their trades could effectively be performed by persons who are mobility, sight or hearing impaired. In addition, industry bodies have not publicised these occupations as being suitable for these groups. Another reason may be that companies are generally unaware of the incentives that are available for apprentices with disabilities and may never have considered the possibility of hiring them.

There may be some trade areas which are too hazardous for apprentices or trainees with disabilities and which therefore preclude their participation. However, it seems that more attention needs to be focussed on identifying appropriate areas in which such apprentices or trainees can take part, and mounting a promotional campaign to raise awareness of these. More information about government subsidies that attach to the employment of apprentices with disabilities also needs to be disseminated.

Under the *New Apprenticeships* training scheme, apprenticeships and traineeships are proposed for newer industries. It is here that opportunities could be increased for individuals with physical disabilities that hinder their entrance into traditional trades.

It seems that many employers in this study have never had to deal with employing apprentices or trainees with a disability. Nor have they given much thought to how they could make jobs available for people with disabilities in their companies.

What is needed is a basic awareness-raising campaign. This would inform prospective employers that their selection processes should focus on the skills that people with disabilities can bring to a job. Furthermore, it is important that employers realise that an applicant need only show the ability to do what is necessary to get the basic job done. This may mean that modifications to certain equipment should

occur to allow the person with a disability to undertake the job. Employers must realise that they can provide jobs by making a few adjustments to machinery and equipment and by being willing to give those with disabilities an opportunity to participate in the workforce. Only then will apprentices and trainees with disabilities be able to gain equality of employment opportunity.

NESB groups

Being of non-English-speaking background seems to bear little relevance to being employed as an apprentice or trainee. What was important was the ability to speak English. This study showed that now more than ever before, basic language proficiency is especially important for students wanting to become apprentices or trainees in any industry. It is important, then, to ensure that young people have a basic command of the language so they can obtain a trade qualification. We should note that language and literacy classes will be continued under the *New Apprenticeships* system to ensure that training of educationally disadvantaged groups continues.

ATSI groups

The employment of ATSI apprentices by companies in this study was extremely low, with very few companies ever having employed them. Furthermore, only two of the companies surveyed made a point of targeting ATSI apprentices during recruitment. However, it is also evident that many companies had never been approached by an ATSI applicant for an apprenticeship. It is therefore important to ask why ATSI groups do not apply for apprenticeships in those industries. The answer to this question may lie in the fact that along with their non-ATSI peers, these young people may not have been encouraged to consider a trade as a career. As a result, they do not appear in great numbers in the apprenticeship statistics. It is important that we find out what the reasons are and take steps to make ATSI groups aware of the career paths provided by the trades.

The public utilities who employed ATSI apprentices had the targeting of these groups as part of their strategic objectives. It may be productive for companies like group training companies—who receive an extra $1000 for putting on an apprentice under the present scheme—to ensure that they also target ATSI apprentices as a condition of the incentives they receive. In this way, the representation of these groups within the trades can be increased. Once these apprentices have completed their time, they can be used as role models and help to promote the career to other young people in their ethnic group.

In addition, the *New Apprenticeships* system may be able to help in the promotion of apprenticeships and traineeships in the new growth industries like eco-tourism and hospitality. These may be some other areas where apprenticeships and traineeships for ATSI groups in outback areas can be increased.

To support the increased number of students requiring vocational placements as part of AVTS and MAATS initiatives, ANTA, through the States/Territories, has commissioned a number of infrastructure projects. The products of these will be available during 1997. The first, the Vocational Placement Information System, will be a computer software package to assist providers in managing the placement of students with employers. The second will be a handbook for employers, providers and students which will provide guidelines for the operation of vocational placements in each of the States and Territories.

Work experience and vocational placements

School work experience

Our research shows that many employers feel it is part of their community obligation to provide work experience for students from schools. Unfortunately, the findings also show that at times work experience is not very useful, in terms of what students can be given to do and what they can be expected to learn as a result. Work experience for school students has been promoted as one way to expose them to the world of work, in the hope that it will help them clarify what they want to do in the future. If the experience they can expect during this period is considered to be without substance, then it is important to reconsider the whole strategy. If work experience means nothing more than observing other people at work, rather than participating in meaningful work activities, then it makes no sense to send students into workplaces for whole weeks at a time. It might be more profitable to shorten the length of blocks of time that they spend in workplaces or ensure that properly structured work experience is available. In this way, the interests of both employer and student can be maintained. Alternatively, it may mean a greater effort is required to structure the experience that students are expected to obtain.

An exception to this was found in the cooking trade. Here, it seems easier for work experience in the form of real work activities to be provided for students. Students can actually be given tasks which, although basic, form a crucial part in the food preparation process and, therefore, in the workings of a kitchen. This is not always the case in any of the other industries. Staff in the cooking trade must be very careful about what students are given to do and extremely vigilant in making sure they do not injure themselves in kitchens. However, if care is taken, it seems that staff have found ways to make work experience both meaningful for students and helpful to themselves. In addition, work experience in this industry has also proved a sound way of recruiting future employees and apprentices. A number of companies in other industries also used work experience for recruitment purposes but highlighted some of the shortcomings of younger or immature students. Lack of ability to do well in the trade, an inability to accept direction willingly and not being prepared to perform basic tasks were all cited as shortcomings of work experience students.

As mentioned previously, students will need to be informed of what is expected of them at work. Schools must also realise that the old adage 'if he/she is good with his/her hands then give him/her a trade' does not always apply. Industry wants tradespeople who are both good with their brains and with their hands. It is important for schools to inform students with intellectual ability about the possibilities of working as electricians, toolmakers, carpenters, chefs and mechanics and to give them opportunities to experience these trades. For these reasons, teachers should be given in-service training to understand the requirements of employers. This will help them improve the information they give students before they get to the workplace.

Under the *New Apprenticeships* system, links between schools training and work will be increased. This means that schools will be increasingly dependant on industry to provide appropriate work experience for their students. If industry is to provide these added services, then it must be recognised that resources required to provide supervision and training at the workplace come at a cost to enterprises. Thus, they will need to be supported by some financial incentives.

Structured vocational placements

Providing placements for students taking vocational courses at TAFE colleges and universities was seen by enterprises in this study as being more productive. Here, the majority of managers were quite positive about what these students could be given to do and what they could be expected to learn. This can, in part, be explained by the fact that students in vocational courses at TAFE or university are also older and often more mature. This willingness on the part of industry to accept individuals from these institutions for vocational placements may also explain why many TAFE institutions are able to access placements for their students. It must be remembered that these placements do not attract any payment from employers and this may be another reason for their availability.

Institutes of TAFE in this study reported that their staff put a lot of effort into developing and maintaining networks and relationships with their local enterprises and industries. It is these networks and relationships which they depend on in locating placements for their students. The time involved in procuring suitable employers cannot be underestimated. Training providers and brokers should be encouraged to develop new relationships with small and medium-size businesses, who have not hitherto experienced the positive benefits of vocational placement students.

The appointment of work placement officers in many institutes of TAFE has led to improved service in vocational placements. However, it is important that these work placement officers have a very strong background in the industry they are servicing, and continue to work hard at maintaining links.

Not all programs are finding it easy to locate vocational placements for their students, however. In these cases, it might be important for curriculum developers to ask themselves how much field placement time is required for students to achieve competencies. It may also be necessary for them to replace some field placement requirements with simulated off-the-job experience strategies. This is already being examined in a number of institutes, especially those which deliver child-care programs.

Internal and external monitoring of contracts

Under the *New Apprenticeships* system, employers will assume far more responsibility for training. This means that enterprises at the local level will have a greater role in ensuring that quality structured training is in place and contractual obligations are being met. There is little doubt that the majority of employers have the knowledge, skills and integrity to carry out such a function. What is less clear, is whether or not they will devote time to setting up and maintaining an effective training and monitoring system.

The new system envisages less bureaucracy in overseeing the apprenticeship and traineeship system. No one can argue with benefits that should accrue to all stakeholders when red tape is reduced and processes are streamlined. Under the current scheme, the responsibility for monitoring contracts of training has resided with State training authorities. Training officers from these authorities in Queensland, South Australia and Victoria have reported problems in the quality and amount of on-the-job training that apprentices and trainees receive in some enterprises. Apprentices and trainees have not always been released for off-the-job training and there are cases of people working as apprentices without a contract.

Many of these problems could be solved by an emphasis on high quality training and more regular monitoring. This will need to be a consideration as the *New Apprenticeships* system is implemented.

Continuing off-the-job training for unemployed apprentices or trainees

Whatever industry or agency they represented, all respondents in the study believed that encouraging the apprentice to continue off-the-job training while looking for another employer is the best solution to the problem of displacement. The advantages of this strategy relate to improving the marketability of apprentice or trainee. The problem is that unless apprentices or trainees contact State training authorities, they may not be aware of their need to inform colleges of their situation and make arrangements to continue their studies.

It is important, then, to reinforce the requirement that employers considering displacing an apprentice must inform State training authorities before any other actions are taken. In addition, it is extremely important that training officers conduct induction programs which emphasise the actions apprentices should take in the event of losing their jobs. Although employers are required by legislation to contact State training authorities in all States, there are still many cases when State training authorities are not contacted until the apprentice has been advised they are no longer required. This is often too late for any remedial action to be taken.

A number of companies believed that apprentices and trainees should only be taken on when employers can commit themselves to the full term of the contract. Ensuring that employers are prepared for this commitment would require extensive interviews and screening with would-be employers, which is impractical in today's industrial climate. Some State authorities have moved to a system of self-assessment for employer approval. This means that employers decide for themselves whether or not they meet the criteria before appointing an apprentice or trainee. Providing briefings or other support to employers for this self-assessment test would be another way of ensuring a more effective process.

Group training companies

Group training companies provide a very crucial service in the employment of apprentices and trainees. However, they can only survive if the industries they service are able to afford the placements. It is clear that at the present time, group training companies servicing the building trades are finding it especially difficult to place their apprentices. Their problems have been compounded with the phasing out of State and federal funding for building projects, which provided 'live work' alternatives for apprentices and trainees who were not in work placements. If group training companies subsidise apprentices while they are on downtime for substantial blocks of time, they run the risk of using up their reserves and going out of business. If they decide to stand-down or suspend the apprentice, then they may be seen as not fulfilling their part of the contract. It would make sense for group training companies to be able to access funds which will help them continue to employ apprentices until they can be placed in paid work. The creation of industry-funded programs with objectives similar to those of the HIYESTP, HIT or UPSKILL programs would be one way of helping group training companies cope with this dilemma. Another option is to impose an industry training levy, such as exists in South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia. This can help group training companies reduce their charge-out rates.

Many group training companies in Victoria and Queensland have established their own training centres. In many cases, these training centres are not registered providers for the training of apprentices, and apprentices must attend the local TAFE college. The problem

with this is that apprentices are not always able to accelerate their formal training when they are not in work placements. If these centres were registered to provide formal training, it would give them the flexibility to allow apprentices to continue their training when work placements are not available. This is especially important for those trades which are affected by the weather. MAATS has promised employers increased choice in the use of training arrangements. It may also have to examine the costs connected with registration. This should assist group training companies in accessing the training they need when it is required.

If displaced apprentices or trainees are to continue formal training, the providers of training will need to be able to respond quickly. This may mean setting up 'emergency training response units' (within faculties responsible for the training of apprentices). These units can accommodate students who are on downtime from group training companies or who have lost their jobs and require accelerated training.

Improving funding arrangements

Live work programs

The funding of simulated or 'live work' projects is one way of solving the problem of lack of access to work placements. This would include making industry funds available for group training companies and training providers to build constructions, maintain appliances or provide other services to community organisations. This would ensure the flow of 'live work' available for these organisations. Allocating funds for training providers and group training companies to produce commercial products would also help deal with the inability to access live work. College butcher shops, bakeries, automotive workshops and carpentry workshops could all be used to produce articles for sale. In addition, departments could undertake contracts for various services. Although these activities would help provide on-the-job skills required to complete training, training providers and group training companies will need to make sure that they do not compete with existing enterprises by working at subsidised rates.

ITABs, group training companies and training officers from State training authorities believed that the broad range of Special Assistance Programs (SAP-1, 2 and 3) previously funded through DEET (now DEETYA) should be reinstated. These funds have provided very real assistance to employers and apprentices in times of economic hardship, and have been instrumental in helping apprentices complete their training. It would make good sense to allow these Special Assistance Programs to be used once again. They could be used by government and private enterprise to make positions available for displaced apprentices and for ITABs to implement programs to allow apprentices to complete their time. Special assistance could also be given to employers who can see no way of continuing an apprenticeship without some funding.

Promotion of government incentives

To date, promotion of government incentives for the employment of apprentices and trainees has largely been the responsibility of training officers attached to State training authorities, officers of the Department of Education and Training (DEET now DEETYA) and the former Commonwealth Employment Service (CES). Awareness of these incentives among employers has also been low.

It is important to ensure that employers are aware of available incentives for the employment of apprentices or trainees. One way of doing this is to promote incentives through community newsletters, television and radio programs, and equipment and product suppliers. In this way, employers can also learn of the special incentives which attach to employing apprentices or trainees with disabilities, females in non-traditional apprenticeships and ATSI apprentices or trainees. As a result, they may have more incentive to target such groups for any appropriate vacancies. Another way to ensure that information on government incentives is widely disseminated is to give training providers promotional material to pass on to local employers. Failure to market these incentives will mean that small business may continue to believe that their ability to put on apprentices and trainees is severely limited. The *New Apprenticeships* system has promised to make this information more accessible to local business. It will be important to evaluate whether increasing knowledge about incentives improves participation of small businesses in training.

Restructuring incentive arrangements

It has been the experience of training officers from State training authorities and group training companies that some OOV apprentices have also fallen behind in their college training. This may explain why some employers are unwilling to employ OOV apprentices. It is important to ensure that incentive schedules are structured in such a way as to encourage all employers to fulfill their training obligations. That is, to make sure that apprentices/trainees are given time to attend formal training at appropriate times during their contracts. One way to enforce this is to make the commencement subsidy contingent on the apprentice having completed a certain proportion of formal training.

Making use of existing workshops

Workshops of government enterprises or large private companies could be used to provide placement opportunities for apprentices who are displaced through no fault of their own. For example, government transport and storage workshops could take responsibility for apprentices in the automotive industry; public utilities could take responsibility for apprentices in the electrical/electronic industry and engineering industries; and public buildings departments could take responsibility for apprentices in the building trades. Where these government-run enterprises outsource major parts of their work, there should be a greater and more stringent use of contract compliance principles. In this way, the training of apprentices is directly tied to the ability of companies to win government contracts. In addition, large manufacturing firms,

building companies with the capacity for training and large hotels could also take responsibility for these apprentices. These workshops could provide a very real service in providing 'live work' for displaced apprentices until they find another employer. The question of who pays for this service will also have to be resolved. One solution is to ask large companies to provide the training with no remuneration. This would work for the time being, because the number of OOV apprentices searching for positions in each local area would not be great. Another solution is to give these companies some tax break advantages for taking up displaced apprentices.

Summary of recommended strategies

Summary of recommendations

The findings of this study point to five major strategies to expand the numbers and improve the training of skilled workers.

Recommended strategy 1

Encourage business and industry to increase their uptake of apprentices and trainees

Recommended actions

1 Encourage large manufacturing building and electrical/electronic firms and hotels to take responsibility for helping displaced apprentices/trainees complete their indentures.

2 Encourage industries to establish training levy schemes similar to those operating in the building industries in South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia to foster sustained numbers in training.

3 Encourage employers to take on more apprentices and trainees.

4 Promote the employment of apprentices and trainees from disadvantaged groups in the existing and emerging industries.

Recommended strategy 2

Improve the quality of work experience and vocational placement programs

Recommended actions

1 Examine the ways that work experience programs for Years 10, 11, and 12 can be made more meaningful for employers and students.

2 Expand the provision of induction programs which emphasise appropriate work behaviours and attitudes in students.

3 Promote benefits to enterprises of non-paid vocational placements and work experience to students.

Recommended strategy 3

Improve funding arrangements

Recommended actions

1 Encourage DEETYA (Department of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs) to re-establish SAP-1, 2, 3 arrangements.

2 Revamp employer incentive arrangements so that they are contingent on apprentices having completed the appropriate training.

2 Establish government policies that require the uptake of apprentices/trainees through the use of contract compliance measures.

4 Set up or reinstate programs which will provide assistance to group training companies to keep apprentices in 'live work' while they are on downtime.

5 Continue English language, literacy and numeracy programs to ensure that students are prepared for working in the trades and associated formal training.

Recommended strategy 4

Improving and increasing the information available to employers and apprentices and trainees

Recommended actions

1 Expand the provision of induction programs which emphasise the obligations and rights of parties to contracts of training or training agreements, including how to structure workplace training and the requirements of apprentices/trainees in the workplace.

2 Provide greater support for employers and supervisors of apprentices to participate in workplace trainer courses.

3 Implement cost-effective processes for the monitoring of contracts of training and training agreements.

4 Ensure that other potential providers are clear about registration requirements.

5 Ensure that training providers examine the number of vocational placements for institutional pathways that are required to complete qualifications, and explore alternative ways to achieve similar outcomes when placements are scarce.

6 Improve information available explaining support services available to employers, apprentices and trainees under the contracts of training or training agreements.

7 Raise awareness with industry groups of workplace needs of people from designated groups and incentives available to employers who employ apprentices/trainees.

Recommended strategy 5

Promote more research into vocational choices

Recommended actions

1 Conduct research into effective strategies to encourage females into non-traditional occupations.

2 Conduct further research into reasons for low participation rates of females in managerial positions in female-dominated occupations.

3 Conduct research into reasons for the low rate of applications to enter the trades by all students, including ATSI students.

Concluding comments

Lack of access to on-the-job training for apprentices or trainees increases when the industry in which they are employed is experiencing downturn. It is manifested in apprentices and trainees being suspended or cancelled because of employer economic hardship, work shortages or closure of business. However, when industries are not experiencing growth there are still substantial reductions in the number of apprenticeship commencements. It is this reduction which seems to be a major reason for lack of access to on-the-job training.

Furthermore, when fewer apprentices and trainees are being put on during times of economic downturn, skills shortages will continue to be felt several years down the track.

According to Dr Kemp (1997), the *New Apprenticeships* arrangements for apprentices 'will provide thousands of young Australians with quality training that will lead to real jobs . . . and businesses with a competitive edge in overseas markets'. It will be important to evaluate the real extent to which the new scheme achieves these goals.

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Appendix A

Participants in the study

Participants in the study

Type	State	Number of regions	Number of participants
State training authorities	South Australia	5	15
	Victoria	4	7
	Queensland	6	5
		15	**27**
Group training company	South Australia	10	10
	Victoria	13	13
	Queensland	20	20
		43	**43**

Type	Industry serviced	Number of companies
Company managers and supervisors	Building	11
	Engineering	26
	Electrical/Electronics	18
	Automotive	7
	Food	17
		79

Type	Industry serviced	Number of providers
Training providers	Building	7
	Engineering	7
	Electrical/Electronics	5
	Automotive	10
	Food	6
	Child care	12
		47
Industry bodies and associations	South Australia	7
	Victoria	6
	Queensland	4
		17

Appendix B

Interview questions

Industry training advisory boards

Name .....

Industry .....

State .....

Respondents: Executive officers

Areas of interest: Extent of problem
Disadvantaged groups
Policies and practices
Attrition of apprentices

1 How many apprentices, trainees or work experience students were taken on in your industry last year? ***(please specify approximate number)***

Student type	Number
Apprentices	
Trainees	
Work experience students	

2 Has there been a decline in intakes of apprentices or trainees during the last five years? ***(please tick one)***

_ Yes
_ No

Please explain the reason for this.

3 Have apprentices or trainees ever been displaced in the industry for economic reasons? ***(please tick one)***

_ Yes
_ No

4 **When did this mostly occur?** ***(please specify years)*** .....

5 **How many apprentices or trainees were involved?** ***(please specify number)***

Type	Numbers
Apprentices	
Trainees	

6 **Which occupations were mostly affected?** ***(please specify)***

Student type	Major occupations
Apprentices	
Trainees	

7 **How many of these displaced apprentices or trainees belonged to the following groups?** ***(please specify approximate number for each group)***

_ females
_ non-English-speaking background
_ ATSI (Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders)
_ disabled

8 **What was the industry policy on apprentices or trainees who were displaced?** *(please tick one)*

Action	Apprentices	Trainees
Look for other employers to take them on		
Set up own on-the-job training facilities		
Transfer to other trade in industry		
Other ***(please specify)***		

9 **What actually happened to apprentices and trainees who were displaced?** *(please tick one)*

Action	Apprentices	Trainees
Took up other jobs in the industry		
Left industry		
Received on-job training elsewhere		
Other ***(please specify)***		

10 **Were there alternative arrangements made by the industry to provide this on-the-job experience?** *(please tick one)*

_ Yes
_ No

If YES, who provided the work experience? *(please tick one)*

_ group training scheme
_ ITAB
_ union
_ skill centre
_ other *(please specify)*

11 What facilities were used? *(please specify)*

12 Did these apprentices and trainees receive a wage? *(please tick one)*

_ Yes
_ No

If YES, who paid for these wages?

_ DEET
_ group scheme
_ union
_ ITAB
_ other *(please specify)*

13 What were some of the problems experienced? *(please tick one)*

_ finding appropriate facilities
_ finding appropriate trainers
_ finding funding
_ other *(please specify)*

14 What were some of the successes? *(please tick as appropriate)*

_ apprentices and trainees completed indentures and traineeships
_ apprentices and trainees found work in the trade
_ apprentices and trainees improved their self-esteem
_ industry improved in self-esteem and confidence
_ other *(please specify)*

15 Approximately what percentage of these apprentices or trainees eventually got a job in their chosen field? *(please specify percentage in each case)*

Type	Percentage
Apprentices	
Trainees	

16 **Approximately what percentage of apprentices or trainees dropped out of the industry?** ***(please specify percentage in each case)***

Type	Percentage
Apprentices	
Trainees	

17 **What do you think should be done to solve the problem of providing on-the-job training for apprentices or trainees who are displaced for economic reasons?** ***(please specify)***

18 **Could you please give me the names and addresses of about six companies in your industry who you know are employers of apprentices and trainees?** ***(please specify)***

Accreditation and registration council (or equivalent)

Name .....

Organisation name .....

State .....

Respondents: Training officers

Areas of interest: Extent of problem
Effect on students
Solutions to problems

1 How often have you had to deal with displacement problems? ***(please specify approximate number of times)***

Student type	Occupational area	Approximate numbers
Apprentices	Food Metals/engineering Building and construction Hairdressing Automotive Electrical electronics	
Trainees	Food Metals/engineering Building and construction Hairdressing Automotive Electrical electronics	

2 **How are decisions about displacement made?** *(please specify)*

Decision-making process
Apprentices
Trainees

3 **What options are available for apprentices or trainees?** *(please specify)*

Options
Apprentices
Trainees

4 **Is there any compensation for displaced apprentices or trainees?**

Student type	**YES or NO** ***(please specify)***
Apprentices	
Trainees	

5 **If YES how much compensation is available?** ***(please specify monetary value or other benefit)***

Compensation
Apprentices
Trainees

6 **How are alternative arrangements for employment made?** ***(please specify)***

Alternative arrangements
Apprentices
Trainees

7 **What is your role in negotiating a suitable placement for apprentices or trainees?** ***(please specify)***

Negotiation role
Apprentices
Trainees

8 **What are some examples of solutions that have been successful?** ***(please specify)***

Solutions
Apprentices
Trainees

9 **Do you have any other suggestions for solutions to the problem?**

Suggestions for solutions
Apprentices
Trainees

Managers, trainers, supervisors

Name .....

Position .....

Company ..... Industry .....

Respondents: Personnel or human resources managers, trainers, managers and supervisors of work areas, apprentices/trainees.

Areas of interest: Policy on work placements, and work experience
Availability of work placements and work experience (apprentices, trainees and other students)
Getting supervisors and managers interested in taking on responsibility for work placements and work experience
Past experience with students

1 **What is your company's policy towards providing work placements or work experience for apprentices, trainees and other students?**

(Collect any documentation)

Briefly describe:

2 **Do you have any apprentices, trainees and work experience students with you at this time?** ***(please tick one)***

_ Yes
_ No

3 **If YES, how many do you have?** ***(please specify number)***

Type	Number	Male	Female
Apprentices			
Trainees			
Work experience students			

4 **Who in the company is responsible for arranging the placements?** ***(please tick one)***

_ human resources or personnel manager
_ trainer
_ departmental managers
_ other ***(please specify)***

5 **How do they do this?** ***(please tick one)***

_ call for volunteers
_ decide which area to allocate
_ approach certain supervisors with request for a favour
_ other ***(please specify)***

6 **How do supervisors and managers feel about taking on responsibilities for apprentices, trainees, and other work placement students?** ***(please specify in table)***

Feelings	Apprentices	Trainees	Work experience students
Happy to take on *(specify reason)*			
Do it but reluctant *(specify reason)*			
Refuse *(specify reason)*			
other *(specify)*			

7 **Will you continue having any apprentices, trainees and work experience students in the future?** ***(please tick one)***

_ Yes
_ No

Please explain why.

8 **How many disabled apprentices or trainees, NESB, and ATSI (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) apprentices or trainees do you have currently?** ***(please specify number for each in following table)***

Type	Male	Female
Disabled apprentices		
Disabled trainees		
Disabled work experience students		
NESB apprentices		
NESB trainees		
NESB work experience students		
ATSI apprentices		
ATSI trainees		
ATSI work experience students		

9 **If you do not have any at all, how many have you had in the past?** ***(please specify number for each in the following table)***

Type	Male	Female
Disabled apprentices		
Disabled trainees		
Disabled work experience students		
NESB apprentices		
NESB trainees		
NESB work experience students		
ATSI apprentices		
ATSI trainees		
ATSI work experience students		

10 **Do these present any special problems?** ***(please tick one only)***

_ Yes
_ No

11 **If YES, please give details.**

12 **Will you continue having the following apprentices, trainees and work experience students in the future?** ***(please specify YES or NO)***

Type	Male	Female
Disabled apprentices		
Disabled trainees		
Disabled work experience students		
NESB apprentices		
NESB trainees		
NESB work experience students		
ATSI apprentices		
ATSI trainees		
ATSI work experience students		

13 **If NO please give details.**

14 **Does your company have a policy about the displacement of trainees because of economic reasons?** ***(please tick one)***

_ Yes
_ No

15 **If YES, please give details.**

16 **Have you ever had to displace an apprentice or trainee because of economic reasons?** *(please tick one)*

_ Yes
_ No

17 **If YES, how did you go about doing this?** *(please specify)*

18 **What happened to the apprentice?**

19 **What do you think should be done when apprentices are displaced because the company cannot keep them on anymore?**

20 **What do you think should be done about finding work placements for work experience students who need on-the-job experience to complete their VET credential?**

Training providers

Name .....

College .....

Position ..... (name trade or curriculum area)

Respondents: Director, heads of departments, counsellors

Areas of interest: Extent of problem
Effects on students
Effects on training provision

1 Do you have problems accessing work placements or work experience for your students? ***(please tick one type of student)***

	Apprentices	**Trainees**	**Other students**
Always			
Sometimes			
Rarely			
Other (please specify)			

2 Which occupational fields have the most problems in accessing work experience? ***(please specify)***

Student type	**Occupational fields**
Apprentices	
Trainees	
Other students	

3 **When has accessing work placements been a significant problem?** ***(please specify years between 1980 and 1996)***

Student type	Years
Apprentices	
Trainees	
Other students	

4 **Which areas have been most affected by apprenticeship or trainee displacements from employment since about 1980?** ***(please specify)***

Student type	Occupational fields
Apprentices	
Trainees	

5 **Approximately how many apprentices and trainees in your college have been affected during this time?** ***(please specify)***

Student type	Numbers
Apprentices	
Trainees	

6 **Were any groups affected more than others?** ***(please tick one)***

_ Yes
_ No

7 **If YES, which groups were these?** *(please tick)*

_ females
_ non-English-speaking background
_ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
_ disabled
_ other *(please specify)*

8 **What is your policy on training for apprentices, trainees and work experience students if they cannot get access to work placements or experience?** *(please specify) (obtain copy of policy documents)*

Student type	Policy
Apprentices	
Trainees	
Other students	

9 **Has this policy been implemented?** *(please tick one)*

_ Yes
_ No

10 **Overall how successful has this implementation been?** *(please tick one row only for each student type)*

Success rating	Apprentices	Trainees	Work experience students
Fully			
Generally			
To some extent			
Minimally			
Not at all			

11 What problems have you encountered with these policies? ***(please specify)***

12 What is done to advise and counsel students who find themselves in these situations? ***(please specify)***

13 What do you think is the most effective solution for off-the-job training providers to consider when students are displaced from employment or are unable to access work experience to complete their VET credential? ***(please specify)***

Displaced apprentices or trainees	
Students unable to locate work experience	

Apprentices, trainees and work experience students

Name .....

Type .....

Company ..... Industry .....

_ Gender
_ Occupation

1 How did you locate this work placement? ***(please specify on following table)***

Method	**Apprentices**	**Trainees**	**Work experience students**
Relatives			
Friends			
Newspaper			
School counsellor			
TAFE, private provider			
Cold-calling myself			
Contacted union office			
Other *(please specify)*			

2 How easy was it to locate? ***(please tick one)***

_ very easy
_ easy
_ not easy, not difficult
_ not easy
_ not very easy

3 What could have been done to make it easier for you to locate a work placement? ***(please tick one)***

_ introductions to managers of firms looking for work placement
_ set up interviews with firms
_ invite firms looking for apprentices etc. to come to college
_ other ***(please specify)***

4 **Did you receive any assistance from your off-the-job training provider?** ***(please tick one)***

_ Yes
_ No

5 **What type of assistance was provided?** ***(please tick one)***

_ assistance with names of possible contact persons
_ assistance with techniques for approaching contact persons
_ assistance with interview skills
_ arrangement of placement by TAFE, school, private provider
_ other ***(please specify)***

6 **Do you know of any other apprentices or trainees who have had trouble locating work placements?** ***(please tick one)***

_ Yes
_ No

If YES why do you think they are having problems? ***(please specify)***

7 **Do you know of any apprentices or trainees who have been displaced because the company could not keep them on, or went out of business?** ***(please tick one)***

_ Yes
_ No

If YES what did they do to continue their apprenticeship/traineeship? ***(please specify)***

8 **What do you think you might do if you found yourself in this position?** ***(please tick one)***

_ look for another employer
_ put my name down at the union office
_ leave the industry
_ don't know
_ other ***(please specify)***

9 **What do you think your off-the-job training provider (TAFE, business college, etc.) would do about you continuing your classes if you had no employment?** ***(please tick one)***

_ let me continue
_ let me continue and help me to find a work placement
_ ask me to leave
_ defer my studies until I had a work placement arranged
_ don't know
_ other ***(please specify)***

10 **Do you know if there are any special people to help apprentices find work in cases of displacement?** ***(please tick one)***

_ Yes
_ No

If YES who are they? ***(please specify)***

11 **What do you think they will be able to do?** ***(please specify)***

12 **How would you solve the problem of displacement?**

Group training companies

Name .....

Position .....

Industry .....

Respondents: Managers
Field officers

Areas of interest: Extent of problem
Uptake of apprentices and trainees in times of economic downturn
Scheduling of training
Use of training providers
Providing their own training

1 **How many of your apprentices and trainees are presently in work placements?** ***(please specify % in work placements)***

2 **How difficult is it to find work placements?** ***(please tick one only)***

_ very difficult
_ difficult
_ not difficult, not easy
_ easy
_ very easy

3 **Who arranges the work placements?** ***(please specify)***

_ apprentice
_ group scheme
_ other ***(please specify)***

4 **How are these placements arranged?** ***(please specify)***

5 **When have you experienced difficulties in arranging work placements?** *(please specify years 19.. to 19 ..)*

6 **Why do you think it was difficult to find work placements at this time?** *(please specify)*

7 **What do you think would help you to find work placements for your apprentices?** *(please specify)*

8 **What do you do with the apprentices when they are not in work placements?** *(please specify)*

9 **What do you think can be done to overcome training problems created by displacement?**

Appendix C

Case studies of each industry

The building industry

Historically, the building industry in Australia has been characterised by peaks and troughs. Recently, the peaks have become less frequent and the troughs more prolonged. In South Australia, Queensland and Victoria, the building industry is presently experiencing another cyclical trough. This current decrease in building activity, however, seems much more dramatic than any other recent troughs.

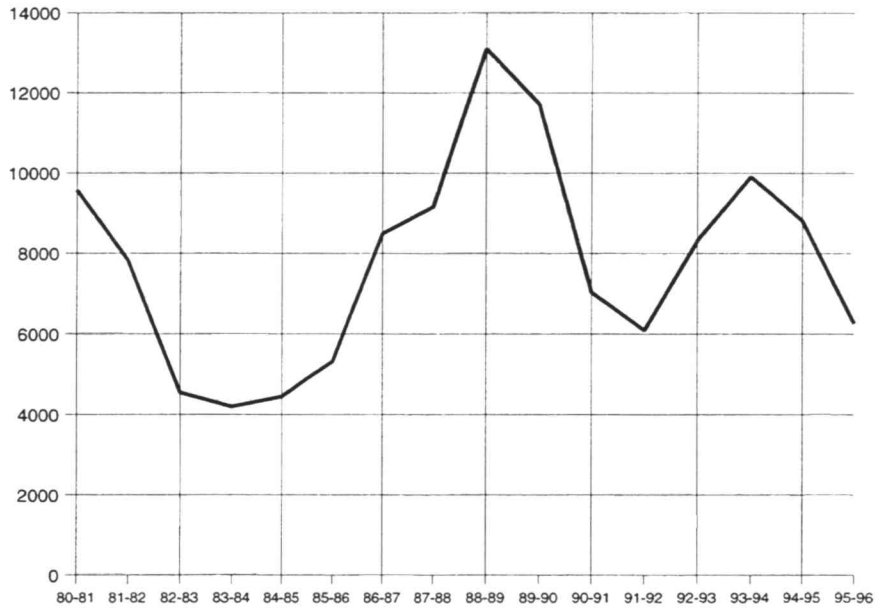
These downturns have heavily reduced the number of apprentices that are taken on in the industry, and the on-the-job placements for apprentices employed by group training companies. In Victoria, the 1990–91 recession and the collapse of the Pyramid Building Society signalled a major downturn in the Victorian building industry. It also meant that large numbers of carpentry, joinery and plumbing apprentices were laid off and subsequent intakes were heavily reduced.

In Queensland, the building industry has experienced a downturn since late 1995. The over-supply of housing and commercial buildings has caused Queensland to experience greater than usual impact on the taking up of apprenticeships. It has also affected the ability of group training schemes (GTS) to find placements for building apprentices.

In South Australia, the building industry has been experiencing difficulties since the early 1990s. In addition, the winding down of activities has occurred in the South Australian Housing Trust and Department of Housing and Construction, traditionally major employers of apprentices. This has also contributed to a reduction in the number of apprenticeships. South Australia and Victoria are experiencing a depressed building environment. However, the situation in Queensland is even worse.

Figure 3 shows how the number of apprentices being put on in the industry has declined since 1980. From figure 3, we can also see how apprenticeship commencements follow the peaks and troughs of the building industry, which are also affected by recessions in the general economy.

Figure 3: Apprenticeship commencements 1980–1996 Building trades



The building industry in all States has become increasingly specialised. Major building companies no longer do everything themselves. Today, the majority of building work is undertaken by subcontractors, each specialising in a particular component of construction (formwork, foundations, painting, ceiling fixing, plastering, carpentry, cabinet making, glazing etc.). Large construction firms are invariably run by a small team of construction managers, site managers, supervisors, and administrative officers, who then contract work out to specialist subcontractors. Because of this, the ability of these companies to take on apprentices has been severely limited. In addition, the general shortage of building contracts makes it even less viable for small subcontractors, unsure of future work, to commit themselves to taking on a four-year apprentice.

Industry initiatives

Queensland

As outlined previously in this report, there has been a significant decline in the intake of apprentices in the building trades in Queensland, due to the decline of the building industry. Supply has now outstripped demand and there is a shortage of work. When there is a work shortage in any industry, employers look to release staff or not take more on.

In Queensland, 1994–1995 and 1995–1996 have been two difficult periods for the building trade. As a result, apprentice carpenters and

joiners, wall and floor tilers, bricklayers, cabinetmakers and painters have experienced suspension and cancellation of contracts.

There has been no industry training advisory board (ITAB)-led initiative to ensure that these apprentices are able to complete their contracts of training. Instead, the industry is considering an industry levy similar to the ones operating in Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia. This levy would apply to building firms and could be used to fund training initiatives like setting up skill centres and providing assistance to sustain employment and subsidise placements. There is some industry opposition to the levy, because firms see it as another tax. The manager of the Housing Industry Association (HIA), which represents the domestic market, has reservations about the tax. HIA feels that there is no need to pay for training which, in major part, occurs on the job.

Victoria

There has also been a downturn in the Victorian building industry. As a result, employers are unwilling to commit to a long-term contract. This has affected the number of apprentices being employed and the ability of some training providers to fill classes.

Traditionally, carpenters have taken on the largest responsibility for training apprentices, but today the confidence of these employers is very low. They are very unsure of what lies ahead.

Victorian apprentices were laid off in great numbers in 1992, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Pyramid Building Society. According to the ITAB, the number of apprenticeship commencements has never recovered from that time.

At the time, there was no industry-led initiative to assist out-of-trade apprentices in completing their indentures and many left the industry. As yet, there has been no study to find out what happened to these apprentices.

Instead, Commonwealth government-funded special assistance programs (SAP-1, SAP-2 and SAP-3 programs) were accessed to help apprentices complete their trades. With the demise of SAP-1 and 2, however, there are no programs that employers can use to help these apprentices.

South Australia

South Australia is also experiencing a major downturn in the building industry and this has affected the intake of apprentices. It suffered its greatest loss of apprentices in the 1981–82 and 1991–92 recessions.

There was no ITAB-led initiative to take care of apprentices who lost their jobs. Instead, two industry group schemes, one set up by the

Housing Industry Association and another by the Master Builders Association, picked up many of the displaced apprentices.

Recently, the industry has introduced a training levy to be paid by builders. This levy provides funds for on-cost reduction for apprentices and trainees. It has also provided funding for skill centres. A government program aimed at increasing the training of apprentices and trainees has been implemented in South Australia. This is the UPSKILL SA program, which requires tenderers for government contracts to make provision for training. They do this by agreeing to allocate 10 per cent of total labour hours for the training of apprentices and trainees. This program is still in its early stages. It remains to be seen how well the program ensures that contractors do, in fact, honour their contractual obligations and actually employ and train apprentices or trainees.

Availability of positions—employers

Employers

The eight private companies surveyed in this study generally hired between one and two apprentices. Company B8 in Victoria had five apprentices. The company B9 in Queensland employed 330 apprentices and divided these among its 14 regions. One subcontracting firm had no apprentices and the owner was not considering hiring apprentices in the future. A breakdown of these numbers appears in table 10.

Table 10: Number of building apprentices and trainees employed by companies

Company	Apprentices	Trainees
Company B1	1	0
Company B2	0	0
Company B3	2	1
Company B4	1	0
Company B5	1	0
Company B6	0	0
Company B7	2	0
Company B8	5	0
Company B9	330	0
Company B10	1	0
Company B11	2	0
	345	**0**

Only one of these companies hired female apprentices. This was company B9, which employed six female carpentry apprentices, one female plumbing apprentice and one female signwriting apprentice. Although the companies in this study employed a very small number of apprentices, managers responsible for hiring staff indicated that managers and supervisors who were responsible for training apprentices were generally very comfortable doing so. This willingness, however, also depended on how keen apprentices were to learn and work hard.

According to the site manager at one of the company B3 construction sites in Adelaide, the supervisors had found that apprentices were usually very keen and eager in their first year but sometimes needed more motivation in their second and third years.

The foreman at this same site observed that although he was happy to take apprentices on, he had to accept the fact that a tradesperson performs at 70 per cent capacity when working with an apprentice. It had also been his experience that apprentices from group training companies were far more productive because the report they received from their supervisor or leading hand depended on their performance.

At company B3 and company B8, apprentices have never been laid off because of economic hardship or shortage of work. According to the construction manager in Melbourne, they are happy to take on apprentices in the hope that they will be forepersons in the future.

Only three of these companies had displaced apprentices because of economic hardship.

Availability of vocational placements and work experience

One way to find out the availability of vocational placements and work experience is to survey building companies on their willingness to provide work experience. Another way is to survey training providers on whether or not their students have been able to access vocational placements or experience. Four companies provided vocational placements for TAFE or university students. There were generally no concerns with these types of placements.

Company B6 in Queensland is involved in commercial construction. The manager is not prepared to take on work experience students because of the risk involved. In his opinion, prevocational students would be much better served doing work experience on a domestic construction site. Although the personnel manager for company B4 indicated that the company was happy to take on school work experience students, he too felt that there would be little meaningful work for them to do. The situation was slightly different for prevocational students looking for work. They could have experience on company projects that are not sublet to subcontractors.

The reactions to providing work experience were mixed. Six companies reported that managers and supervisors were generally reluctant to provide the experience. Reasons for this included occupational health and safety issues, the need for constant supervision and the lack of real learning that eventuated.

Occupational health and safety factors were major concerns which reduced the willingness of at least three companies to provide work experience. Company B2 in Adelaide erects frames for the pouring of concrete. This means that work will be carried out on edge beams and flat decks as each floor of a building is being erected. The work

environment for form workers is thus especially dangerous. Such an environment makes it very hazardous for tradespeople to provide work experience for students.

At company B3 in South Australia, work experience is provided to students who request it. Although the company sees the provision of work experience as a community responsibility, workers and managers do not, as a rule, look forward to it. According to the foreman there is little that can be given to work experience students from school and there is little time to teach them. In addition, unless students have done previous work on a site, they can become a liability. Typically, a work experience student is placed under the care of a leading hand or foreperson. Companies have found that after about three days of work experience, it becomes an effort for students and tradespeople alike. Students also tend to get bored with the experience. As a result, work experience for high school students is considered to be of 'no use at all' and a 'waste of time'. At least three companies felt that work experience was more of a hindrance than a help.

Work experience for trainee engineers who are usually from universities is more favourably looked on. In this case, they are able to take on meaningful tasks and in most cases have been on a construction site.

Although the manager at company B5 will provide work experience when he is approached, he has also found the whole process to be a 'bit of a pain'. In his opinion, work experience from school is a waste of time and money. When the student is only with the company for one week, there is no continuity that can be built into the activities provided.

At company B7 in Victoria, work experience is provided to students who request it. This only occurs if the tradespeople are 'not too flat out' and there is time to provide the experience.

At company B8 in Melbourne, supervisors and managers are also reluctant to give work experience. This is because of the effort it takes to arrange and because there is not much that students can learn in two weeks. In addition, the obligation to complete a report on students is another drawback and managers and supervisors consider this to be a chore.

Providing vocational placements for students who require a practical year to complete their university credentials can also have its problems. This is because often students get to feel that they are part of the company and expect to be employed at the end of the practical year.

Company B9 in Queensland is happy to provide work experience or vocational placements for all types of students, so long as no wages

have to be paid. When wages have to be considered, the provision of work experience is no longer an attractive option.

The need for constant supervision was also a drawback for vocational placements and work experience programs. The manager of company B1 was only interested if there were jobs that students could be given to do that did not require constant supervision.

Availability of placements—group training companies

Group training companies are now major employers of apprentices in the building industry. A group training company, however, is not immune to financial hardship or work shortage. Nor is it guaranteed survival. When the industry being serviced by the group training company is suffering, group schemes run the risk of incurring bad debts from companies who can't pay their bills. They can also become unprofitable because of the need to pay wages to apprentices who are not in paid work.

In general, 31 of the 43 group training companies participating in this study employed building trade apprentices and all experienced difficulties in placing these apprentices in jobs on a regular basis. Industry-specific group training companies experienced such difficulties to a greater extent. In August 1995, the Queensland GTCQ1 had 45 apprentices not in a placement, the Brisbane-based GTCQ12 group training company had seven apprentices out of work and the GTCQ industry group training company in Bundaberg had 15 apprentices out of work. In Victoria, the GTCV3 group training scheme had ten apprentices out of work, the GTCV1 group training scheme had 70 apprentices out of work and the GTCV11 group training company had six apprentice carpenters out of work.

The declining rate of housing approvals has also affected the ability of these companies to find apprentices work placements on the Sunshine Coast. Here, the local group scheme is finding it almost impossible to place apprentice carpenters, bricklayers, tilers and plasterers. According to the manager of this group scheme, the bottom fell out of the building market at Christmas 1994. Since then, there has been a surplus of tradespeople working for low dollars, helping each other out with contracts and thus not requiring the services of apprentices.

The manager of GTQ14 believes that if the commercial sector of the building industry is down in the southern States, many subcontractors head north to Queensland in the hope of finding work. These qualified tradesmen can often work for less than the apprentice who requires supervision. This, in turn, lessens the ability of group training apprentices to get jobs.

Another concern for group training companies is the need to adhere to award conditions for apprentices when the industry is in downturn and tradespeople are not being paid award rates. This puts added pressure on the job-finding process.

There is also a backlash from employers in having to pay apprentices when they are not at work and are in college. This is exacerbated by the block training system in Queensland, where apprentices undertake training in seven-week blocks at a time.

Although small employers would generally prefer day release, the manager of the building industry-specific group training scheme GTCQ13 takes advantage of the block training system to relieve the pressure on work placements. An apprentice on block training means an opportunity of job placement for other apprentices.

As we have noted before, the building industry in Queensland is in downturn. Since about October 1995, almost all group schemes in the State have been experiencing difficulties in placing building trade apprentices. The local GTCQ15 group scheme in Gladstone has a number of new major construction projects going up and is generally well-served by companies able to take on apprentices. However, even this scheme is experiencing major difficulties in placing its apprentice carpenters from the local group training company. Moreover, the new construction projects will still only provide foundation work for apprentice carpenters for about four months. Because of the high cost of carpenters, the scheme is considering no longer taking on carpentry apprentices.

Many of the building businesses in the Brisbane metropolitan area are closing. This has produced major difficulties for the Brisbane-based GTCQ12 group training company, which has to find apprentice placements in the area. In addition, there has been a gradual winding down of government-funded housing projects that the company has accessed in the past. This has caused a further reduction in the live work that apprentices are able to do when they are on downtime.

Short-term placements

For group training apprentices in South Australia, Victoria and Queensland, the length of work placements is becoming shorter. In addition, at least 12 companies reported a dramatic increase in the number of calls made to keep apprentices in regular work. According to GTCV3 in Victoria, in the past field officers used to have to find three jobs for an apprentice per year, whereas now it has increased to at least eight jobs. In the Murray Mallee in Victoria, builders also want apprentices for short periods of time. In Wide Bay in Queensland, the group company GTCQ3 reported that obtaining six hours work for one apprentice may require field officers to make telephone calls to as many as four or five companies.

Builders in metropolitan and regional South Australia also experience activity in short bursts. Apart from affecting the placements available for group training companies, they also reduce opportunities for OOV trade apprentices.

Discounting charge-out rates

At least 16 companies indicated that they reduced charge-out rates at times to keep apprentices and trainees in regular work. Group training companies in Queensland and South Australia tended to decrease the charge-out rates for building apprentices to keep them in regular work. In Victoria, only two group training companies reported reducing their charge-out rates.

In addition, the industry levy in South Australia has meant that group training companies have been able to substantially discount the charge-out rates for apprentices. According to the manager of the GTCSA4 group training scheme in South Australia, the levy has been invaluable in helping to keep apprentices in regular placements.

Discounting was even more prevalent for fourth-year apprentices. On the Sunshine Coast, one group training company has looked at the possibility of decreasing the rates for fourth-year carpenters by about $50 per week to make them more competitive. In Brisbane, the group training company GTCQ13 is also discounting apprentices up to 30 per cent of their normal charge-out rates to attract placements.

Six group training companies reported that they also fully subsidised an apprentice to keep him or her working. This means that the group company will pay all wages and on-costs and the host employer will not have to pay any fee for the apprentice.

The high cost of fourth-year carpenters and joiners

The specialisation of the building industry and the economic downturn has also affected the ability of group schemes to maintain viability. When work is scarce, fully qualified tradespeople will reduce their prices to get jobs. In such a situation, it is very difficult for group training companies to be competitive in hiring out their third or fourth-year apprentices. Almost half (48.4%) of the group training companies servicing the building industry spoken to in this study indicated they often had great difficulty in hiring out third and fourth-year apprentices. This was especially the case for fourth-year apprentice carpenters, who would cost most employers as much as $4 more per hour than a qualified tradesman.

According to the manager of the GTCQ4 group training company, 'fourth-year group training apprentices are being priced out of employment'. Other group schemes in Queensland report that they are competing with fully qualified workers, who are working on construction jobs for sometimes about $5 per less than the charge-out rate of the apprentice. The manager of GTCV3 in Victoria believes that not only are fourth-year carpenter and joinery apprentices harder to place, but so are fourth-year apprentices in all building trades. In the Murray Mallee, the group training company GTCV8 has also experienced problems in placing its fourth-year apprentices. They have found, however, that they are easier to place if they have completed all their training.

Problems in placing fourth-year apprentices have not always been the case, however. The manager of one far north Queensland regional group apprenticeship scheme GTCQ4 has found that when things are booming in the construction industry, 'everyone wants a fourth-year apprentice, or even a third-year apprentice, but when things are quiet they either want a first-year apprentice or no one at all'.

Industry-specific group schemes

Group schemes which only employ building apprentices are generally metropolitan based and are particularly vulnerable to downturn in the building industry. The Queensland group training companies GTCQ12 and GTCQ1 and the South Australian group training schemes GTCSA4 and GTCSA5 have all been greatly affected by the present downturn in the industry.

Host employers with GTCQ1 group training scheme who have never been without work for 30 years are now without employment. As a result, many of the reserves the scheme has built up over the years are now being used to keep apprentices in work. The manager of this scheme believes that if things don't pick up soon, the scheme may find it increasingly difficult to survive in its present form.

Similarly, the group training company GTCQ12 in Queensland was contracted by the State government to repaint public houses. When these funds dry up, they will also have problems keeping apprentices employed. GTCQ12 is now discounting apprentices up to 30 per cent of their normal charge-out rate. This, too, must be eating into the reserves of the company.

Group training scheme GTCV3 in Victoria also faces similar problems to those being experienced by counterparts in Queensland. In Melbourne, the building climate is presently being buoyed by the construction of the Melbourne Casino. The manager of the scheme believes that this may change dramatically as this work placement source dries up when the casino is completed.

GTCV3 finds itself in a more stable situation than the Queensland group schemes serving the building trades. However, this stability is built on a lower base. In the boom years of 1989–1990, the scheme employed 540 apprentices. With the failure of the Pyramid Building Society, this number fell. Today, the company employs 400 apprentices.

GTCSA4 in South Australia attempts to avert disaster by being more conservative in the numbers of apprentices it employs, trying as often as possible to hire only those for whom it can be reasonably sure of securing a work placement. If business does not improve, it too will find it difficult to maintain present levels of activity.

Pre-apprenticeship or prevocational training

The building industry, like many other industries, has put in place prevocational or pre-apprenticeship courses. This is the case for Victoria, South Australia and Queensland.

In those courses, students who wish to follow a certain building trade will be given some of the initial modules of national construction curricular, and ideally be given opportunities to access work experience in the industry. This has generally stood students in good stead of gaining an apprenticeship, once their prevocational year is over. Indeed, many employers are more favourable to students who have shown initiative and interest in the trade to enrol and complete a prevocational course.

Under competency-based training, the prevocational course also allows students to be credited with the first year of their formal training, should they subsequently get an apprenticeship. In Queensland, the prevocational student who is then employed as an apprentice is also to be paid at a second-year rate of pay. In Victoria, depending on the vocation, the apprentice may receive a slightly higher rate of pay than the first-year apprentice who is under the time-served scheme. In South Australia, the legislation is not clear as to the rates of pay for a first-year apprentice carpenter who has done prevocational training.

At least six Queensland companies and one Victorian company experienced difficulties in hiring out their prevocational apprentices. In Queensland, prevocational students who go onto a job after their prevocational year must be paid as a second-year apprentice. Although builders are loath to employ a fourth-year apprentice because of the high costs involved, they are also unwilling to put on an apprentice who has completed prevocational studies. Such an apprentice generally does not have his own tools and has limited hands-on building site experience. However, only one of these companies was from Victoria.

At least three group training schemes in Queensland have said that they will no longer be employing apprentices from prevocational training. They are responding to negative opinions about the competencies of these students from industry. The managers of the group training schemes GTCQ15, GTCQ1 and GTCQ10 have found that carpenters in their regions do not want apprentices who have come through a prevocational course. They cost more, have generally had no on-site experience and do not have their own tools. In addition, 'they get contaminated while they are at college'. As a result, they are far more difficult to place than time-served second and third-year apprentices. According to the manager of GTCQ10, 'no one wants them'.

Although he has not experienced builders being overly concerned about the slightly higher rate of pay required by prevocational apprentices, the manager of GTCV3 in Victoria believes that there may be too many people going through prevocational training who are not employed at the end. In his opinion, this affects the way that the course is valued by parents, students and industry. Parents of students who are not successful in getting an apprenticeship, along with the students themselves, feel 'ripped off'. This creates a negative perception of the course and the students who have completed it.

The situation is further complicated with the fact that often one has to have completed a prevocational course to get a foot in the door. The system in Victoria gets around this is by having sponsored and unsponsored prevocational students. Sponsored students have an employer lined up to take them when they are finished, whereas unsponsored students do not.

Although no other group training companies made mention of problems with the hiring out of apprentices who had just completed pre-vocational training, this area should be explored further.

Availability of placements—training providers

Seven providers of formal training were interviewed for this study. They provided information on their ability to find students vocational placements and their experience with OOV apprentices. Accessing work experience for these training providers in the building industry depends to a large extent on what is happening in the industry at the time and on the number of students that require work experience.

TQ1 institute of TAFE in Queensland, and TV1 and TV2 institutes of TAFE in suburban Melbourne reported little difficulty in placing students in work experience. At TQ1 TAFE, however, this was not always the case. According to one of the construction faculty members, accessing work placements was far more problematic when students were required to find their own placements. Now that a work placement officer has taken on arranging work experience for prevocational students, it has been far more successful. TV1 has trainees and associate diploma students in fit-out and finish trades. Although it finds little difficulty in placing prevocational students in work experience, associate diploma students in architecture and draughting are harder to place.

TV2 provides programs in plumbing, plastering, bricklaying, carpentry and joinery, shop fitting and painting. According to the head of department, there are few problems in getting students to access vocational placements. This is partly because the college provides its own 'live work' programs. One program comprises making full-size components for a charitable organisation program that provides shelter for homeless youth. Another involves performing maintenance work around the college.

The building program at TV3 institute of TAFE in regional Victoria provides training for plumbing, carpentry and joinery, bricklaying, steel fixing and concreting. Although it can be difficult to find work experience for all trades, it has been easier to access the experience in the commercial and renovation sectors than the domestic sector. The college is also involved in providing its own 'live' work projects. These projects can be used to provide work experience and their products can be sold at the end. Transportables for caravan parks, granny flats or scout camps have all been built by prevocational students on work experience. These projects have been used to provide on-the-job training and give students experience in commercial enterprises.

It is getting harder for colleges in South Australia to access vocational placements for their prevocational trainees. This has been the experience at TSA1, TSA2 and TSA3 institutes of TAFE. TSA1 institute of TAFE provides training in carpentry and joinery for apprentices and trainees; and draughting, building inspection and building supervision for associate diploma students. Although prevocational students experience some problems in accessing vocational placements, it is always difficult to find placements for the associate diploma students.

TSA3 institute of TAFE provides training in the building and furniture industries. Although its carpentry and joinery trainees can pick up vocational placements on the college transportables building program, it is very difficult for those in furnishing to find work experience. In the past, the alignment of public schools and institute holidays has meant that students from both sectors were looking for work experience at the same time and flooding the market. To ensure that its students are able to get work experience, TSA3 has adopted a more flexible approach.

As a result, vocational placements for furniture trainees need only involve employment-related training rather than industry-specific training. Because about 30–40 per cent of trainees looking for work experience will not gain it in their chosen field, they have the option to perform work experience whenever it is available. Students are also encouraged to keep a diary of the work they do outside college hours. This can be counted as work experience.

It is getting harder for institutes in South Australia to access suitable placements for prevocational trainees. This has been the experience of TSA1, TSA2 and TSA3. TSA2 institute of TAFE provides training in bricklaying, floor and wall tiling, glass work, sign writing, plastering, and ceiling and wall fixing. It has 45 prevocational students of which 50 per cent are from unemployed backgrounds. Although it was relatively easy to find work experience for tilers and fit-out and finish trainees in 1995, the downturn in the whole industry has meant that it will be far more difficult in 1996. Finding work experience for trainees is quite difficult, especially as many employers do not even have work for their own people.

Displacement issues and strategies

Employers

When there is insufficient work or economic hardship in the building industry, an apprentice's options are more limited. Unless the employer feels that work will pick up, the best option available to the apprentice is to sign up with another employer and cancel out his/her present contract. The problem with this course of action is that when there is a downturn in any industry, everyone experiences hardship. Finding new employers who are willing to take on apprentices can be difficult.

Restructuring the industry

For the Construction, Mining, Forests and Energy Union (CMFEU), one solution lies in the restructuring of the building industry so that builders rather than project managers are responsible for building. These builders could then be made to take on apprentices according to the number of tradespeople they employed. The builder could then act as a group scheme and lend apprentices out to subcontractors. Implementation of the process could then be monitored by the CMFEU.

According to the construction manager at company B3 in South Australia, solutions to the problem of displacement are made even more difficult by the inability to predict the state of the building industry in four year's time.

Finding placements in group training companies

At least four companies suggested sending apprentices to group training companies as the solution to this problem. However, this study has shown that group training companies can also be vulnerable to downturn in the building industry. For example, regional group training companies who employ apprentices in the building trades as well as many other trades are affected by the downturn in the building industry. It influences their ability to place not only building trade apprentices, but also others whose jobs are driven by construction activities.

Funding skills centres

Another suggestion was to establish or continue to fund skills centres. The problem with this strategy is voiced by the manager of the head office of Companies B3 and B8: 'skills centres cannot teach you what you learn on a building site'.

Funding community projects

What is needed, then, is real building activity. This could be provided by an increase in the number of government-funded public housing projects or community recreational facilities, which could then be used as sources of 'live' work.

TSA3 institute also believed that colleges could employ apprentices to work on community facilities and sporting clubs that needed work done. This, of course, would require considerable funding.

Accelerated formal training

Company B2 was in favour of full-time training while the industry was in a slump, so that all training could be completed when the industry picked up again.

Group training companies

When group training apprentices and trainees lose their access to on-the-job training in the construction industry in Queensland, South Australia and Victoria, efforts are made to access other employment which will count as on-the-job training. This means that they may work on housing projects, community and public buildings or the company complex. Alternatively, it may mean discounting the charge-out rates. They may also complete any outstanding formal training. When this is not available, they may be asked to take any annual leave owing or rostered days off.

Of the group training companies who employed building apprentices, just less than half (45%) encouraged apprentices to take annual leave. Slightly less (41.9%) sent them off to complete formal training. Well over a third kept apprentices gainfully employed in government-funded housing projects, working on community projects or building projects within the company complex. When all options and strategies are exhausted, apprentices may be stood down in Queensland or suspended in South Australia and Victoria.

Although, to date, only a few group training schemes have closed because of economic hardship and inability to make ends meet, group training building trade apprentices may be in a slightly better position than apprentices who are employed by small businesses. Although not completely immune to economic hardship themselves, group training companies can help stave off unemployment for apprentices in the short term. That is, apprentices are less likely to lose their jobs because of temporary lack of work placements. The situation will change if the temporary lack of work placements becomes long term. Even group training companies cannot afford to carry apprentices for long periods of time.

Traditionally, many of these OOV apprentices were picked up by group training companies. However, at least five companies reported concerns with employing OOV apprentices. The managers of GTCQ12 and GTCQ13 in Queensland, and GTCV8, GTCV3 and GTCV9 in Victoria believe that few employers like to put on OOV apprentices because of the costs involved. It has been their experience that many of the OOV apprentices who are picked up by their companies have not undertaken their college training. This is despite the fact that their previous employers have received the $1500

commencement incentive under the CRAFT ATI scheme. Thus, although new employers picking up the OOV apprentice will receive a $500 recommencement subsidy, they will still be liable for college fees and paying wages while the apprentice is in formal training.

According to the manager of GTCQ12, the OOV apprentices that he has employed have also had more problems completing their formal training. This leads him to believe that perhaps they may be out of trade because of low performance. Their previous employer may have tried to be kind in releasing them by using reasons of financial hardship or work shortage, rather than citing non-performance as a reason for cancellation.

Dealing with apprentices who are not in work placements

Building projects

State funds have been made available to group schemes to build houses, renovate public buildings and houses and be involved in community projects in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia.

In Queensland, the Housing Industry Training Program (HIT) sponsored by the State government, has made funds available to group training schemes to build a small number of its housing commission houses. These funds included a small training component to allow for the fact that construction would be used to train apprentices. These projects have been especially useful for group training companies with apprentices in the building trades. They have provided a steady source of work for apprentices when they were not in external work placements. All but two of the group training companies hiring building apprentices in Queensland were very supportive of the HIT program and had used it as a holding bay for apprentices on downtime.

However, not all group schemes used the HIT program to occupy apprentices in downtime. In central Queensland, the local group training scheme GTCQ4 preferred to involve its downtime apprentices in community projects. This involved providing maintenance work on student villages, local nursing homes and general hospitals. For another Queensland group training company, GTCQ5, having too many apprentices in the HIT projects could also increase the cost of the houses so that they were no longer marketable at going rates.

The HIT project is dependant on general funding. Recently, group training companies in Queensland have been told that they may no longer access such funds after June 1997, as the program is being phased out.

The Housing Industry Youth Employment and Skills Training Program (HIYESTP) was a federally-funded program which also allowed group schemes to build their own houses for sale. HIYESTP funds were available to pay the wages and on-costs of a building

supervisor. In the past, such projects provided work for apprentices on downtime. HIYESTP has also been axed.

Many group schemes have been disadvantaged by the demise of HIYESTP and the gradual winding down of State programs. According to the manager of GTCV3 in Victoria, HIYESTP was a 'terrific counter-cyclical' program, which targeted out-of-trade apprentices and made it possible for them to complete their training.

In South Australia, a pilot program designed to increase skills and provide jobs is the UPSKILL SA program. This government initiative will require contractors who win State government building and civil construction contracts valued at more then $500 000 to provide training opportunities to the value of 10 per cent of their total labour hours.

Solutions

Group training companies which serviced the building industry also believed that the solution to the problem of displacement needed to be viewed in light of what was happening in the larger economy. At least six companies believed that solutions depended on there being work available and on stimulation of the economy to provide this work.

Improve funding mechanisms

The special assistance programs (SAP-1 and 2) provided allowances to help apprentices complete off-the-job training and subsidised programs for the completion of on-the-job training. One solution for dealing with displaced apprentices was to bring back this funding.

Another solution was to restructure the collection and amount of CRAFT ATI incentives. This would mean that employers would not be able to access the commencement fee subsidy until well into the apprentice's training. This would stop employers from receiving the fee during the probationary period and dismissing the apprentice at the end of this period. Increasing the rate of the recommendation fee for employing an out-of-trade apprentice would make employment of these apprentices more attractive.

Because of the high cost of fourth-year apprentices, another solution was to increase subsidies to group companies or these apprentices. This would help them to deal with those times when the market could not support normal charge-out rates for apprentices.

Providing funds for group training schemes to do their own training was thought to be one way of ensuring flexibility of delivery. This could involve setting up skill centres and workshops and making accreditation processes more streamlined. This would mean that off-the-job training could be delivered at times when it was required.

Increasing subsidies to hire more field officers attached to group training companies was also a favoured solution. This would increase the capacity of these companies to search for positions and to build and maintain industry networks.

One company was of the opinion that field officers could also provide guidance and mentoring for any apprentices or trainees who lost their jobs because of employer economic hardship or work shortage. In this way, they would receive the necessary support to help them cope with any negative feelings brought on by losing their jobs.

One way to ensure the government could afford to provide subsidies for dealing with out-of-trade apprentices was to fund these through unemployment benefits (the dole). That is, make the dole available to group training companies rather than apprentices for training.

Improve access to live work

One way to deal with apprentices or trainees on downtime would be to restore the HIYESTP program and continue other State-funded building programs. Another solution is to improve access to community projects like the building of boardwalks, shelters or the restoration of public buildings.

Reduce costs

The reduction of on-costs which have to be borne by small business was considered a means of ensuring the availability of placements for apprentices.

Reduce red tape

Reducing bureaucratic red tape was also perceived as one way of making participation in the training of apprentices more attractive. This would mean streamlining procedures that have to be followed when applying for grants and subsidies and gaining approval for delivering off-the-job training.

Recognise on-job skills

Improving the recognition of skills acquired on the job would be another way of dealing with the problem of displacement. That is, it would decrease the amount of time spent on practical workshops in formal training.

Training providers

When apprentices or trainees lose their jobs through economic hardship or work shortage, all the institutes in this study reported that they would allow apprentices to continue their studies even if they were not employed. The institutes believed that the more formal

training an apprentice could complete, the more attractive he/she would be to a prospective employer. At Torrens Valley, attempts are being made to persuade all those who have not completed their training to come back and complete their certificates. Three of the institutes would help apprentices to complete their training by providing work for them around the college with college tradespeople.

A solution to the problem of displacement needs to be seen in relation to the economy. Jobs cannot be created where work does not exist and it makes no sense to put on apprentices when existing tradespeople are out of work. Furthermore, there may a perception that contracts are one-sided; that is, in favour of the apprentice. It is unlikely that companies who have had a negative experience with apprentices in the past will take responsibility for putting them on in the future. Although all respondents in this study believed that everything must be done to encourage the apprentice to complete his/her indentures, they suggested a variety of solutions.

Solutions

Accelerate formal training

Training providers generally believed that displaced apprentices should continue their formal training while they were looking for a job. The main reason for this is that it kept apprentices in touch with the trade and made them more marketable to a future employer.

The director of TSA3 institute of TAFE believed that when the industry was in a slump, apprentices should be placed in full-time training. Consequently, there would be adequate numbers of apprentices who could devote themselves solely to on-the-job activities when the economy improves. In this way, the apprentice would not require any further formal training and would become more attractive to an employer. Alternatively, the college could handle apprentices in a manner similar to that of a group training company. In this way, the college could train people out of cycle.

The co-ordinator of building and construction at TSA2 TAFE institute is of the opinion that there has to be some direct way to inform TAFE colleges about apprentices who lose their jobs. This means that the provider needs to be more flexible in supplying training on demand. However, she also conceded that providing this flexibility is not always easy, especially when there are small classes involved.

There are also other problems associated with displacement that need to be considered. When an employer does not release an apprentice for the block training in which he/she is enrolled, the college does not receive any money for that apprentice when he/she eventually wants to 'make up' the block. This places an added strain on college resources.

The education manager at TSA1 institute of TAFE feels that a special fund should be set up which could subsidise group training schemes to take on out-of-trade apprentices. In addition, employers could be subsidised by the 'dole' monies traditionally given to unemployed apprentices as well as some additional funding. This may help them to keep on the apprentice until the end of the apprenticeship.

Making commercial products

The faculty head of building construction at TV3 institute of TAFE believes in placing out-of-trade apprentices in commercial activities run by the college. Here, they could make and sell full-sized 'work' and the proceeds could be put into buying capital equipment for work on future commercial activities.

The faculty head of building and construction at Box Hill TAFE suggested that employers may like to form syndicates to provide work for displaced apprentices.

Policies on the disadvantaged

Apprentices or trainees with disabilities

Only one company in this study reported employing any apprentices with disabilities. These were two hearing-impaired apprentices employed by a Queensland Government department. All the other companies had never employed people with disabilities. They firmly believed that sight, hearing and physically disabled apprentices would have problems working or moving around a construction site. These sites were seen to be occupationally very hazardous, even for people with no apparent disabilities. Climbing ladders, scaffolds, pouring concrete, and hanging doors would be especially difficult for people with physical or mental disabilities. However, they were not against people with physical disabilities taking up clerical or draughting traineeships which did not require them to work on construction sites.

NESB apprentices and trainees

All apprentices hired by these companies could speak English. Problems that were foreseen for apprentices who did not speak English had more to do with their ability to cope with formal training than with performing the actual work required.

ATSI apprentices and trainees

Company B9 in Queensland targeted ATSI applicants on an annual basis and currently employed 10 of them. None of the other companies had ever been approached by ATSI job applicants.

The engineering industry

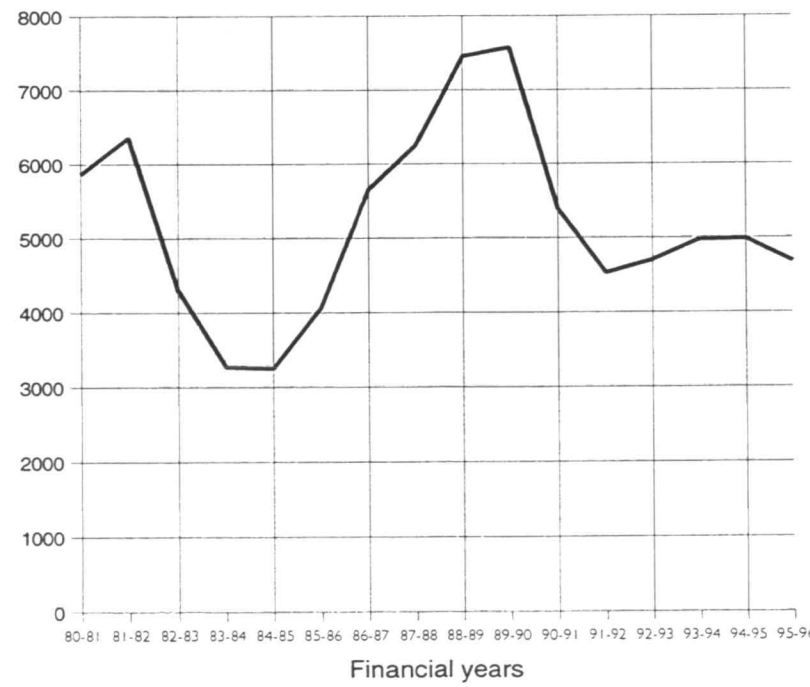
Overview

The engineering industry is at the forefront of national award restructuring and workplace reform. In the 1970s, the metals and manufacturing industry accounted for about 180 000 employees. By the 1990s, this number had been reduced to about 56 000. The restructuring of the Metals Industry Award has seen the redefinition of job classifications for fillers, welders, sheet metal workers and boiler makers. In addition, 360 trade classifications were reduced to three streams each, with 14 levels. Apprentices and trainees are now employed to become engineering tradespersons in fabrication, mechanical and electrical/electronics trades.

Apprenticeship commencements in the metal trades were heavily affected by the 1982–83 recession, when large numbers of apprentices almost lost their jobs due to economic hardship and work shortages experienced by their employers.

The industry has steadily reduced the number of apprentices being taken on. A pictorial representation of the declining numbers since mid-1981 can be gauged from figure 4.

Figure 4: Apprenticeship commencements July 1 1980 to June 30 1996, engineering trades



Industry initiatives

The engineering industry has been a leader in restructuring their industrial awards and decreasing traditional adversarial relationships between employers and unions. Laurie Carmichael, the former general secretary of the powerful Metals Union, was the chairperson of the Employment and Skills Formation Council. This body has been instrumental in changing the direction of vocational training for the Australian industry as a whole.

In 1981, the foundry section of the metal industry in South Australia held a joint seminar of employers and unions to look at problems affecting the sector. In 1982, the industry held a wider forum called 'Future Directions'. The forum included members of the Engineering Employers' Association and the Metal Trades Federation of Unions. Here, representatives of the metal industries discussed problems and proposed solutions.

In the 1982–83 recession, the engineering industry in Australia experienced a major setback, with many apprentices from all trades losing positions. Mostly affected were apprentices in the welding and boilermaking trades.

In South Australia, the government and Engineering Employers' Association worked together to implement a training program to help displaced apprentices complete their contracts. The South Australian State Government had established a task force for the Jubilee celebrations, and had bought a ketch 'The AK Failie'. The then Minister for Labour in the Bannon government approached the director of the Engineering Employers' Association. The Minister proposed the concept of using apprentices who had lost their jobs to help in the restoration of the ketch.

A factory was leased at the Port Adelaide wharves, equipment was solicited and procured, and 77 apprentices and tradespeople were employed on the project. These included about 50–60 out-of-trade apprentices who worked under the direction of especially selected boilermakers, electricians and ship wrights. Funds to pay the wages of apprentices and tradespeople were provided by the Commonwealth Employment Program. Compliance with the program meant that funds were also to be spent on minority groups. However, it was difficult to find many representatives of minority groups to apply for the program because of their low representation in the OOV population. The next project to be approached in a similar vein was the building of the two Victor Harbor horse trams.

These two programs proved to be very successful. OOV apprentices were able to complete their contracts of training, the AK Failie and the horse trams were completed, and apprentices went on to find work as tradespeople in their chosen trades. In addition, the project demonstrated to unions and employers alike that the old craft

demarcations could be ignored when teams of tradespeople worked together to complete a project.

Victoria experienced another major trade crisis in 1990–91, when substantial numbers of apprentices were placed out of trade at a time when there already existed a shortage of toolmakers, fitters and machine operators. As well as trying to place apprentices with other employers, the industry set up a program to fast track apprentices through the skill centre in conjunction with the group training company. The Special Assistance Program (SAP-2) was used to fund apprentice wages. The program was also successful in that apprentices involved in the scheme completed their indentures and found work in the trade. Not all out-of-trade apprentices attended the skill centre, however, and many who did not attend left the industry.

Availability of positions

Employers

Twenty-six engineering firms from South Australia, Queensland and Victoria were interviewed in person or by telephone. Of these, 14 companies currently hosted or employed a total of 260 apprentices and 18 trainees. In all, there were seven female apprentices and two female trainees employed by three companies. Two companies had employed apprentices in the past and nine companies had no apprentices. Table 11 provides a breakdown of these details for the different firms in the study.

The majority (73%) of these companies believed in providing jobs for apprentices. Of these, at least 13 companies considered apprentices to be an integral part of ensuring a steady pool of tradespeople were available for the operation of the plant. Three South Australian companies prefer to use apprentices from group training schemes. This allows them to keep the apprentice for either the full four-year term or a limited period of time.

Companies were asked how managers and supervisors felt about taking on responsibility for the training of apprentices. All the companies who had experience of apprentices or trainees reported that their supervisor tradespeople believed it was their role to train tradespeople for the future. However, at least five companies qualified this by saying that the willingness of supervisors to take on responsibilities for training apprentices was also coloured by how the apprentice performed on the job. Supervisors were particularly keen to work with 'good' apprentices, who were willing to learn and respectful. They were less keen to work with apprentices who did not display these characteristics. According to the supervisor of the tool room at one South Australian company, company Eg2, the attitude of apprentices towards their work affected how much help and assistance they could expect from tradespeople. He believed that if apprentices showed a 'know-it-all' attitude, the toolmakers would not be willing to help them. If they showed a willingness to learn, then toolmakers would take the time to assist them.

Table 11: Number of engineering apprentices and trainees employed by engineering firms

Company	Apprentices	Trainees
Company Eg1	75	0
Company Eg2	4	3
Company Eg3	26	0
Company Eg4	8	0
Company Eg5	1	0
Company Eg6	1	15
Company Eg7	120	0
Company Eg8	0	0
Company Eg9	5	0
Company Eg10	0	0
Company Eg11	0	0
Company Eg12	*0	0
Company Eg13	4	0
Company Eg14	0	0
Company Eg15	1	0
Company Eg16	1	0
Company Eg17	0	0
Company Eg18	0	0
Company Eg19	4	0
Company Eg20	2	0
Company Eg21	0	0
Company Eg22	3	0
Company Eg23	1	0
Company Eg24	2	0
Company Eg25	*0	0
Company Eg26	2	0
Total	**260**	**18**

* Companies employing apprentices in the past

Individuals who think they know everything about a certain procedure were described as 'smart alecks'. Such individuals were not well-tolerated by tradespeople from at least three other engineering firms.

Tradespeople at company Eg5 are generally very happy to take on responsibility for apprentices. However, the apprentice must be careful not to make too many mistakes which may damage a tradesperson's products. If the apprentice is given a task that is not performed according to expectations, the tradesperson may not ask the apprentice to help with other complex jobs. If this happens, the apprentice may only be asked to perform routine jobs until the tradesperson's confidence in his/her ability is restored.

The majority of supervisors saw the training of apprentices as part and parcel of their jobs. However, at least three companies indicated that apprentices were appreciated because they relieved tradespeople of more mundane jobs and provided an extra pair of hands.

One Victorian company, company Eg25, had trained apprentices and kept them on as tradespeople in the past. Recently, its owner had become disheartened with apprentices who had given up the job after one or two years of training. This company also found that although its supervisors were happy to teach apprentices, they would not tolerate any 'cheek'. As a result, the company was wary of taking on apprentices in the future, even though it would very much like to do so.

Company Eg6 in South Australia has taken on about 24 trainees from the NETTFORCE program. Its assistant manager, who had been with the company for 41 years, was especially supportive of the program because he 'hated seeing kids on the street'. The team leader in charge of one group of trainees likes the challenge of working with trainees. "It make me feel like I'm contributing something. I love training and I like the challenge of moulding them my way. I like to see them work their way up", he said.

There seems to be a general acceptance of the need for tradespeople to train apprentices and trainees, and a willingness to do so. This goodwill is especially heartening for the provision of on-the-job training. It also suggests industry has realised that it will continue to suffer from skill shortages unless skilled tradespeople are produced. In addition, it is prepared to shoulder some of the responsibility for training.

Availability of vocational placements and work experience

Just over half (53.8%) of these companies were willing to provide vocational placements and work experience for school, TAFE or university students. Almost two-thirds (n=17, 65.4%) had provided work experience in the past. The remainder had either never been approached to provide work experience or decided not to be involved in the process. One company would only consider school work experience for clerical areas. This company did not readily accept any work experience requests for their factory areas without substantial screening.

One of the major reasons that companies were quite positive about providing work experience for schools was that it provided students with exposure to the world of work. In addition, it helped them to decide what they wanted or did not want to do in the future. Companies also saw the provision of work experience as an integral part of their community obligation. Once again, the willingness of tradespeople to take on responsibilities for work experience students was also tempered by the attitude of the student. According to the engineering foreman of company Eg6, 'if the lad is not approachable, he will get the same treatment from the tradesperson'. At least three

companies reported that they would be more prepared to take on work experience if they felt students had a positive attitude and were willing to learn.

The provision of work experience in the engineering industry is heavily affected by occupational health and safety considerations. This is because people can be severely maimed if things go wrong. Accordingly, some companies will not take on work experience students from schools. At company Eg2 in South Australia, work experience from schools has been cut back due to lack of available resources to co-ordinate the program and teach students about safety issues. It has also been cut back because little value was seen in what the students could learn in the short period of time they were in the company. According to the human resources manager, 'We see work experience as a nuisance. We used to spend more time teaching them (students) about safety than teaching them anything concrete.' As a result, company Eg2 is only taking on work experience students from TAFE or university. Company Eg3 also does not take on school work experience students in their toolrooms because of the safety factor.

At company Eg5, work experience is reserved for students who have undertaken some prevocational training. This is partly because this type of student is generally interested in the vocation and is 'worth spending time with'; and partly because it is less costly and less dangerous to work with someone who has had some prior experience.

At least three companies believed that school work experience was useless or a complete waste of time. This is because they felt there is little that students can be taught to do and, according to one manager, because any experience they do gain 'walks out the door'. According to the manager of one Victorian firm, 'work experience doesn't work. It only teaches them to get up in the morning, stand on their feet all day . . . It makes them realise that they should stay on at school a little bit longer because work is tough'. One Victorian company, not keen on providing work experience for school students, felt that it was not fair on 'kids'. There was no time to teach them and restrictions on tool use limited the work they could be given to do.

One way that company Eg24 has dealt with this problem is to give work experience students smaller assembly-type jobs, or other menial tasks.

Locating placements for work experience students from schools, TAFE or universities was less of a problem than providing more places for apprentices. Many of these companies had misgivings about the type of work the industry could allow the school work experience student to do. However, the majority were prepared to provide work experience when actually approached by students. A strong consideration for their willingness to take on work experience students was the fact that these did not generally attract a wage and were only on the premises for short periods of time. However, the

majority of these companies also felt a strong community obligation to provide the experience.

Company Eg1 believed that one way for institutions to ensure that work experience continued to be available was to develop close networks with industry. Company Eg2 felt that another way to attract co-operation from industry would be to stagger the times at which all institutions asked their students to procure work experience.

A picture emerges of companies generally wanting to fulfil community obligations, but being slightly sceptical of the value of the experience in terms of student learning.

Availability of placements—group training companies

Few group training companies had problems placing engineering apprentices with host companies. The GTC4 group training scheme which specialises in engineering, electrical and vehicle trades in Victoria has experienced a minimum amount of downtime in the past ten years. One of the main reasons for this is that the company has been extremely selective in its choice of apprentices and very conservative in the number it has taken on. At times, it has also been prepared to subsidise the wages of fourth-year apprentices to secure them a placement. This has also been the experience of a South Australian group training scheme, GTCSA1, who has targeted apprentices and trainees in the engineering trades. GTSA1 also has stringent selection procedures in place.

The GTCV5 group scheme in Victoria employs mainly metal trades or engineering apprentices. It, too, has found few problems in placing apprentices since its inception four years ago. Recently, however, one field officer has noticed a small increase in the number of apprentices and trainees who are being returned to the scheme, due to companies not winning contracts they had expected to. This has led the officer to believe that things may be slowing down in the sector.

In Queensland, the GTCQ6 group training scheme is 48 per cent engineering based. This scheme has found it difficult to fill engineering vacancies in companies because of the shortage of boiler-maker apprentices on their books. It is also very much affected by any industrial relations problems experienced at the Mount Isa Mines. Any lock-outs or strikes may affect the work that local contractors can access. When local contractors have work shortages, it signals problems for placing apprentices. However, during the most recent industrial problems at Mt Isa, the group scheme was not affected to any great degree. It was also able to survive during the 1991–92 recession. The most difficult problem experienced by the group company is finding enough suitable apprentices who have the ability and desire to become fitters and turners. This has been a particular problem for another GTCQ7 scheme in Queensland, which has vacancies for metal apprentices that can't be filled. In addition, few students are entering these trades.

Some difficulties in placing metal trades apprentices have also been experienced in places where there is not a large manufacturing base. In regional Victoria, the local scheme GTCV6 has had problems placing metal trades apprentices. According to the manager of this scheme, this may also be because the scheme is not well-known by the metal trades industry in the area.

Availability of placements—training providers

Seven providers of formal training in engineering were interviewed. In all three States, they generally had very few problems in accessing vocational placements for engineering students. One Brisbane TAFE college, TQ2, has experienced some problems in locating placements for apprentices and other students in fitting and machining, and maintenance fitting and metal fabrication. According to the manager of the department here, this is because Queensland does not have a heavy manufacturing base and is more involved in the repair and service industry.

Sometimes, students who were not in apprenticeships had difficulty finding jobs. In order for them to complete their credentials, on-the-job experience was provided with college tradespeople.

Displacement issues and strategies

Employers

Only one company had ever cancelled an apprentice's contract for economic reasons. In this case, the apprentice had also not been certain that he wanted to continue the apprenticeship. Subsequently, the apprentice left the industry.

All companies with apprentices understood that lack of work would find them in a difficult position with their tradespeople, production workers, and apprentices. However, only one company indicated that they would put apprentices off if times were bad. The others would do their best to keep their apprentices by finding other tasks around their sites for them to perform.

Not all employers were happy about taking on displaced apprentices. The manager of company Eg18 was more interested in taking on students from 'scratch'. His reason for this was that it was becoming increasingly difficult for employers to direct apprentices to carry out tasks they did not want to. This perceived overconfidence and assertiveness did not endear such apprentices to the manager or tradespeople in the company.

It seems that for these companies, the issue of displacement is not a major one. What is occurring, however, is that fewer companies are employing large numbers of apprentices and a number are employing none at all.

Solutions to the problem of displacement

Only one of these companies had ever experienced the problem of having to displace apprentices. However, all respondents were asked to provide suggestions for solutions to the problem of lack of access to on-the-job training for apprentices and other students.

Continuing formal training

All companies believed that the apprentice should be allowed to continue the apprenticeship and complete it. This could be accomplished by setting up an industrial training centre for up-front training; sending the apprentice to TAFE to complete and broaden formal studies; and finding alternative employment. Apart from this, there were no major trends to the solutions that were suggested.

Utilising government workshops

At least three companies suggested that displaced apprentices should be placed in government-run workshops, to continue or complete their apprenticeships. These could include public works departments, railways, or workshops which are specially set up to deal with this problem.

Two managers at one firm believed that apprentices should be allowed to complete their apprenticeships in a 'mock industry'. Here, 'live' work could be carried out under commercial conditions, with materials bought at a tax-free rate and products sold to pay apprentice wages. Such an industry workshop could be a government-run concern, catering for all trades.

Increasing government subsidies

Two other firms suggested that the government pay businesses to keep on apprentices. This could be achieved either through giving the apprentices' dole payments straight to employers; or providing up-front incentives to employers to maintain apprentices. According to one of the respondents, this might be difficult to monitor and could be open to abuse.

One company manager was adamant that apprentices should not be paid the dole, because the money would be too attractive and distract them from completing their apprenticeship. Instead, apprentices should be given jobs in engineering factories, so they could keep close to the industry and continue the apprenticeship when work picked up.

Utilising group training

At least four of the companies suggested sending apprentices to a group training scheme. This would mean that they would be less vulnerable to work shortage problems and could be sent back to the scheme to be placed elsewhere if these occurred.

Training providers

Providers experienced few cases of apprenticeship displacement and all were quite willing to allow apprentices to continue their formal training until they found a job. According to the manager of the mechanical engineering department of TSA1, displacement is not a major issue because there has been a decline in enrolments for a long period of time. This decrease has meant that the problem of displacement has become less obvious. He believes that the decline in engineering enrolments has been brought about by fewer apprenticeships being offered and fewer students choosing to enter the trade. In addition, he feels that the education system is not providing students with the skills to succeed in engineering at a time when trades are becoming far more 'academic'. A smaller pool of students with reduced skills means that employers are also selecting students with less ability. Because colleges have to accept employer choices, they must increase the learning support required by students to complete and pass their formal training. This extra work is not given recognition in term of productivity and funding.

Well-developed networks with industry have also reduced the problems of accessing work experience for students or finding jobs for displaced apprentices. These networks have also been helped by the appointment of job placement officers, who are employed to help students find work experience during their studies and jobs when they have graduated.

Policies on the disadvantaged

Apprentices and trainees with disabilities

No company currently employed any apprentices with major disabilities and only one company had ever employed them in the past. These apprentices, however, had only become disabled after accidents at the plant.

Almost two-thirds (65.4%) of the companies believed that people with major physical or intellectual disabilities could not perform the work of an engineering apprentice. This is because they needed to be mobile, as well as having the full use of their arms, hands, legs and eyes.

Working as fitters and turners, boilermakers, and sheet-metal workers also requires long hours of standing, manual dexterity and depth perception. Wheelchair-bound apprentices would find it especially hard to get around the workshop, work with heavy machinery or move sheets of steel for pressing. In addition, many of the work benches, lathes and computer-operated machinery have computer panels which are produced at standard heights. According to one manager, it would be very difficult for a wheelchair-bound person to operate these.

The engineering factory or workshop floor is a hazardous and often noisy environment. People need to be alert and able to quickly move out of the way of machinery and equipment. Sometimes accidents occur when products fall or move in an unexpected manner. One South Australian company producing panels for motor cars had employed injured workers from the Commonwealth Rehabilitation service. The company had found it very difficult to give these workers anything but menial tasks to perform. This was also the case in another engineering firm, who produced pressed sheet metal products. They found that when they have had injured workers on light duties in the past, it was very difficult to find them work. Although only two companies indicated that they had never received any applications from people with disabilities, this may also be the case for all the other companies. Two companies, however, indicated that apprentices with physical disabilities might be able to work at trades that required keyboard or drawing skills.

NESB apprentices and trainees

Being of non-English-speaking background was not considered a relevant issue. However, the ability to speak English was seen to be important. All apprentices who worked for the companies surveyed spoke English. Generally, they had to complete Year 11 or 12 or pass company selection tests which required at least a basic command of the English language.

Almost two-thirds (63%) of the respondents believed that basic English was essential for a number of reasons. Firstly, occupational health and safety issues are very dependent on communicating information and understanding instructions in an environment which is hazardous if people are not careful. Secondly, there is the need to interpret drawings, take careful instructions and fill job cards. A grasp of English is also required if apprentices are to cope well with formal off-the-job training.

According to one of the managers at company Eg5 in Adelaide, 'this is a highly skilled trade and it is unforgiving when mistakes are made. We have problems even with people who do understand English'. Moreover, the need to understand the language is especially important because of the precise and expensive nature of work that engineering firms do. This was also confirmed by the manager of company Eg24 in Victoria.

This is not to say that a non-English-speaking qualified tradesperson would not be accommodated. The manager from company Eg5 believed that lack of language in this case could be tolerated because the tradesperson already had a knowledge of what was expected for certain tasks. However, this did not mean that language problems would not have to be dealt with at some stage.

ATSI apprentices and trainees

Only one South Australian company currently hosted an ATSI apprentice. This apprentice was employed by a local group training scheme. Two other companies, company Eg1 and company Eg7 in South Australia, had employed ATSI apprentices in the past. The majority of other companies, however, had never received an application from ATSI individuals.

The electrical/electronic industry

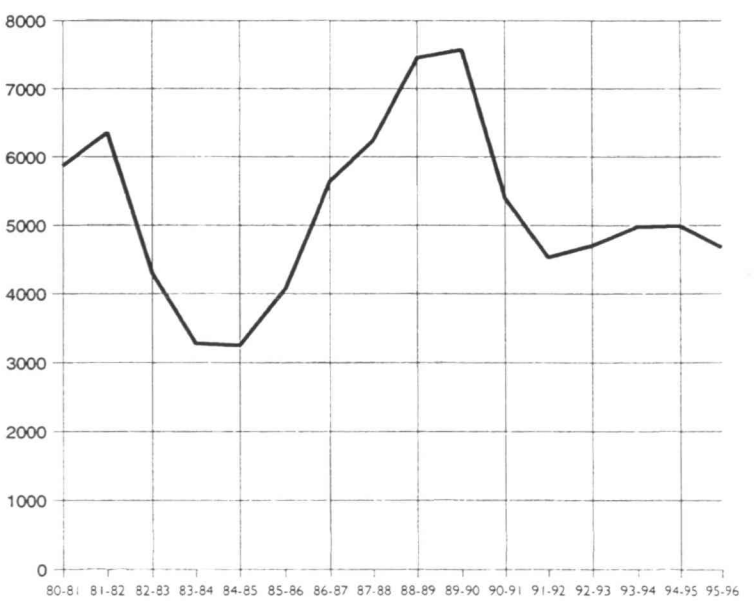
Overview

The electrical industry provides services which are fundamental to a broad range of other industries. These services include the wiring of industrial, commercial and domestic constructions and the installation, repair and maintenance of electrical equipment. This means that workers will perform electrical work in factories, shopping complexes, offices, mines, railways, airports and seaports. They will work in power stations, telecommunications and defence force bases.

To a certain extent, most other industries are dependent on the electrical industry. This means that peaks and troughs experienced in those industries will also have repercussions for the electrical industry. Figure 5 shows fluctuations in the number of apprenticeship commencements since mid–1980.

The graph in figure 5 shows how apprenticeship commencements in the electrical/electronics industry were affected by the 1982–83 and 1990–91 recessions.

Figure 5: Apprenticeship commencements July 1 1980 to June 30 1996, electrical/electronic trades



Industry initiatives

There has been a dramatic decline in the number of apprentices being indentured in the electrical/electronics industries. Managers of all State training advisory bodies and State electrical associations attribute this decline to the increasing uncertainty of regular work brought about by economic recessions. This means that many small businesses are so 'flat out getting wages for themselves' that they are unable to provide for an apprentice. In addition, the ability of small sub-contractors to present quotes for jobs, without providing for the award provisions required by waged employees, has increased the competition for available work. It has also thus reduced the prices that can be expected for jobs.

The manager of the Electrical Contractors Association in Victoria believes that the arrival of group training schemes has provided an easy service centre for apprentices. The downside to this is that many employees are not taking on responsibility for hiring their own apprentices.

Furthermore, it is his opinion that the push for young people to enter tertiary studies has also steered them away from the trades. Where the technical high schools once provided a steady pool of apprentices for the industry, the comprehensive high schools are not doing so to the same extent.

Many of the recent training reforms have also been problematic for employers. The manager of the Utilities ITAB in Queensland also believes that many employers find the training reforms quite confusing. He feels that this may be, in part, because they do not attend conferences where these issues are explained or debated.

The experience in Queensland with displacement of electrical apprentices has been small. During the 1982–83 recession, the Electrical Contractors Association received government funding to put on five apprentices, with a view to hiring them out like a group scheme. Apart from this, there was no industry-led initiative to capture displaced apprentices. However, the Electrical Contractors Association used its considerable networks to find places for apprentices who had been displaced.

About 150 electrical apprentices lost their jobs in Victoria in 1992. The industry set up the Electrical and Electronic Group Training Scheme (EEGL) to put on more apprentices and pick up displaced apprentices that could be contacted. This scheme is still in operation.

In South Australia, displacement problems were experienced in the early 1980s and more recently in 1991-93. These affected any of the trades related to the electrical contracting sector and, in particular, electrical and refrigeration mechanics. When electrical fitters were displaced, some were not experienced enough with electrical wiring to do the job of electrical mechanics.

The Electrical Contractors Association and the Communications Electrical and Plumbers Union (CEPU) in the State set up a skills centre. All equipment was supplied by the industry contacts.

The skills centre provided a simulated work-site and on-the-job training for displaced third and fourth-year apprentices. The work-site comprised booths with false ceilings and apprentices were required to complete tasks such as install the cabling and ducting. Apprentice wages were paid from the government-funded special assistance programs.

The training was successful and all were able to complete their indentures and find work in the industry. However, some apprentices found that initial displacements made them unable to keep up with financial commitments such as paying for cars or apartments. Eventually, they had to find alternative forms of transport and return home to live.

Availability of positions

Employers

Eighteen electrical companies from South Australia, Victoria and Queensland were interviewed in person and by telephone. These included companies servicing domestic, industrial, commercial and public utilities sectors. Information was also provided by the electrical industry-specific group training companies from each State and 35 group companies employing various trades including electrical apprentices. The State industry training advisory boards and electrical contractors' associations also provided information.

A total of 154 apprentices were employed. Of these, five were female apprentices employed in three different companies. Table 12 shows that all but four companies currently employed apprentices. Two had employed apprentices in the past and two had not employed them. All companies supported the need to train apprentices. Of the companies who did not currently employ apprentices, one had just 'folded' and had to release them; one had three apprentices in the past but had no work to employ any at present; and the other could not afford to put anyone on.

Although the remainder took apprentices on a yearly basis, the majority had decreased the number of apprentices they employed. In the past, the Queensland Electrical Board used to train large numbers of apprentices for its own needs and for that of their community. Now the board takes on eight apprentices to keep pace with the turnover of tradespeople.

Table 12: Number of electrical/electronic apprentices employed by firms

Company	Apprentices	Trainees
Company E1	32	0
Company E2	5	0
Company E3	8	0
Company E4	20	0
Company E5	5	0
Company E6 Electronic Division	2	0
Company E7	30	0
Company E8	1	0
Company E9	*0	0
Company E10	1	0
Company E11	2	0
Company E12	0	0
Company E13	1	0
Company E14	3	0
Company E15	*0	0
Company E16	3	0
Company E17	24	0
Company E18	19	0
	150	**0**

* These companies had employed apprentices in the past

Large numbers of apprentices were also taken on by government utilities in South Australia (ETSA) and Victoria (SEC). As the roles of these utilities changed and more of their services became outsourced, the number of apprentices they could employ also dramatically declined. In Victoria, large manufacturing companies like Boral and Kearney also provided places for large numbers of apprentices. As these companies ran into economic difficulties, their involvement in apprenticeship training also decreased. According to the head of the electrical department of RMIT, 'where we used to have 15 classes of electrical mechanics and five classes of electrical fitters, we now are lucky to fill three classes of electrical fitters and mechanics combined'.

Willingness to take on apprentices

Respondents in this study reported that supervisors in their companies saw the responsibility for training apprentices as their role. They had all been apprentices themselves and were aware that industry skill shortages could only be averted, in part, by the training of apprentices.

However, it is also true that 'good' apprentices are mainly sought after by supervisors. According to the construction manager at company E4 in South Australia, 'the good ones, everybody wants; the bad ones, nobody wants'. This was also confirmed by the human resources manager at company E7 in South Australia. Supervisors in these companies want to take on good apprentices because they are invaluable in getting work completed on time. Apprentices who are slow, make mistakes and have attitude problems are not welcomed. Slow and error-prone apprentices

require lots of time to master skills and apprentices with attitude problems do not pitch in and help perform more mundane tasks.

Although the training of apprentices took time, supervisors enjoyed the training role. The supervisor at company E6's electronic division commented: 'the bit I don't like is that it slows you down. But I like to see them learn. Helping them to go beyond the basics is the biggest plus'.

Supervisors at company E14 in Victoria also believed that it was 'nice to teach someone your way of doing things'. At O'Donnell Griffin supervisors 'took pride in their apprentices'.

The manager of company E15 in Queensland believed that an apprentice was more of a hindrance than a help during his/her first six months. However, once an apprentice had served this period and had mastered some skills to a proficient level, he/she was an asset.

Being able to guarantee continuous regular work had a great bearing on whether or not companies could take on apprentices. This was confirmed by company E9 in Victoria, company E7 in South Australia, company E10 in Victoria and company E15 in Queensland. When there is little or no work coming in, it is difficult to find work for tradespeople, let alone apprentices. At company E7 where tradespeople have lost jobs through work shortages, supervisors have pushed for the company to employ at least half the apprentices from group training companies. In this way, apprentices can be sent back when there is a shortage of work, and many industrial relations problems with tradespeople can also be averted.

Willingness to provide vocational placements and work experience

All companies had provided work experience to students from secondary schools in one or two-week blocks. Six companies had also taken students from university or TAFE for vocational placements. Just over half (55.5%) of the 18 companies interviewed reported they were happy to take on work experience students. The remainder had some misgivings about its value. However, the majority (83.3%) of companies signalled their intention to continue to provide work experience for those students who approached them.

The reasons for this positive attitude to providing work experience were varied. Five companies saw the provision of work experience as part of their community obligation. Three companies used the work experience as a vehicle for observing potential recruits. Four companies were happy to give young people an opportunity to learn about the world of work.

However, problems were generally experienced in giving school students meaningful tasks to perform. At least six companies

indicated this was a concern. The human resources manager at the Queensland Electrical Board believed that providing work experience was part of the board's community responsibility (and had no problems with TAFE-directed work experience). However, he was firmly convinced that work experience from high schools was not productive. It had also been his experience that schools tended to send them students with limited ability. Because the industry and the board required and wanted students of high ability, they did not rely on work experience for the selection of apprentices. As a result, supervisors were generally unhappy to take on work experience students and the company no longer took on students from Year 10 classes in high schools. No other company alluded to the problem of students of low ability being sent on work experience.

Taking on work experience students from TAFE colleges was a different proposition. These students were generally interested in the industry and had already had substantial exposure to many theoretical and safety concepts associated with working with electricity.

Company E2 in Queensland accepted work experience students from high schools, with a view to recruiting the good ones for their company. Rather than telling students what to do or what not to do, they preferred to evaluate students' potential by observing their performance. That is, they observed how students interacted with people, their initiative and their attitude to work. From this, the company gauged whether or not to approach the student with a view to offering him/her an apprenticeship.

At company E3 in Queensland, work experience is given to anyone who applies. However, supervisors do not encourage this arrangement because they feel the workplace is very hazardous. Even though students are given occupational health and safety training, supervisors have to keep them in sight on a constant basis. In addition, supervisors feel they are unable to give students meaningful tasks to achieve. In such a hazardous environment, they reported that even first-year apprentices spend most of their time as off-siders.

Company E4 in South Australia takes on 6–10 work experience students per year from schools and TAFE. Supervisors are generally happy to take them and students are willing to learn. However, it is also true that teaching students and reminding them about occupational health and safety is time consuming. It also takes time to ensure that students wear safety boots and get up for a 7am start.

Work experience students are difficult to accommodate in the electrical trade and on building sites. Indeed, they can sometimes be more of a hindrance than a help. This was confirmed by at least three companies. In addition, five companies believed that there is

little that work experience students can be given to do. Moreover, it was felt that some students are not prepared to carry out any mundane activities (sweep floors, pick up rubbish etc.). For tradespeople, the willingness to perform these mundane tasks must be accepted as part of the job.

One leading hand reported that another draw-back is that students can only be shown activities that workers are involved in at the time of the work experience period. One year, students on work experience at company E4 could only be involved in digging trenches because that is what the tradespeople were doing at the time. One of the leading hands with company E4 commented: 'Work experience is a good idea but this is not a good trade to do it in. Students have to be thoroughly inducted; they spend a lot of time hanging around. You feel guilty if you are not showing them meaningful tasks and you feel guilty if you are construed as using cheap labour'. It was his opinion that a co-ordinated approach to work experience, much like that adopted by a group training company, would be beneficial for the company and the student.

At company E6's electronic division in Adelaide, work experience is accepted as a community obligation. However, it can prove frustrating for supervisors. Care must be taken in giving students tasks they can perform and in structuring the experience so that they can move around the different areas. 'If students are willing to learn, the company is prepared to invest time in training them, otherwise it is a complete waste of time' commented the supervisor.

Vocational placements from TAFE are taken on without hesitation at company E7 in South Australia. However, there is some reluctance to take on work experience from schools. According to one supervisor, 'work experience is like looking after your little sister, its not a joyous thing. We do it because it is company policy. If we had the choice we would rather not'. It was also his opinion that some supervisors believed that looking after a work experience student could impact on their ability to be efficient and effective.

Company E8 in South Australia is happy to take on work experience students, as long as the company has ample warning and can prepare for it. They also prefer mature students, rather than those who lack a sense of responsibility.

Having enough work also affects the willingness and ability of companies to provide work experience. At least five companies were very happy to offer work experience if they have enough work at the time. They see it as a way of helping students find out whether they like the trade and giving them experience in the world of work.

There are also limitations regarding what work sites students are able to be given. At least three companies did not take work

experience students onto construction sites. In Victoria, the sites are unionised and people without occupational health and safety training or induction are denied access. Here, work experience students usually accompany servicepeople based at the company's permanent site at the Rialto building in the city. Work experience students are also allocated to servicepeople in South Australian companies for the time they are with the company.

There was a general feeling among these companies that providing work experience or vocational placements was not a 'major hassle' for the industry in general. However, this was qualified by at least three companies who said they would not consider putting on work experience students if they had work shortages. Although company E8 in South Australia provided work experience for students, it believed that this also required time to arrange and co-ordinate. The company was prepared to offer work experience for short periods of time, but would find it very difficult if they were faced with a constant stream of students.

Availability of placements—group training companies

There were no group training companies which complained about difficulties in accessing placements for their electrical apprentices. The three industry-specific group training companies—GTCSA2, GTCQ8 (Qld) and GTCV7 (Vic)—generally had all their electrical/electronic apprentices in work. GTCV7, which employs 345 electrical apprentices, had ten apprentices on downtime on the Friday afternoon of the week they were interviewed. Their most difficult time has been December 1995 to March 1996, when they had 20 apprentices on downtime. At the present time, however, GTCV7 has 30 of its apprentices working on the Melbourne Casino project. The Casino is now to be finished in the new year. This will have a major impact on downtime if contracts due to be started in March and April do not go ahead.

GTCQ8 in Queensland has about 75 electrical apprentices and has rarely experienced downtime. GTCSA2 in South Australia employs about 140 plumbing and electrical apprentices. It found placing all its apprentices during the 1991–92 recession especially difficult. As a result, it was constrained to place about 12 apprentices on a six-week rotation schedule. During 1992, no apprentices were taken on. During the recession, however, the group scheme mounted an aggressive marketing campaign. Today, the scheme seldom chases companies to take on its apprentices and is very effective in finding placements through company requests.

When apprentices are not in work, the group companies encourage them to do extra training. GTCQ8 tries to send apprentices to college or involve them in other live work. In the past, they have worked in the company's new facilities, on projects to make pensioners' houses more secure, and helped to build and maintain small irrigation motors. When GTCSA2 apprentices are on downtime, they are either put through short courses at the

electrical industry's skill centre or advised to take a single day off. When GTCV7 apprentices are on downtime, they stay home. If they are on downtime for more than ten days, they are then suspended. This, however, has never happened. There were no other group training companies employing electrical/electronics apprentices who reported any problems in hiring them out to host companies.

Availability of placements—training providers

Five providers of formal electrical training in all three States confirm the low incidence of displacement among their electrical/electronic apprentices. Figures as low as one to three per year are reported by TQ2 and TQ3 institutes in Queensland, TSA4 institute in South Australia and TV4 in Victoria. When displacements do occur, these institutes are able to use their extensive industry networks to place students with other employers.

Few major problems are also experienced in locating placements for prevocational students. At TQ3 and TQ2 institutes, placements are located for students by the college job placement officers or an educational assistant. At TSA4, students are given lists of employers to contact. If students are unable to set up their own work experience in this way, then the college will contact organisations they have used before. If this is also unsuccessful, students are placed with tradespeople who are employed in maintenance positions in the college itself. Finding placements for full-time associate diploma students is more of a problem. This approach has always delivered work experience placements for all students requiring them. In Victoria, there is no formal requirement for pre-apprenticeship students in the electrical trades to undertake work experience. Plans are being made to introduce a 60–80 hours work experience component into the program by 1997.

Displacement issues and strategies

Employers

Only one company had displaced any apprentices for reasons of economic hardship or lack of work. This was a Queensland company, who was going through receivership at the time of the study and had to release all three of its electrical apprentices.

One Victorian and two South Australian companies, on the other hand, had suspended their apprentices during work shortages. Company E4 had suspended apprentices on a rotational basis for five weeks at a time and had taken them back when work picked up again. All apprentices involved in the suspensions had completed their apprenticeships with the company. Company E18 in Victoria and South Australia had also suspended apprentices during work shortages. In South Australia, some of its apprentices were taken on by the GTCSA2 group training scheme to complete their training. Others found alternative employers or came back to the company

once work picked up. In Victoria, company E18 put 100 apprentices on rotation for three months. After the three months, most of the apprentices came back and completed their apprenticeships with the company.

The general trend for other companies was to keep their apprentices on and find any work to keep them busy. Company E7 came close to putting apprentices off in the 1992–93 recession. However, legally this meant they would have had to dismiss all their apprentices. As an alternative, they decided to keep on their apprentices and occupy them in painting, building or maintenance activities. Luckily, the industry picked up after a while and the need to cancel the apprenticeships passed.

Company E13, company E14 and company E15 have all kept apprentices on during hard times. They, too, have found jobs such as washing company trucks or cleaning company offices to keep apprentices busy when there was no work. At company E15, this involved sometimes using personal savings rather than company funds to pay apprentice wages. At company E13, tradespeople were put on a three-day week while apprentices were maintained full time.

Although almost all companies had not displaced any apprentices, they had all reduced the number of apprentices subsequently put on. Company E7 used to take on about 15–25 apprentices per year. Now they take on five. Company E4 used to put on about 20 per year, whereas now they take on five or six.

Solutions to the problem of displacement

Employers

Although the incidence of apprenticeship displacements from their jobs was low, respondents in this study provided suggestions for solving such problems should they become more frequent. Solutions included ensuring companies only employ apprentices they can keep for the full term of the apprenticeship; transferring the contract to another employer, group training company or government utility; and encouraging students to complete their formal training.

Although placing students with group training companies was favoured by over a third (39%) of these companies, it was pointed out by one manager that group training companies may also be having their own problems during economic downtime. One company manager in Queensland felt that group training companies should be abolished. It was his belief that group training apprentices did not make good tradespeople. This was because they had not had the continuity of employment in one company. In addition, working in a variety of areas did not develop any skill to its full extent. It was also his opinion that companies had stopped taking on their own apprentices because of the group training scheme concept. As a result, young people were being used as cheap labour and companies escaped their responsibility to train new tradespeople. No other company manager voiced this concern.

One Victorian company also mentioned that care should be taken to ensure displaced apprentices were not used up by unscrupulous employers. This company had experienced apprentices willing to offer their services for free, in order to complete their apprenticeships. The manager had been unable to help them because of the need to provide WorkCover and superannuation benefits.

Seven companies believed that apprentices should be encouraged to complete their formal schooling. This would make them more attractive to a prospective employer.

Although all respondents sympathised with the plight of displaced apprentices, at least three companies voiced the opinion that there was nothing much they could do if there was no work available. One Victorian company felt that companies should be allowed to release apprentices if they had no work and governments should subsidise the cost of the apprentice if this was not possible.

Being laid off was no excuse for not persevering in looking for another employer. Another Victorian company believed that if the displaced apprentice took time to contact different employers, then it would eventually pay off. 'If an apprentice is good enough, someone will help them finish off'.

Placing displaced apprentices with government agencies was also suggested. One South Australian manager suggested that the former Electricity Trust of South Australia take on apprentices. Another recommended that government-run electronic/electrical assembly areas should be set up to help.

Training providers

The colleges interviewed in this study all said they were willing to allow students to continue their formal training while they looked for other jobs. They were also prepared to help them locate other positions through their substantial industry networks if they felt the apprentice could be recommended. Providers would also allow them to continue off-the-job training for the current year or block. Limiting the completion of training to the current year was considered to be important. An extended lack of on-the-job skills would severely limit the apprentice's ability to understand the concepts being covered in the course.

Policies on disadvantaged

Apprentices with disabilities

No company currently employed an apprentice with any major disabilities. In the past, company E4 had employed an apprentice who suffered from epilepsy and company E6 had had a trainee with calipers. The apprentice had not indicated his disability at recruitment. When it was discovered, he had to be released from the contract. The trainee had found it very difficult to negotiate her way around the factory.

One year, the electronics division of company E6 provided work experience for individuals from The Royal Institute for the Blind. This experience showed that visual impairment was a major obstacle to working on company E6's production lines.

Working in the electrical industry is particularly hazardous for people who do not have the full use of their eyes and limbs. Nor is it a place for people without fine motor co-ordination, or normal intellectual ability.

The majority (78.9%) of these companies reported that any major restrictions with movement or colour blindness would make individuals unsuitable for work in the electrical industry. Only two respondents hinted at the possibility of someone in a wheelchair being able to work in an environment where mobility was not crucial (e.g. workshop or a level site).

All companies believed that physical disabilities which interfered with an individual's ability to climb ladders, crawl through ceilings and under buildings, deal with heights, move about construction sites, or pull cables would be a major restriction.

NESB apprentices and trainees

NESB was not seen as having relevance to the employment of apprentices. However, the ability to speak and understand the language was important. No company currently employed or had previously employed an apprentice who did not speak English. In addition, they all believed that knowledge of English is essential for apprentices in the electrical/electronics industry. Apart from being necessary to complete formal courses, English is required to read occupational health and safety documentation, construction and wiring plans and instructions.

Lack of English, however, was not seen as a major problem for work experience students. The reason for this is that work experience usually entails observing, rather than actually performing, any hazardous activities.

ATSI apprentices and trainees

Only two companies interviewed currently employed aboriginal apprentices. Company E1 in Queensland employed four apprentices and company E7 in South Australia employed two (ATSI) apprentices in Gove in the Northern Territory. Three companies— company E2 in Queensland, company E17 in Victoria and company E6 in South Australia—had employed ATSI apprentices in the past, but these had not completed their contracts.

At least eight companies reported they had never been approached by ATSI individuals to be considered for an apprenticeship.

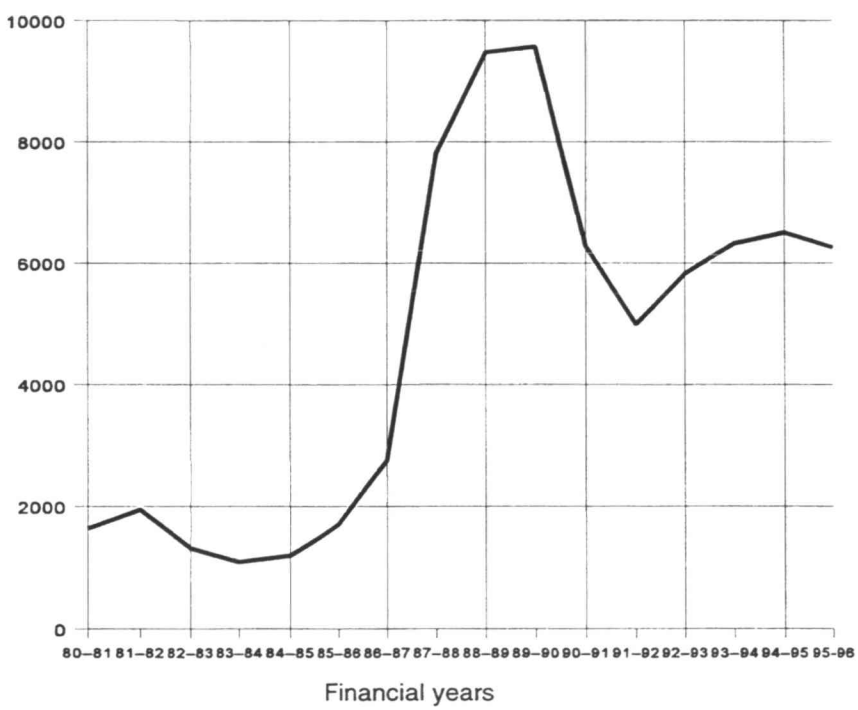
The automotive industry

Overview

Apprenticeship commencements in the automotive industry have been affected by fluctuations in the economic cycle. Reductions in commencements have been experienced after recessions; increases in commencements have been experienced during periods of growth.

A pictorial representation of these fluctuations is presented in figure 6.

Figure 6: Apprenticeship commencements between July 1 1980 and June 30 1996



Is it important to note that the graph in figure 6 gives a somewhat distorted picture of commencements. Prior to mid-1987, the vehicle trades were included with the metal trades. This accounts for what appears to be an increasing number of apprenticeship commencements leading up to 1987.

According to the Automotive Industry Training Board (AITB) in Adelaide, the number of apprentices in the industry has declined. One of the major reasons for this is that small businesses have not been willing to put on apprentices. This is due to the uncertainty of the future and because expenses were generally perceived as too

high. Historically, the industry commitment to training has been poor. The introduction of the Training Guarantee Levy (TGL) helped increase training in enterprises to some extent. However, as enterprises below the $200 000 threshold were not affected by the TGL, many small automotive workshops were not required to be involved in taking on apprentices.

There has been a history of apprentices and trainees being displaced in the automotive industry for economic reasons. This has mainly occurred due to hard times experienced in the 1982–83 and 1990–91 recessions.

The major occupations affected by displacements are those in the light motor mechanics trades. Between 1990–94, the South Australian AITB was faced with the problem of apprentices who had been displaced because companies could no longer afford to keep them on.

Industry initiatives

To deal with the problem of apprentices losing their jobs, the AITB set up four training programs which delivered both on and off-the job training to allow apprentices to complete their training. They were able to do this through DEET funding made available through the Special Assistance Programs (SAP-2 and 3). These funds were also used to provide travel and tool allowances and, if required, overalls, safety boots, reference manuals and work books. These programs were run for 30–36 weeks. Off-the job training was delivered in a training centre. On-the job training was delivered in workshops owned by the Motor Trades Association (MTA).

As well as covering all the necessary requirements for students to complete their apprenticeships, the workshops extended the training to allow apprentices to learn extra skills such as:

- wheel alignment
- engine management
- wiring seven-point plugs
- customer skills
- team-work skills
- coaching skills.

Program success

A program's success can be gauged by the percentage of students completing their trade qualifications and accessing employment. The apprentices who completed the SAP programs all found jobs. Some went back to former employers who had indicated they would take them on again when work became available. In addition, some apprentices were able to obtain airconditioning licences.

The AITB policy aims to help apprentices find alternative employment and complete training if they lose their jobs. However,

the cessation of the SAP-2 and 3 programs has meant they have been unable to access funds to allow them to do this.

The Accreditation and Registration Council (formerly the Industrial and Commercial Training Commission [ICTC] and, before that, the Apprenticeship Board) circulates a list of out-of-trade apprentices to industry bodies. Unfortunately, this is not always an accurate list of apprentices who have been displaced. At times, neither apprentice nor employer have contacted the Training Commission to inform them of the intention to suspend or cancel contracts. The AITB found that when it advertised SAP programs, more than half the apprentices who responded to the advertisement for applicants did not appear on the ICTC lists of OOV apprentices.

Apprentices in the SAP training programs were dependent on the unemployment benefits received from the Department of Social Security. Even though the benefits were 'poor', many apprentices continued their training because they believed they would be more employable at the end of the program.

Availability of positions

Employers

A total of 103 apprentices and three trainees were employed by these companies. Company A7 was the largest employer with 64 apprentices and 10 trainees. The other companies employed between three and four apprentices. These included two female apprentices and two female trainees employed by three companies. Table 13 gives a breakdown of these numbers.

Table 13: Number of mechanical apprentices employed by firms

Company	Apprentices	Trainees
Company A1	3	0
Company A2	4	2
Company A3	11	0
Company A4	4	0
Company A5	4	0
Company A6	13	1
Company A7	64	10
	103	**13**

Managers, supervisors and trainers from five South Australian and two Victorian firms, who employed apprentices and trainees, were canvassed for their policies on the provision of on-the-job training. Although many of them had experienced reduced intakes of apprentices because of past general economic downturns, they were all aware of their responsibilities to prepare tradespeople for the future.

Two of the South Australian companies—company A1 and company A3—preferred to use apprentices from group training companies

because it meant they were not tied to fixed-term contracts and salary on-costs. They still preferred to keep the same apprentices for the full four years as if they were their own employees.

The other companies liked to hire and 'grow' their own apprentices. This allowed them to train future tradespeople for their particular enterprises and have much more control over the way skills were developed.

All supervisors and trainers were very happy to take on apprentices and committed to taking them on now and in the future. They generally believed that the future of the industry depended on having adequate numbers of trained tradespeople. In turn, this was dependent on industry taking up responsibility for training. The ability to pass on knowledge and the satisfaction received from seeing young mechanics develop their skills were also added benefits.

In the majority of cases, this willingness was also tempered by the apprentice's attitude. At two South Australian companies, company A5 and company A4, an applicant's prior interest in the trade is taken into account. If the applicant has shown motivation to get experience in the trade, likes working with cars and is prepared to put in the effort, then they have an advantage of being selected over others.

The attitude of apprentices is also taken into account, with one firm preferring to employ 'quiet achievers', and another preferring applicants who are not overly confident and will listen and learn.

Availability of vocational placements and work experience

Providing vocational placements for students who were in pre-apprenticeship courses or university courses was generally not a problem.

The provision of work experience for school students was another matter. All companies, except for one, reported taking on work experience students from schools as part of their community duty. However, they often did not see the value in having students come to an organisation for a two-week block unless they were very committed to the industry and interested in what it had to offer. Almost all the companies referred to problems that were involved in taking on students for work experience.

Work experience students were seen to:

- require 'constant supervision'
- slow tradespeople down
- be more of a hindrance than a help
- lose money for companies
- require one person to look after them
- learn very little.

One Victorian company had had some bad episodes with work experience students. Two students had left work one day and gone home without telling anyone at the worksite. This led to fears they had fallen into a cleanaway truck that had just passed by. As a consequence, the company will no longer take on work experience students from schools. They may, however, be more favourable to taking on work experience students involved in a TAFE or university course.

Dual recognition programs are more prevalent in Victoria than in South Australia. At company A7, 11 students came to the training centre for work experience one day a week. The manager feels there is little knowledge to be gained from such a short period of time. In addition, the company has to allocate a person to look after the group. Company A7 is a large manufacturing firm and may be able to cover these responsibilities. However, this may not always be possible for smaller businesses.

Availability of placements—group training companies

South Australian, Victorian and Queensland automotive industries are serviced by metropolitan and regional group training schemes. Industry-specific group training schemes, along with regional and suburban group training companies which hire automotive apprentices in the three States, were interviewed.

Although almost all group training apprentices in the automotive industry were currently in work placements, only the South Australian GTCSA3 scheme and the Queensland GTCQ7 scheme said that it was relatively easy to find these placements. In fact, the manager of the GTCQ7 scheme found problems in filling available vacancies. The others found that it took many marketing and promotional activities by its field officers to ensure they maintained few apprentices on downtime. When apprentices were on downtime, the training companies either subsidised the payments to make sure that apprentices were in work, allowed them to have the odd day off or arranged for them to attend short courses run by industry skill centres or TAFE.

All schemes had experienced difficulties during State-wide economic downturns. Most recently, 1991-93 were particularly difficult years for group training schemes hiring out automotive apprentices in Victoria and South Australia. During this time, demand for services had dried up, businesses were cutting back and people were neither having their cars repaired nor buying new ones. At such times, group training schemes also experience difficulties in placing apprentices.

Displacement issues and strategies

None of the employers in this study had ever displaced an apprentice because of economic reasons. All but one replied that they would do everything to keep the apprentice on until they completed their

training. The majority of these companies have avoided this potential scenario by taking on fewer apprentices. At company A7, the low turnover among company tradespeople has certainly reduced their apprentice intake. For example, in the 1970s they took on 50 to 60 apprentices per year, and in the early 1980s about 100 apprentices per year. However, during the last three or four years, they have only taken on about 15 apprentices per year.

Solutions to the problem of displacement

Employers

When employers were asked for solutions to the problem of apprentices being unable to complete their training through no fault of their own, almost half these companies referred to accessing government subsidies. The federal government's SAP-2 and 3 programs had been used in the past by three of the companies and were found to be very beneficial. For example, in 1985 company A7 ran SAP programs with 40 apprentices at a time. It included subsidised federal apprentices from the Department of Defence (naval dockyards), put them through six months of upfront training and employed those who elected to stay.

Other solutions to the problem are for the government to make available its transport and storage workshops, so that apprentices can work on government vehicles until they can find placements elsewhere. Large car manufacturers could also be subsidised to take these apprentices on a temporary basis until they are chosen elsewhere. In this way, apprentices are able to keep their learning current and have an incentive to complete their apprenticeship. Not surprisingly, the companies who used group training apprentices suggested that displaced apprentices approach the Motor Trades Association Group Training Scheme for employment.

One manager actually questioned whether apprentices were really displaced because of economic hardship or work shortage, or because of poor skill or performance. It was his opinion that many managers would use these reasons to mask the fact that they could no longer tolerate an apprentice who was incompetent.

When asked what should be done to solve the problem of on-the job training for apprentices who are displaced through no fault of their own, the AITB believes they should be funded to continue the SAP-2 and 3 programs. Their opinions are based on the success rates of SAP programs in helping apprentices to complete apprenticeships and find jobs. The AITB would like to run similar programs on a continuing basis as a 'catching net' to make sure young people are not lost to the industry.

Group training companies

According to the GTSA3 group training company, one way to ensure a steady stream of work placements for apprentices in group training schemes was for the State to insist on the regular road testing of motor vehicles. This could provide work for dealers and mechanics and make it easier for them to take on work placement apprentices.

Two of the regional schemes had made use of State government incentives to encourage local industry to provide placements for apprentices. They were of the opinion that such incentives are of great benefit in regional areas and should be continued.

Marketing the group training concept and providing support for training companies is another way of improving placement opportunities.

Training providers

Ten providers of automotive training from South Australia and Victoria were interviewed. Their policy for dealing with out-of-trade apprentices was to allow them to continue their off-the-job training. All efforts were made to ensure that 'good' OOVs were able to continue off-the-job training. However, the majority of OOVs at TV10 institute of TAFE were allowed to complete one block of training before their contract was put on hold. At TV5 in country Victoria, OOVs are also able to continue their off-the-job training. In addition, their names are listed on a register and given to employers who call the college looking for TAFE employees.

TAFE institutes in South Australia also allow their OOVs to continue off-the-job training. When teachers at both colleges are made aware that a certain student has lost his/her job, they also do their best to connect students with new employers. Apart from general student services, the colleges did not arrange informal counselling processes for out-of-trade apprentices.

Although Queensland TAFE institutes also allow apprentices to complete their current block of training, they generally insist that OOV apprentices wait for a vacancy.

At TVC6 institute of TAFE, students are encouraged to bring in their own work to college to fulfil their on-the-job training requirements. In addition, they may also work on the vehicles of staff and students at the college. Here, the cost of materials and teacher resources are paid for by these customers. However, staff tried very hard to ensure they used their own industry contacts to link OOVs with new employers. A variety of solutions to the problem of displaced apprentices were offered. These included :

- the promotion of group training companies
- the setting up of a 'one-stop automotive shop' at the college where employers could call for prospective employees
- the broadening of training opportunities for apprentices to become multi-skilled and therefore more marketable
- the setting up of a college labour hire arrangement.

Policies on the disadvantaged

Apprentices and trainees with disabilities

No firm reported having ever hired an apprentice with major disabilities. All companies reported that the requirement for mechanics to be physically fit and have manual and physical dexterity was a major impediment to hiring people with disabilities. They did, however, acknowledge their willingness to look at people with disabilities for other positions in their companies that were not as dependent on physical mobility.

NESB apprentices and trainees

Although non-English-speaking background was no barrier to being employed as an apprentice in any of these companies, having 'little command of English' was seen as a major obstacle. None of the companies had employed an apprentice who did not speak a reasonable amount of English. At least five of these companies indicated that a reasonable command of English was required to complete the off-the-job training and co-operate with workmates in completing tasks.

ATSI apprentices and trainees

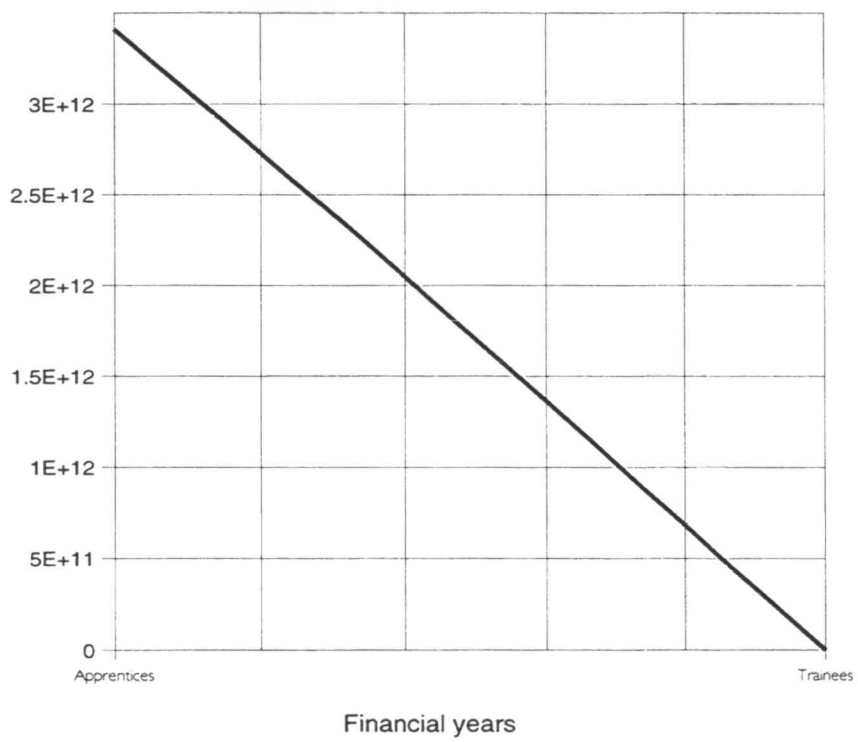
No company currently employed any ATSI apprentices and only one company had hired two ATSI apprentices in the past. One of these apprentices had completed his qualifications. Six of the companies had never been approached by ATSI applicants. All companies were willing to hire applicants from any minority background, provided they had the potential to cope with the off-the-job and on-the-job training.

The food industry

Overview

Apprenticeship commencements in the food industry have also tended to mirror economic trends. That is, they decrease in times of economic recession and increase when the economy improves. Figure 7 shows how numbers of commencements have been affected by recessionary pressures.

Figure 7: Apprenticeship commencements between July 1 1980 and June 30 1996



Industry initiatives

The food industry has traditionally trained apprentice chefs, butchers, bakers and pastry cooks. For the majority of workers in the industry, there has been little off-the-job training. Recently, it has taken on trainees in the wine, oils and fats industries. The industry is also looking at introducing traineeships in red meat slaughtering, small goods and butchery.

To date, these jobs have been performed by general operatives who have picked up their skills on the job. A very small percentage of the

workforce in this industry has a trade qualification. Recently, the industry has developed a certificate of vocational education in food processing for its operatives. This comprises core, stream and enterprise-specific modules. Core modules cover occupational health and safety issues, hygiene, communication and industrial calculations. Stream modules relate to a particular sector, e.g. viticulture, cellar door sales, small goods, butchery and boning. Enterprise-specific modules cover knowledge which is important to a particular organisation.

Although there has been some decline in the intake of apprentices in the food industry, it has not been dramatic. According to the manager of the Victorian food ITAB, this is because the industry only had apprentices in the three areas of meat, baking and pastry cooking.

Although there has been some displacement of apprentices since the economic downturn of 1991 and 1994, the levels seem to have been maintained in 1995. In Victoria, South Australia and Queensland, the greatest number of displacements in the recessionary years were experienced in butchery. This occurred with the closure of many small retail butchers and expansion of fresh food sections in major supermarkets. During the downturn, however, large employers such as company F8 in Queensland were losing apprentices on a daily basis. Although there was no formal industry-led initiative to deal with displaced apprentices, many small country businesses tried to find other employers to take their apprentices when business became poor. Another solution was for apprentices to complete their off-the-job training. In this way, the provider could use their networks to assist apprentices to find another job. Although the Meat and Allied Trades Federation of Australia (MATFA) in Queensland and South Australia have appointed an officer in charge of member services, there are no other formal processes implemented to deal specifically with out-of-trade apprentices. MATFA is presently looking at the possibility of setting up group training schemes.

In South Australia, the ITAB is considering setting up a multi-purpose centre which will incorporate a skills centre for the training of trainees, apprentices and existing workers. It is also conducting discussions with the Department of Education and Children's Services and Urrbrae High School about the possibility of having high school students complete the certificate of vocational education.

Availability of positions

Employers

Seventeen companies, who employ 396 apprentices in meat, baking, or cooking and eight trainees in pastry cooking, participated in the interview. This included eight companies which employed a total of 20 female apprentices and 16 female trainees. Two companies could not provide accurate breakdowns of male and female apprentices and trainees. Supermarket chains and large hotels were the largest

employers of apprentices and trainees. A breakdown of these numbers appears in table 14.

The majority (81.25%) of companies interviewed in this study were very positive about taking on apprentices. They saw it as part of their role to develop tradespeople for the future.

Table 14: Number of meat, baking and cooking apprentices and trainees employed by companies

Company	Apprentices	Trainees
Company F1	0	8
Company F2	2	0
Company F3	3	0
Company F4	1	0
Company F5	0	0
Company F6	16	0
Company F7	1	0
Company F8	70	0
Company F9	250	*0
Company F10	8	0
Company F11	18	0
Company F12	1	0
Company F13	14	0
Company F14	5	0
Company F15	0	0
Company F16	2	0
Company F17	5	0
	396	**8**

* Company F9 also employed 25 management trainees

The remainder expressed reservations about:

- 'getting stuck with a bad apprentice'
- 'the time it takes to train apprentices'
- 'unfair dismissal laws'.

A bad apprentice seems to be every tradesperson's worst nightmare. Even companies who are very positive about taking on apprentices are not happy if the apprentice turns out to be unwilling either to work hard or learn.

One Victorian supermarket executive was concerned at the general lack of commitment displayed by some apprentices in his company. He felt this affected the willingness of store meat managers to take on apprentices. This was further compounded by the decreasing amount of time that meat managers in stores had to train apprentices, and the increasing use of casuals to do the work formerly undertaken by apprentices.

The scheduling of formal training into blocks was put forward by one South Australian butcher as a major reason for butchers not wanting to take on apprentices. He also claimed that many butchers would prefer a one-day-a-fortnight day release to block training, because it

gave the apprentice much more opportunity to practise skills learnt at TAFE in their work.

Willingness to provide vocational placements and work experience

Just over half the companies in this study were happy to provide vocational placements and work experience. In the big hotels, it was one way of recruiting prospective staff. At company F11 hotel in Melbourne, a student doing a prevocational course who shows promise may be asked by the executive chef to consider the possibility of applying for an apprenticeship with the hotel. A work experience student from high school who shows promise may be asked to apply to become a kitchen hand, with a view to eventually becoming an apprentice when a vacancy occurs.

Company F13 on the Gold Coast is also positive about providing experience for students who have the right aptitude, attitude and willingness to learn. According to the executive chef, however, many work experience students are given the wrong advice before they come to the Casino kitchens. They are often not prepared for the scale of tasks that must be performed in a kitchen which has a turnover of 3.5 million meals. For example, where students in a smaller kitchen may need to break approximately 30 eggs for breakfast menus, students at company F13 will be expected to break 3000 eggs.

At the company F14 hotel in Queensland, work experience is also used to recruit potential staff and apprentices. There are advantages to having work experience students in the kitchen in that they can help apprentices perform many of their basic tasks, such as preparing garlic bread and peeling vegetables. However, the executive chef believes that they also provide definite problems. 'You always have to watch them in case they forget what they have been taught or hurt themselves', he observed.

The company F12 in Queensland is also keen on providing work experience to allow students gain exposure to the workings of a kitchen. In addition, the hotel can observe them as potential apprentices. Although supervisors are very happy to take on work experience students, the executive chef feels that one reason for this may be because they only have to deal with them for two weeks in a year. That is, they do not have to deal with them on a continuing basis.

In South Australia, the company F5 meat company likes to put work experience students into their butcher shops because it gives students an opportunity to experience the workplace. It also allows the company to observe students as potential apprentices. 'Work experience is not a problem for us. We need to get young people working', affirmed the manager.

Company F8 supermarkets in Victoria will provide vocational placements for students from university when they feel that they can meet the objectives of the course the student is undertaking. As far as

the human resources manager is concerned, 'work experience is valuable but it takes a lot of time'.

Company F6 in Adelaide is also positive about taking on work experience students as long as it does not coincide with Easter time, which is the company's busiest period of the year. Supervisors are very mindful of occupational health and safety issues and careful about the areas in which students are allowed to go. However, if work is not too busy, students can be moved around to the different areas. "It gives our people a chance to move around with them", said the supervisory pastry cook.

In Queensland, company F15 and company F16 believe that providing work experience for high school students is a role they need to be involved in, even though it means that people have to spend time training them. According to the assistant manager of company 16, students have to obtain exposure to work 'somewhere'.

However, other companies are less enthusiastic about providing work experience. At company F2 bakery in South Australia, work experience is provided for students in ESL language courses. This is seen as 'a bit of a drag': firstly, because the students are only there to observe; and secondly, because the training they receive 'walks out the door'.

Company F3 bakery in South Australia only occasionally provides work experience for students. This is reserved for students from staff members' families. The company's major reasons for not providing work experience on a large scale are that it is too costly to free someone up to train these students, and that it would take 'weeks and months to train people to use the high tech equipment in the place'.

Company F10 supermarkets in Victoria are also loath to put on work experience students in their stores. This is because managers feel there are not many tasks for work experience students to perform and because they would not be learning very much. In addition, having work experience students in skilled areas is considered to be a nuisance. They ask too many questions and this can slow work down. According to company F10 personnel manager, 'There is no fat in any department and on the factory floor there is not the time for training'.

Although individual company F9 stores are responsible for arranging their responses to local needs, company F9 supermarkets find it difficult to justify putting on work experience students when there is often very little that they can be given to do. There is also the problem of students being perceived as cheap labour.

Two firms who were prepared to take on work experience students were not being sought after by schools or students. One baking firm, company F17 in Queensland had had work experience a 'couple of times' in the past. However, it had found that students were not prepared or not allowed to work night-shift hours. A meat

slaughtering and packaging firm in South Australia, company F7, requires students to be vaccinated for zoonosis before they can work in the slaughterhouse. As a result, schools are loath to send them students for work experience. However, two apprentices were recruited from students who had previously performed work experience with the company.

Availability of placements—group training companies

The experience of group training companies in placing students is also an important indicator of what is occurring in the industry. It can also help us to understand the realities of finding job placements.

There were no cases of group training companies experiencing major problems in placing apprentices and trainees in the food trades. However, the Brisbane-based GTCQ9 scheme and two regional group training schemes in Queensland have found that there are always numerous places for first and second-year apprentice cooks throughout the year, except for just after Christmas and Easter. Fourth and third-year cooks, however, are harder to place. This is because their wages are a burden and week-end penalty rates are too high.

The GTCQ10 and the GTCQ11 group training schemes in northern Queensland have also found that establishments only want first and second-year apprentices. It has been the experience of the GTCQ11 scheme that jobs are also being taken by tourists with experience in kitchens and restaurants who are able work for less than the charge-out rate for apprentices. This places an extra burden on group training companies looking for places for their apprentices. Because the area served by GTCQ13 in far north Queensland is not a major tourist area, finding places for its apprentice chefs can sometimes be difficult for the local group scheme. To deal with this problem, the scheme used to send apprentices to restaurants in the Whitsundays; now it sends them to Brisbane or McKay.

Availability of work placements—training providers

Six institutes providing certificate and diploma training for cookery, baking and meat and smallgoods provided information for this study. These were TV7, TV8 institutes of TAFE from Victoria, TQ4 and TQ2 institutes of TAFE from Queensland and TSA4 institute of TAFE from South Australia.

None of the institutes had any problems accessing work experience or placements for their certificate students in these fields. However, TQ4 experienced some problems in locating placements for associate diploma students. When this happened, the college allowed the students to defer the completion of their course, until they had accessed work experience in the next semester.

These training providers also experienced few apprenticeship displacements. Where displacements had occurred, however, apprentices were generally able to locate new employers very soon

after their displacement. In many cases, colleges were rarely involved because the apprentice had already been picked up by a new employer.

This facility in locating work placements and jobs for displaced students is a result of the relative buoyancy of the industry, and the growth of the hospitality and tourism sectors. The problem in locating jobs seems to be occurring at the front-end of the system. That is, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to obtain an apprenticeship because few people are leaving the industry.

Although colleges are finding few problems in accessing work experience at the present time, the faculty heads of commercial cookery at TQ4 and TQ2 institutes of TAFE are both concerned that demands for industry placements by high school students will flood the work experience market. In addition, increases in the number of work experience hours planned for commercial cookery credentials in the future may impact adversely on the ability of students to find placements. This was the only time that the competition for work experience from high schools and the issue of curriculum change were reported as potential problems.

Displacement issues and strategies

Problems between apprentice cooks and their employers formed a substantial part of the work of training officers in South Australia, Queensland and Victoria. According to the training officer in the Toowoomba region, this may be due partly to the fact that cooks are encouraged to move between employers to develop more experience, and partly because of the nature of individuals who are attracted to the job.

A South Brisbane training consultant recounted how one company had used a young person as an apprentice, paid him apprentice wages but had failed to formally indenture him. When the employer no longer required the young 'apprentice', the apprentice contacted the training consultant. The training consultant investigated the matter. The employer was asked to sign a formal contract indenturing the apprentice and then to complete a cancellation form. In this way, the apprentice could be credited with the time he had already worked. The training consultant's justification for this process was based on the fact that in Queensland a person working in a trade area who is not indentured, qualified or over the age of 21 is working illegally.

Employers

Employers in this study were asked for the solutions to the problem of displaced apprentices. The most favoured solution was to keep

apprentices in employment. This could be achieved by locating other establishments or group training companies willing to take on apprentices.

At least four companies indicated that employers should only take on apprentices if they could commit themselves to the full term. The executive chef at company F13 suggested that employers who were willing to take on apprentices should be screened for their ability to keep an apprentice for the full four years. Successful employers would then be given a licence to have an apprentice. Penalties would be incurred by the employer or apprentice if the agreement was broken.

The view that an employer should be committed to the apprentice for the full term of the apprenticeship is supported by the executive chef at company F12 and the manager of company F17. They believe that it is an employer's responsibility to see the apprenticeship through. 'We take pride in seeing our apprentices qualify'. The supervisor at a major baking firm in South Australia, company F3, agreed that an apprentice should not be taken on unless the company has a strategic plan in place which recognises the need to train apprentices.

At least six companies suggested that apprentices attend 'trade' school until they found another job. The manager at another major South Australian baking firm, company F2, believes that any displaced apprentice should attend TAFE. In this way, TAFE has a pool of displaced apprentices and can provide a contact point for employers who require them. Apprentices could then be shared out for varying lengths of time and their costs split between the companies involved.

A strategy has been provided by the manager of the F5 meat company. This involves having a pool of apprentices who are monitored by a body charged with placing them with companies and monitoring their training. In addition, a register of butchers who would be prepared to take on apprentices for a while and then move them on would also be helpful.

Other strategies were suggested by the executive chef of company F11 in Melbourne. These included asking restaurants who don't have apprentices to take on displaced apprentices, or restaurants who already train apprentices hiring an extra one.

Suggestions for strategies for ensuring that work experience was available were also requested. The majority of companies did not believe that providing work experience was a great problem. This was firstly because it was unpaid and secondly because it was short term. However, if the issue of work experience did become a problem, the executive chef at company F13 believed that school career nights could be useful vehicles for arranging it. Here, local businesses who had been screened for suitability could inform students about their

particular services. In addition, they could register interested students for work experience with their companies.

The executive chef at company F14 believes that students should take the responsibility for locating their work experience. 'It shows that they have initiative if they find their own placements'.

Training providers

All colleges were very sympathetic to the problems faced by displaced apprentices and were prepared to allow the apprentice to continue off-the-job training on a full-time basis, if necessary, while they were looking for a job. TQ4 institute allowed the displaced apprentice to continue for the next block of training. According to the faculty head, it would be difficult for the student to continue formal training if he/she were not practising the skills acquired on the job. The first step, however, was to find apprentices jobs by using the considerable industry networks that lecturers in schools had developed. So far, this had always been successful. Should colleges or apprentices not be able to find a suitable job in the industry, a number of other strategies to ensure on-the-job training would have to be put in place. These included:

- allowing the apprentice to work in college restaurants, cafeterias or hotels
- building up extra relationships with companies so that they will take on apprentices
- paying for WorkCover while the company provides work
- tendering for boning contracts and allowing butchery apprentices to work on these
- setting up a college butcher shop. As well as providing 'live work' for on-the-job training, such a facility would allow apprentices who work for large supermarkets to gain more client contact
- providing departments with information or government incentives so that this information can be passed on to employers and apprentices alike
- negotiating with companies who traditionally provide work experience to accommodate a displaced apprentice.

There is no easy answer to the problem of displacements. However, apprentices who work for supermarket, hotel or restaurant chains are often better off than an apprentice who works for a small enterprise. This is because apprentices who work for larger chains can be moved to locations which are not experiencing problems. To a lesser extent, this is also the case with apprentices from group training companies who can be moved to another host company when his/her current host company runs out of work.

Policies on the disadvantaged

Displacement of apprentices and trainees

Only one company had ever displaced an apprentice for economic hardship or work shortage. The remainder reported that they would do their best to keep the apprentice. Three companies would deal with the problem by firing of casual workers first; one hotel would move apprentices to other hotels in the chain.

Apprentices and trainees with disabilities

No firm was currently employing any apprentices with disabilities and only one firm had employed a hearing-impaired apprentice in the past. Difficulties were experienced on both sides. The owners did not speak sign language and communication was sometimes difficult. In this case, the apprentice chose not to complete the apprenticeship.

One major baking firm, company F3 in South Australia, employed intellectually disabled employees to provide yard maintenance and bin removals. A supermarket in Victoria, company F10, used sight-impaired casuals to collect trolleys. However, all companies were very reluctant to employ any apprentices who had major sight, hearing or physical disabilities. They all quoted the nature of the job as being the major constraining factor.

All four butcher companies expressed concerns about employing apprentices with disabilities. Working in a butcher's shop involves operating dangerous machinery. It also requires individuals who are mentally alert, manually dexterous, sure footed, able to stand for long periods of time and lift heavy objects. If they can't control their balance, they could easily slip on wet and greasy floors. Working in a butcher's shop would also be considered dangerous for an intellectually disabled person because of the sharpness of cutting machinery and equipment.

Working in the kitchen of a small restaurant or large hotel is also very difficult for people who do not have good hand–eye co-ordination or are otherwise physically disabled. A kitchen environment can be hazardous because large and heavy equipment, open flames, hot ovens, sharp knives and slippery floors during food preparation. Executive chefs of the four hotels in this study were very concerned that this would be too dangerous for any person who was hearing, sight or physically impaired. The noise and activity created by a kitchen workforce preparing to serve meals would also be extremely difficult for anyone who could not hear orders or respond to the demands of other people.

Working in a bakery can also be hazardous for individuals with physical impairments. This was confirmed by all five baking firms interviewed in this study. It requires the ability to climb ladders to check the operations of machinery and equipment, lift trays out of ovens and pour flour into mixers. This would be quite difficult for

individuals who were not able to move around easily, did not have the use of their hands or were sight impaired. Working in a bakery also requires the ability to stand for long periods of time.

NESB apprentices and trainees

Being of non-English-speaking background was not considered a major problem for employment in this industry. Although at least six companies employed workers who may have had English language difficulties, no company in this study currently employed apprentices without a basic command of English. Reasons given for this was the need for apprentices to communicate with workmates, follow instructions and to read occupational health and safety signs.

ATSI apprentices and trainees

None of the companies in the study currently employed an ATSI apprentice. Furthermore, almost half the companies reported that they had never been approached by an ATSI applicant.

However, two ATSI students had completed apprenticeships with a South Australian company (company F6) and a Queensland company (company F17). A major South Australian meat slaughtering and packaging firm is currently considering involving ATSI youth in a youth training program in the South East of South Australia.