

Australian vocational education and training  
**Research messages 2006**



2006

National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Informing **policy** and **practice** in Australia's **training system**



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The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors/project teams and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government or state and territory governments

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*Research messages 2006* is a collection of key messages from research projects published or completed by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) in 2006.

It covers work undertaken by both NCVER and external researchers through the following programs:

- National Vocational Education and Training Research Evaluation Program
- National Vocational Education and Training Statistical Program
- National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Program
- NCVER Core Research Program
- NCVER consultancy work.

NCVER acknowledges the funding the Department of Education, Science and Training provided on behalf of the Australian Government and state and territory governments for the first three programs listed above. Details are shown in the appendix on page 42. We thank also each of the authors of the individual projects.

The summaries are clustered under five broad themes used by NCVER to organise all of its vocational education and training (VET) research and analysis:

- Industry and employers
- Students and individuals
- Teaching and learning
- VET system
- VET in context

Twenty-nine pieces of work are included, and each summary provides details of how to access the full research reports. Statistical publications and other value-added research dissemination products by NCVER such as *At a glance*s and *Research readings* are not covered in this book.

Established in 1981, NCVER is an independent body responsible for collecting, managing, analysing, evaluating and communicating research and statistics about vocational education and training. Its vision is that Australia's VET policy and practice are informed by a sound base of quality information.

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**Industry and employers**

## Training and skills in the electrical and communications industry

*Kirsty Woyzbun, John Saunders, Alison Anlezark, Phil Loveder, Mark Cully, Wendy Perry*

This study set out to profile the electrotechnology industry workforce, and to understand how the industry is adapting to the rapidly changing environment, and how well it is positioned for the future. Through an analysis of extant data, combined with 25 in-depth interviews with contractors, training providers and vendors, this study provides the following key messages.

### Key messages

- The electrotechnology industry has adapted well to the growing demands from its customers to integrate the electrical and communications skills sets into a narrow range of occupations, such as electrical and communications tradespersons. The industry response has been to use the traditional electrical tradespersons as the core of its skill base, up-skilling in new technologies and the communications area predominantly by vendor training and short courses.
- Training within the formal Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) structure in emerging technologies within the electrotechnology industry has been reactive rather than future-looking, with vendor training filling the gaps by providing the workforce with the skills required for new products as they are brought to market.
- Since mid-2004 there has been a flattening of the steady increase in skills shortages experienced over the preceding three years. Other evidence indicates that the skills shortages remaining in the industry tend to be region- or occupation-specific. The challenge appears not to lie in attracting people to the industry across the board, but rather, in attracting those with the appropriate skills or the ability to gain the appropriate skills, and to do so in the geographic regions of high need.
- One vulnerable group of employees in the electrotechnology industry may be non-tradespeople who have only specialist skills in the data communications area. This group of employees tends to have lower-level (certificate II) qualifications, and the industry tends not to train them up to the electrical trades certificate III level, but rather the other way around—training electricians in the data communications area. With predictions of a downturn in the information communications and technology (ICT) area in the future, this creates a vulnerable workforce group.

*Training and skills in the electrical and communications industry* can be found on NCVET's website <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1678.html>>

Note: NCVET consultancy work funded through the Department of Employment, Science and Training, through the National Skills Shortages Strategy; see page 42 for details.

## Understanding and resolving the skills shortage in the Australian printing industry

*Victor J Callan*

This report uses the Australian printing industry as a case study to see how a major manufacturing industry has responded to the issue of skill shortages. It also looks at possible future strategies for dealing with this problem.

### Key messages

- Finding a solution to skill shortages requires a strategic, coordinated response from three main groups: industry, the enterprise itself, and training organisations. Industry needs to provide a strategic, long-term action plan; enterprises must promote solutions within the workplace; and training providers must broaden their approaches to traditional training.
- Employers in the printing industry are actively addressing skill shortages by strategies which include introducing new technology to reduce the need for highly qualified staff, and putting pressure on training providers to update the content and delivery of their training.
- Currently, there is a tendency for the industry to invest money in technology rather than to examine the more complex issue which is at the heart of the skill shortage problem: that industry lacks both a far-reaching vision and a long-term strategy for dealing with the future workforce requirements of the printing industry.
- For the printing industry to attract skilled staff, it needs to present a new image: one that is innovative, tolerant of change, well-paying, and prepared to invest in the skills and career paths of its employees.
- The industry is one of the first in Australia to design and trial an accelerated apprenticeship as one strategy for dealing with its skills shortages. However, low wages and current industrial arrangements are a strong constraint against attracting and retaining high-calibre apprentices.

*Understanding and resolving the skills shortage  
in the Australian printing industry*  
can be found on NCVER's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1733.html>>  
in February

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program; see page 42 for details.

## What is a skill shortage?

Sue Richardson

The vocational education and training (VET) system has an important role to play in assisting with the smooth matching of the skills wanted by employers with the skills offered by workers. This report looks in detail at the meaning of supply of and demand for skills in the Australian labour market, focusing in particular on the way in which skill shortages are identified and addressed.

This report is part of the larger research program, *A well-skilled future: tailoring VET to the emerging labour market*.

### Key messages

- While the term 'skill shortage' seems to be clear and unambiguous, in reality it is a slippery concept with many meanings. For a shortage to occur, it is necessary for the demand for a particular type of worker to exceed the supply of such workers, but the notions of supply and of demand are themselves quite inexact.
- Employers look for many qualities in a worker, beyond the technical capacity to complete the required tasks. When workers are abundant, employers develop a high expectation of the level and range of qualities that new workers should possess. When workers become scarce, employers are forced to accept workers with lesser qualities (such as relevant experience, personal presentation and willingness to work flexible hours). Employers experience this as a shortage of suitable workers.
- The normal operation of the labour market, including variations in the wages and conditions of the job, will deal with many types of shortage. But it will not work well if there are few people with the required skills who are not already using them, and it takes a long time to acquire such skills.
- We suggest the following scheme for classifying skills shortages:
  - Level 1 shortage  
There are few people who have the essential technical skills who are not already using them and there is a long training time to develop the skills.
  - Level 2 shortage  
There are few people who have the essential technical skills who are not already using them but there is a short training time to develop the skills.
  - Skills mismatch  
There are sufficient people who have the essential technical skills who are not already using them, but they are not willing to apply for the vacancies under current conditions.
  - Quality gap  
There are sufficient people with the essential technical skills who are not already using them and who are willing to apply for the vacancies, but they lack some qualities that employers consider are important.
- There is no simple reliable measure of the existence of a skill shortage. It is necessary to draw on a range of indicators, as is done by the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. The most important component of these indicators is the time taken to fill vacancies for the skill in question.

*What is a skill shortage?*  
can be found on NCVER's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1732.html>>  
in February

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program; see page 42 for details.

**Students and individuals**

## Crazy paving or stepping stones? Learning pathways within and between vocational education and training and higher education

Roger Harris, Linda Rainey, Robert Sumner

This study examines patterns of pathways within and between vocational education and training (VET) and higher education. It compares the notion of straightforward pathways with what actually happens. The main data come from in-depth interviews with 49 South Australian students who had experienced both sectors. Categories of student movement are suggested.

### Key messages

- The policy statements of relevant legislative bodies have aimed over time to provide broader, multiple and seamless pathways for young people.
- Students who move within and between VET and higher education are generally not aware that career services are available, they do not use them, and they do not think they need them. These learners may be considered those who could most benefit from such services. From a system perspective this raises issues of inefficiency.
- While policy emphasises 'seamless pathways', the learners in this study do not generally perceive their educational journeys as pathways, but rather as stepping stones, zigzags and lurches. Nor are the moves seen to be seamless; barriers are involved. Barriers include: finance; transport; location of institution; juggling work, family and study; inflexible class schedules; inadequate or inaccurate information, such as credit transfer or course outcomes; and personal issues, such as lack of confidence or finding academic work difficult.
- Nevertheless, these learners see great value in everything they've done and are positive about their multiple learning moves. Their educational journeys demonstrate that student movement within and between sectors is certainly possible and should continue to be facilitated in policies and program initiatives.

*Crazy paving or stepping stones: Learning pathways within and between vocational education and training and higher education*  
can be found on NCVET's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1722.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program; see page 42 for details.

## Informing post-school pathways: Investigating school students' authentic work experiences

*Stephen Billett*

This project investigates how best to utilise school students' experiences in paid part-time work for the purposes of enhancing their understanding of work and working life and making decisions about post-school pathways.

### Key messages

- Paid work experiences provide a rich resource for school students, enabling them to consider the world of work and post-school pathways, including career planning. School students report that reflecting on their paid work is helpful in understanding the world of work, and also in making informed choices about:
  - working life
  - similarities and differences in work options
  - preferred kinds of work in post-school employment
  - their suitability for their preferred work options
  - their suitability for their preferred post-tertiary or higher education work options.
- Teachers in Australian schools have a vital role to play in ensuring that the full educational potential of their students' paid work is realised. The teacher's role includes providing classroom-based experiences such as individual and group reflection. Integrating students' paid work into the school curriculum could provide a vehicle for recognising and acknowledging workplace competence for vocational education courses within schools more readily than does the conventional work experience model of work placements.
- Using students' paid work experiences can reduce the requirements for school-organised work placements and the resources deployed to provide them.
- Careers advice schemes, such as the Australian National Industry Careers Advisers initiative, will benefit from integrating students' paid work experiences into their processes.

*Informing post-school pathways: Investigating school students' authentic work experiences* can be found on NCVER's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1681.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program; see page 42 for details.

## Older workers in apprenticeships and traineeships

Tom Karmel

This report examines apprenticeships and traineeships with particular reference to the age and sex of apprentices and trainees.

### Key messages

- The 'typical' older male (45 years and over) apprentice or trainee is undertaking a certificate III qualification, is full-time, and is a transport driver, or intermediate production and transport worker. This is the same for men aged between 25 and 45, but is quite different for younger men, who typically are undertaking an apprenticeship in a traditional trade.
- The 'typical' older female apprentice or trainee is undertaking a certificate III, is full-time or part-time, and is an intermediate service or clerical worker, or cleaner. This is similar to other female age groups, with the exception of young women undertaking a traditional apprenticeship in hairdressing.
- The number of apprentices and trainees has increased substantially since the early 1980s, with the majority of growth taking place in 'non-traditional' occupations. The largest percentage increase was for males over the age of 45 years, followed by women aged 45 years and over. The group with the slowest growth is that of young males, but even here the growth was over 50%.

*Older workers in apprenticeships  
and traineeships*  
can be found on NCVET's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1707.html>>

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Note: The above publication was produced through the  
NCVER Core Research Program; see page 42 for details.



## Australian Qualifications Framework lower-level qualifications: Outcomes for people over 25

*John Stanwick*

This report investigates the outcomes of lower-level vocational qualifications (certificates I and II) for people aged 25–44 (prime-aged) and for those over 45 (mature-aged). Certificate I and II qualifications comprised about 30% of all nationally accredited course enrolments, and a little under a quarter of training hours, for people aged 25 years and over in 2002.

The findings indicate that there were no substantial vocational and further study outcomes for prime- and mature-aged people who had undertaken certificate I and II qualifications.

### Key messages

- Employment-related reasons were the main motivation for undertaking these courses. Very low proportions indicated further study as a motivation.
- Rates of completing courses at certificate I and II levels were low. It was projected that about a quarter of those who enrolled in certificate I courses will eventually complete a course, with between a quarter and 30% of those enrolled in certificate II courses completing. People who had undertaken preparatory courses were estimated to have even lower rates of completion. Interestingly, this is despite over a third of the prime-aged, and over one-third of the mature-aged already having a certificate III level or above as their highest prior level of education.
- There was no discernable difference between graduates and subjects-only completers of certificates I and II in terms of gaining employment.
- There were modest career advancement benefits from certificate I and II courses, with full-course completers or graduates more likely to realise these than subjects-only completers.

However, the benefits for graduates were less than for the completion of a certificate III. There were also high proportions reporting no job-related benefit from the course. In particular, the large majority of subjects-only completers reported no job-related benefit from the course.

- Study pathways were not a major outcome of certificate I and II courses. Around 30% of graduates and less than 10% of subjects-only completers were estimated to have gone on to further study at a higher level. However, subjects-only completers were estimated to be the large majority of all students, meaning that, overall, only small proportions enrolled in further study at a higher level. Similarly, only small proportions of people who had undertaken preparatory courses enrolled in further study at a higher level.

*Australian Qualifications Framework lower-level qualifications: Outcomes for people over 25* can be found on NCVER's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1655.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the NCVER Core Research Program; see page 42 for details.

## Down the track: TAFE outcomes for young people two years on

*Rebecca Sherman*

Every year, the vocational education and training (VET) sector, through the Student Outcomes Survey conducted by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), measures student destinations shortly after completion of training. However, little research has been undertaken into the longer-term outcomes of these students.

This study examines outcomes from technical and further education (TAFE) training over time for young people aged 15 to 24. Key outcome measures include employment status, wages, occupation, pathways to further study, and other personal outcomes. The data analysis was based on 15 to 24-year-olds who undertook training in 2001 and who participated in the NCVER's Student Outcomes Survey in May 2002 and in a follow-up survey in September 2004, known as the Down the Track survey. This allows for information to be reported six months prior to training, approximately six months after training in May 2002, and approximately two-and-a-half years after training in September 2004.

### Key messages

- By comparison with their pre-training conditions, young people who undertake TAFE training experience substantial improvements in employment levels, wages, skill levels and occupation approximately two-and-a-half years after training.
- Not all students are employed immediately after their training; however, employment outcomes for these students improve over time. Around two-thirds of those students who were unemployed in 2002 were employed by September 2004. Likewise, over half of those not in the labour force (not working and not actively looking for work) in 2002 were employed by 2004.
- TAFE training is used by many as a pathway into further study. Some students enrol in further study immediately after training. By September 2004, 43% of graduates (students who had completed a full qualification) had completed an additional qualification and around a third of module completers (students who had completed at least one module) had completed a qualification. Around a fifth of graduates had completed an additional qualification at a higher level.
- Students reported many personal benefits from their TAFE training; in particular, in improving skills both generally and in relation to specific jobs. Students also reported their earlier TAFE experiences as being important to them, with nearly nine out of ten graduates and two-thirds of module completers rating their training as important to them two-and-a-half years later.

*Down the track: TAFE outcomes for young people  
two years on*  
can be found on NCVER's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1694.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Statistical Program; see page 42 for details.

## Outcomes from higher-level vocational education and training qualifications

*John Stanwick*

This report investigates outcomes from diploma and advanced diploma courses undertaken in vocational education and training (VET). The particular focus of the research was whether diplomas and advanced diplomas lead to employment at levels of associate professional or above and also whether these qualifications are a viable pathway to university-level studies.

### Key messages

- There are three main groups of students undertaking these courses. Firstly, there are young students (15–24 years) with Year 12 qualifications either seeking employment or anticipating going on to university. The second group comprises those students aged 25 and over undertaking the course for employment-related reasons, such as increased wages or promotion. The final group comprises those aged 25 and over who have not completed school and who are 'catching up' on qualifications.
- These courses offer positive employment outcomes to many of the graduates from the courses. However, many are employed at an occupational level below that of associate professional. Twenty-seven per cent of employed young graduates were employed as associate professionals or higher, although this increases to about half within 30 months after the course. By comparison, 56% of graduates aged 25 and over were employed as associate professionals or higher. About a quarter of all graduates were employed in intermediate service and clerical occupations.<sup>1</sup>
- There are variations in employment outcomes by field of education. Graduates in architecture and building, and health have the best employment outcomes overall, while those in information technology and creative arts do not fare as well. In human welfare studies, about 40% of graduates claimed increased earnings as a benefit of the course.
- Thirty-two per cent of young graduates and 14% of graduates aged 25 years and over went on to university-level study. In some minor fields, such as accountancy, and banking and finance, over half of the graduates aged 15 to 24 went on to university-level study.

*Outcomes from higher-level vocational education and training qualifications can be found on NCVET's website*  
<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1702.html>

<sup>1</sup> Information obtained from NCVET's Student Outcomes Survey, 2003.

Note: The above publication was produced through the NCVET Core Research Program; see page 42 for details.

## The value of completing a vocational education and training qualification

Tom Karmel, Nhi Nguyen

The aim of this report was to identify the benefits, in terms of wages, realised by completing a vocational education and training (VET) qualification. This was achieved by using wage data from the Student Outcomes Survey conducted by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). The report builds on the fact that many VET students do not complete full qualifications and come with varied education and employment backgrounds.

### Key messages

- The analysis finds that there is no universal benefit from completing a VET qualification in terms of returns in the form of higher wages; some groups benefit, but not all do so.
  - Those who already have low-level qualifications (certificate II or below) benefit from undertaking, and particularly completing, qualifications at around certificate III or IV or higher.
  - Those who already have higher-level qualifications (certificate IV or higher) get no wage benefit from undertaking or completing a further VET qualification at any level, relative to the control group of those undertaking only modules at the certificate I or II level (the closest we have to a 'no training' control group).
- By contrast, students *perceive* wage increases as a result of training, especially those who already have a higher-level qualification.

*The value of completing a vocational education and training qualification can be found on NCVER's website*  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1713.html>>

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Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Statistical Program; see page 42 for details.

**Teaching and learning**

## The Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Learning: Understanding learners and learning

*Michele Simons, Roger Harris, Erica Smith*

This study examines how learners and the processes of learning are understood and presented in a sample of courses leading to the attainment of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training (since replaced by the new Certificate IV in Training and Assessment). It considers the implications of these findings for the development of teaching and learning in vocational education and training (VET) in Australia.

### Key messages

- The Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training plays a significant role in promoting views about teaching and learning in the VET sector and is highly regarded by the graduates surveyed. The certificate promotes a strong learner-centred understanding of teaching and learning and emphasises the adult status of learners and the place of experience and interaction as central features of the learning process.
- Attention to learner needs and characteristics is emphasised in the courses examined leading to a certificate IV. This is largely achieved through the application of models of learning styles and by raising awareness of the diverse nature of learners in VET. Unfortunately, the learning styles frameworks often appear to be used uncritically, leaving open the potential for stereotyping of learners. Other characteristics (for example, ethnicity) that might also impact on preferred ways of learning need to be considered.
- Understandings of learning promoted through the new Certificate IV in Training and Assessment need to draw more extensively on ideas which emphasise the importance of learners making sense of their experience and building their knowledge based on these experiences. These approaches also need to emphasise the importance of building knowledge to enhance both individual and corporate performance. This is essential in developing workforce capabilities and meeting the needs of contemporary workplaces. It also helps to promote lifelong learning.
- Ongoing debate and critical reflection among VET practitioners are needed to promote the development of workplace-centred, learner-centred and attribute-focused learning in VET.

*The Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Learning: Understanding learners and learning can be found on NCVET's website*  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1665.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program; see page 42 for details.

## Mix or match? New Apprentices' learning styles and trainers' preferences for training in workplaces

Roger Harris, Michele Simons, John Bone

This qualitative study examines the learning styles and preferences of a group of New Apprentices (apprentices and trainees) and the training preferences of their workplace trainers in three industry sectors—manufacturing, retail and community services. An understanding of learning preferences offers a useful starting point for trainers, enabling them to recognise how they can best 'connect' with New Apprentices and therefore design effective learning environments.

### Key messages

- This study showed that the workplace features preferred by trainers and New Apprentices in manufacturing were different from those in retail and community services. The nature of the work and the industry culture are clearly important in this context.
- The practicalities of workplaces mean that learning preferences cannot always be accommodated, and hence the expectations of both trainers and New Apprentices need to be discussed and clarified early in their working relationship.
- Interpersonal relationships are an important influence on workplace learning environments. Trainers and employers need to take time to talk with their New Apprentices about their jobs. Similarly, New Apprentices need to talk to their trainers and employers about opportunities to learn and practise skills learnt off the job.
- Promoting quality learning environments in the workplace relies upon the recognition that mismatches do occur between trainers' and New Apprentices' preferred learning environments. Trainers need to implement strategies—for example, ensuring that workplace trainers build and maintain effective communication with New Apprentices to support learning in the workplace—in order to manage these differences effectively.
- The stereotype of the kind of person in the workplace who gravitates (either through volunteering or being encouraged) into helping others learn is challenged by the findings of this study. Although it makes no pretence of being representative of the entire workplace trainer workforce, the study found that over half the sample of workplace trainers were not the specific personality types which relevant research usually associates with people in similar roles.

*Mix or match? New Apprentices' learning styles and trainers' preferences for training in workplaces* can be found on NCVER's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1664.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program; see page 42 for details.

## Current and future professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce

*Sandra Mackay, Ursula Burgoyne, Diane Warwick, Jackie Cipollone*

This study explores the current and future professional development needs of three sectors—vocational trainers, specialist teachers and volunteer tutors—of the Australian adult English language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) workforce. Over 200 workers gave generously of their time.

### Key messages

- Language, literacy and numeracy educators are not a homogenous group. Some differences relate to employment sector or work context, some relate to the language, literacy and numeracy educators as individuals with varying educational and employment histories, and still others relate to the role differentiation that has emerged with national training reform.
- The sector in which the language, literacy and numeracy worker is located is the single most significant variable in determining professional development attitudes and issues. The sector determines entry requirements, reporting requirements, availability of funds for professional development and the distribution of those funds, and these impact on the kind of professional development required by language, literacy and numeracy workers and on how best to deliver it.
- Further development of expertise as a teacher is of great importance to the most experienced language, literacy and numeracy specialist teachers. Vocational trainers are interested in professional development to raise their awareness of language, literacy and numeracy issues, but they see language, literacy and numeracy support teachers as best equipped to provide assistance to students. Volunteer tutors have some concerns about whether they can meet future skill needs because of a lack of access to professional development opportunities and value the opportunity to interact with other tutors and teachers through informal networks.
- A number of innovative, relevant and comprehensive professional development programs are being offered at national, state and local provider levels. Better dissemination of information about good practice professional development initiatives may benefit a wider audience of language, literacy and numeracy workers, particularly casual and regional workers.
- Compliance with the reporting demands of external funding and regulatory bodies has increased the administrative workload of many specialist teachers and vocational trainers, to the point where they believe it is adversely affecting both the quality of their teaching and the time and energy available to engage in professional development activities.
- Employers currently offer significant amounts of professional development aimed at achieving compliance. This creates something of a mismatch between what is offered and what is desired by language, literacy and numeracy workers. All workers want additional professional development in teaching and managing the changing profile of learners and information technology skills.
- Language, literacy and numeracy workers have quite strongly held views on adult learning, and their own preferred means of accessing professional development. Face-to-face interaction with colleagues, a practical 'hands-on' approach, and peer learning are highly valued modes across all sectors of the workforce.

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Program; see page 42 for details.

*Current and future professional development needs of the language, literacy and numeracy workforce can be found on NCVET's website*  
<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1679.html>



## Literacy support for Indigenous people: Current systems and practices in Queensland

*Narelle McGlusky, Lenora Thaker*

This study identifies the literacy and numeracy support systems available for Indigenous students in vocational education and training (VET) and determines which systems work most successfully for both students and teachers.

### Key messages

- Literacy and numeracy skills are highly valued by Indigenous students and community members and are the key to further training, education and employment.
- Literacy and numeracy support actually given to Indigenous students remains inadequate across much of the VET sector, although effective support systems are available.
- The study identifies one-on-one support in the form of in-class tutorial support and peer tutoring as the most effective method of delivering literacy and numeracy to Indigenous VET students.
- Funding arrangements must accommodate the best practice model for Indigenous education; this can be achieved through flexible funding and institute structures.
- As the relationship between teacher/tutor and the student is of primary importance to Indigenous students, there is a need for more Indigenous staff throughout the VET sector, including teachers/trainers, administrators and support staff. Cross-cultural training should be made available for non-Indigenous teachers delivering courses in which Indigenous students are enrolled.

*Literacy support for Indigenous people: Current systems and practices in Queensland* can be found on NCVER's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1659.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Program; see page 42 for details.

## The professional development requirements of Workplace English Language and Literacy Programme practitioners

Tina Berghella, John Molenaar, Linda Wyse

This study explores the changing nature of the training services provided through the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Programme in response to the changing needs of industry and vocational education and training (VET) sector reforms. It examines the current and emerging professional development needs of WELL practitioners and proposes strategies to ensure that the professional development needs of both new and existing practitioners are met.

### Key messages

- Induction support for entry-level WELL practitioners is haphazard, and many practitioners believed they were not adequately prepared for the multitude of responsibilities required of them. An appropriate entry-level qualification is needed to enable design and delivery of language, literacy and numeracy in the workplace.
- Current opportunities for accessing ongoing professional development (in addition to entry-level/baseline qualifications) are limited and need to be improved; many practitioners had not received any professional development over the past two years. This includes both formal and informal opportunities to observe practice in the workplace and to gain project management skills.
- The provision of relevant and appropriate professional development for both new and experienced practitioners needs to be embedded within and supported by the VET system.
- Potential shortages of appropriately qualified WELL practitioners emphasise the need for the adoption of a national minimum education standard, such as the Advanced Diploma of Language, Literacy and Numeracy Practice in VET.

*The professional development requirements of Workplace English Language and Literacy Programme practitioners can be found on NCVET's website <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1682.html>>*

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Program; see page 42 for details.

## Reframing adult literacy and numeracy course outcomes: A social capital perspective

*Jo Balatti, Stephen Black, Ian Falk*

This study examined the social capital outcomes experienced by 57 students as a result of their participation in accredited adult literacy and numeracy courses undertaken through the vocational education and training (VET) sector. Social capital outcomes are concerned with changes in students' connections with people. The study also examined how these outcomes contributed to the socioeconomic wellbeing of students, and considered the implications for educational practice and reporting of outcomes from language, literacy and numeracy courses.

### Key messages

- Participation in accredited adult literacy and numeracy courses produced social capital outcomes for 80% of the students interviewed, even though improved literacy and numeracy skills were not necessarily present.
  - Students reported changes in the number and nature of attachments they had to existing and new social networks and spoke of changes in the way they interacted with people in their networks.
  - Students valued social capital outcomes highly because they contributed to their socioeconomic wellbeing.
  - There was evidence that social capital outcomes had a positive impact on students' social environments, education and learning, employment and quality of working life.
- Literacy and numeracy improvement often required the social capital outcomes noted above as a prerequisite or co-requisite. For example, students' literacy skills improved when their membership of networks provided them with opportunities to learn, or to implement what they had learnt.
- Social capital outcomes were realised as a result of specific teaching strategies, such as promoting interaction with peers, and through the new networks and relationships experienced in the course. Reframing adult literacy and numeracy teaching/learning to include the idea of the student as a member of networks would make the social capital-building function of the courses more explicit.
- Current reporting frameworks, including the National Reporting System for language, literacy and numeracy, do not specifically account for social capital outcomes. Recognising the importance of those outcomes, and perhaps reporting them, is likely to result in a more accurate picture of the contribution that adult literacy and numeracy courses make to individuals and communities.

*Reframing adult literacy and numeracy course outcomes: A social capital perspective* can be found on NCVER's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1683.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Program; see page 42 for details.

## Social and economic benefits of improved adult literacy: Towards a better understanding

*Robyn Hartley, Jackie Horne*

Assessing the social and economic costs of poor adult literacy and numeracy is largely uncharted territory in Australia. The benefits of investing in adult literacy and numeracy skills have also been under-researched. This study explores the various frameworks and methodologies available, with a view to informing future research and policy development.

### Key messages

- The most comprehensive relevant frameworks on costs and benefits relate to adult learning rather than literacy per se. They point to the importance of taking into account factors such as age and gender; collective as well as individual benefits; the 'sustaining' benefits of learning that enable people to continue or improve what they do in their communities; and the more recognisable 'transforming' benefits, such as increased employability.
- Longitudinal cohort studies will be an important source of data for measuring benefits and costs, and in particular for demonstrating the sustaining and transforming nature of improving literacy and numeracy skills. Given the high costs associated with longitudinal studies, the feasibility of 'buying in' to existing studies should be explored as an immediate short-term option in Australia.
- A mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodologies and the inclusion of individual, family and community impacts are likely to produce the most convincing evidence and understanding of costs of poor literacy and benefits of improved literacy.

*Social and economic benefits of improved adult literacy: Towards a better understanding* can be found on NCVET's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1634.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Adult Literacy and Numeracy Program; see page 42 for details.

## Quality is the key: Critical issues in teaching, learning and assessment in vocational education and training

*John Mitchell, Clive Chappell, Andrea Bateman, Susan Roy*

This research forms part of a wider program of research designed to assist vocational education and training (VET) providers to build their capability for the future. Through a literature review, discussion paper, consultations and field research, this project identifies critical issues in teaching, learning and assessment to inform and influence practice in the rapidly changing VET environment.

### Key messages

- The VET sector is distinguished by complexity and opportunity. Many critical issues were identified by stakeholders under the banner of these two terms but, for the majority of VET stakeholders, quality is the most critical issue in teaching, learning and assessment.
- The concept of quality provokes different responses from VET stakeholders. Some stakeholders focus on managing quality systems and quality indicators, while others focus on creating cultures to stimulate continuous improvement. Ideally, both perspectives are needed.
- VET practitioners need to extend their existing skills to meet the challenges of the new VET environment, which includes a range of learning styles, new assessment practices, diversity of clients (from industry to individual students) with a diversity of requirements (such as customised service), and enhanced technologies. They need the time and space to do this.
- VET practitioners will need to adopt a variety of methodologies to develop these new skills. Work-based learning takes into account new thinking about adult learning and learning organisations and can involve coaching, mentoring, industry release and work shadowing as well as participating in networks, communities of practice and professional conversations. It has been shown to be successful in supporting the achievement of high-quality teaching, learning and assessment.
- All VET stakeholders will need to adopt innovative approaches to their various roles. For individuals, critical success factors include their adopting new work roles, such as learning manager or facilitator. VET organisations need to develop an agile, flexible, creative and innovative culture balanced, but not dominated, by the need to comply with systemic quality requirements.
- Partnerships and networks support the achievement of high-quality teaching, learning and assessment by encouraging the exchange of information, ideas, techniques and approaches between VET practitioners, their clients and industry representatives.

*Quality is the key: Critical issues in teaching, learning and assessment in vocational education and training* can be found on NCVET's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1710.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program; see page 42 for details.

## Dusting off the shelves: Getting the most value out of vocational education and training equity resources

*Giselle Mawer, Elaine Jackson*

This report identifies the key factors which enable or provide barriers to the use of equity resources in the vocational education and training (VET) sector. These resources, which come in a variety of online or print formats, are an important means of helping teachers, trainers and others who deliver VET to provide extra help for those with special support needs.

### Key messages

- Although good-quality learning resources are available via websites and pamphlets, their existence is not enough to ensure that they will actually be used. To ensure that VET equity resources are used requires the establishment of new processes before and after their development. This will provide a better return for the considerable public and professional investment into equity learning resource development in vocational education and training.
- The report generated a number of strategies to encourage the use of equity resources:
  - developing longer-term funding models which would allow developers to build in consultation, trialling and marketing of the resources, as well as post-production tracking of their use and usefulness
  - integrating professional development with VET practitioners into the resource development stage, so that these practitioners will not only be already familiar with the resources, but can also develop the ability to customise them to meet students' needs
  - linking use of the equity resources to external strategic drivers, such as regulatory compliance or the implementation of training packages
  - standardising the annotation of specific resources in databases or catalogues to include information about the resources so that potential users can make informed decisions about their value
  - lodging the resources on agreed selected websites and creating links between the various websites to promote their wider use
  - using targeted marketing strategies to promote the resources through a range of industry and professional networks
  - promoting the resources as accessible for all learners, rather than only those with 'special needs', thereby encouraging their usefulness within the entire VET sector.

*Dusting off the shelves: Getting the most value out of vocational education and training equity resources can be found on NCVET's website*  
<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1700.html>

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program; see page 42 for details.

## Indigenous staffing in vocational education and training: Policies, strategies and performance

*Stephen Kemmis, Marianne Thurling, Roslin Brennan Kemmis, Peter Rushbrook, Richard Pickersgill*

Between the years 2001 and 2003 there was an overall decline in the number and proportion of Indigenous staff in the public vocational education and training (VET) system. The decline is contrary to the intentions of policies across the Australian VET sector, whereby an increase in Indigenous employment was required.

### Key messages

- If employment targets for Indigenous staffing in VET were set according to the proportion of Indigenous students in VET (whose participation rate in VET is generally high across states and territories), then substantially higher numbers of Indigenous employees would be needed than current targets indicate, especially by providers serving outer-regional, remote and very remote areas.
- At present, uncertainties about funding affect all aspects of the employment cycle for Indigenous employees, from position identification to succession planning, to the relations between VET providers and Indigenous communities.
- As previous studies have shown, data collection on Indigenous employment in VET is currently inadequate. In particular, the current data do not reflect critical differences in the proportions of Indigenous people in urban, inner- and outer-regional, remote and very remote areas. Strategic workforce planning for Indigenous staff at system and provider levels depends on the availability of such data.
- Competition between providers for qualified Indigenous staff is likely to become extremely intense in the coming years. VET employers will need to be more proactive and more effective in attracting, recruiting, developing and retaining Indigenous staff. This study identifies a range of models of effective practice in each of these areas. VET employers must adopt proactive approaches to the development of community networks to ensure identification of potential Indigenous staff, professional and career development for existing staff, and succession planning that will ensure the long-term sustainability of training in and for their communities.

*Indigenous staffing in vocational education and training: Policies, strategies and performance* can be found on NCVET's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1652.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program; see page 42 for details.







## Have school vocational education and training programs been successful?

*Alison Anlezark, Tom Karmel, Koon Ong*

This report investigates whether school vocational education and training (VET) programs provide successful outcomes for their participants. We define 'success' in the school context as retention to Year 12, and outside school in terms of full-time engagement with employment or learning, or part-time employment combined with part-time study. Finally, we look at whether school VET programs have been successful in establishing post-school VET pathways.

### Key messages

- Participation in school VET programs was found to have a positive impact on Year 10 to Year 11 retention but a negative impact on retention from Year 11 to Year 12. Overall, these programs had a small negative impact on retention from Year 10 to Year 12.
- The overall negative effect on retention from Year 10 to Year 12 is larger for boys than girls, for which it is close to zero. The negative impact is too small to be of any real policy significance. This conclusion is not altered if the vocational equivalent to Year 12 is included.
- There is a clear positive impact on post-school outcomes for students who participate in school VET programs in Year 11 but do not go on to complete Year 12. These gains are more sizeable for girls than boys. Over time, however, the positive effect is diluted. These gains are not seen for those who complete Year 12.
- School VET programs provide a clear vocational pathway for some students, particularly for boys studying in the areas of building and engineering. However, for most students the pathway is not so direct. Further, when comparing students of similar ages, we see different types of vocational education and training studied in and outside the school environment. For most students, there is a poor alignment between the types of VET programs studied at school and the requirements of the world of work or further study.
- Policy issues to emerge include:
  - Should school VET programs be offered at Year 10 rather than being concentrated at Year 11 and Year 12, given that many students leave before Year 11?
  - Should school VET programs be better aligned with the world of work or, alternatively, concentrate on broad pre-vocational skills?

*Have school vocational education and training programs been successful?*  
can be found on NCVET's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1654.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the NCVET Core Research Program; see page 42 for details.

## Private training providers in Australia: Their characteristics and training activities

Roger Harris, Michele Simons, Carmel McCarthy

This study examines the nature of the training activity of private registered training organisations (RTOs) offered to Australian students in 2003, based on data from a national sample of 330 private RTOs from a population of around 3000. The study also provides estimates of the overall contribution by the private sector to the vocational education and training (VET) effort in Australia for that year.

### Key messages

- Private RTOs are a very diverse group, covering adult/community providers, enterprise-based providers, industry organisations, commercial training organisations and other private providers.
- Private RTOs offer a wide range of accredited and non-accredited VET courses across the full range of the Australian Qualifications Framework. Most deliver in only one state/territory. As well as their course offerings, many private RTOs also provide a wide range of student services. Training is largely delivered face to face.
- The majority of private RTOs are small in terms of numbers of staff they employ, with over three-quarters of the sample employing 20 or fewer staff.
- Sixty-three per cent of the surveyed private RTOs received some government funding.
- Private RTOs make a substantial contribution to the overall VET effort in Australia. Noting a number of caveats regarding the population register and response error; it is estimated that private RTOs in 2003 had 2.2 million students (a standard error of around 10%). This includes one organisation with 290 000 (part-time) students, reflecting large-scale provision of short courses. This compares with the 1.7 million students in the public sector in 2003.
- It should also be noted that:
  - around 170 000 of these students are covered in the provider collection maintained by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) because they are publicly funded
  - around 25% of the private RTO students studied unaccredited courses.
- Comparisons of the magnitude of training activity with the public VET sector are problematic because there are no estimates available of the training hours associated with each student in private RTOs.
- No accurate estimate of overall VET effort will be possible without a collection built on common statistical standards.

*Private training providers in Australia:  
Their characteristics and training activities  
can be found on NCVER's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1688.html>>*

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program; see page 42 for details.

## A profile of TAFE institutes

*National Centre for Vocational Education Research*

This report presents a profile of technical and further education (TAFE) institutes in 2003. The findings were derived from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) National VET Provider Collection, a project concerned with offshore delivery<sup>1</sup>, and the NCVER Student Outcomes Survey.

### Highlights

#### Description of the TAFE institutes

- There were 72 TAFE institutes in the study.
- The TAFE institutes varied in size, with students per institute ranging from around 400 to around 52 000, and hours of vocational education and training (VET) activity per institute ranging from more than 235 000 to around 14.5 million.
- All TAFE institutes reported activity funded by Commonwealth and state recurrent funding. Most, but not all, institutes reported activity funded by Commonwealth and state specific funding, fee-for-service funding and overseas full-fee-paying students.

#### Students

- There were over 1.4 million students enrolled with TAFE institutes in 2003.
- There was clear variation between the TAFE institutes in the profile of the students and the courses in which they were enrolled.

#### Overseas students

- There were around 22 300 overseas onshore students<sup>2</sup> and around 18 300 overseas offshore students<sup>3</sup> enrolled with TAFE institutes in 2003.

- Sixty-three of the 72 TAFE institutes reported enrolments by overseas onshore students and 38 reported enrolments by overseas offshore students.
- Half of all overseas onshore students were enrolled with six of the 72 TAFE institutes. Similarly, half of all overseas offshore students were enrolled with five of the 72 institutes.

#### Student outcomes

- Across all TAFE institutes, the subject completion rate ranged from 49% to 96%, with 68 of the 72 institutes falling into the narrow band of 72% to 96%.
- Student ratings of satisfaction of overall quality of training ranged from 75% to 91% for graduates and 56% to 92% for module completers.

A profile of TAFE institutes  
can be found on NCVER's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1672.html>>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Education, Science and Training 2005, *Delivery of VET offshore by public providers, 2003*, DEST, Canberra.

<sup>2</sup> Those students from an overseas country who resided in Australia for the duration of their study.

<sup>3</sup> Those students who were enrolled in offshore vocational education and training and who were located in another country and were not normally based in Australia.

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Statistical Program; see page 42 for details.



## Creating synergies: Local government facilitating learning and development through partnerships

*Peter Waterhouse, Crina Virgona, Richard Brown*

This report documents the evolution and development of four 'learning communities' in Victoria where local government has been involved. It investigates the challenges and complexities faced in getting these communities off the ground and the role that the vocational education and training (VET) sector has played. The study has highlighted the importance of recognising different stakeholders' values and perspectives, appreciating multiple outcomes, and proactively managing the relationships between various groups of stakeholders.

### Key messages

- Local government has enormous potential and invaluable resources that enable vocational education and training to support local socioeconomic development. Local government is strategically placed to identify local needs and to facilitate networks, connections and directions for development.
- Management styles in social partnership projects should, ideally, be those with the capacity to work with higher levels of unpredictability and ambiguity. They should also display responsiveness, creativity and flexibility. In addition, managers need to be flexible in applying policy and funding to accommodate shifting needs and opportunities.
- Managers of stakeholder groups also need skills in managing the relationships between different partnership organisations, while respect for different values, needs and modes of operation is also necessary. The partnership participants need to value the health of the combined project over their particular institutional or personal interest.
- Passionate individuals are required for partnership projects to flourish; their commitment is the engine which drives the processes.
- None of the partnership projects in this study has been initiated or led by VET institutions. However, the VET system has been a useful tool in assisting more proactive partners to achieve their goals through effective educational strategies and curriculum/learning design. On occasions private providers have been especially established to overcome the hurdles encountered in mainstream VET institutions and systems.

*Creating synergies: Local government facilitating learning and development through partnerships can be found on NCVET's website <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1685.html>>*

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program; see page 42 for details.

## Vocational education and training in Australia, the United Kingdom and Germany

*Josie Misko*

This study compares vocational education and training (VET) in Australia, the United Kingdom and Germany. The information presented in this overview has the potential to inform policy. The following are the key messages arising from this research.

### Key messages

- In Australia, the United Kingdom and Germany, training policies are increasingly based on similar general principles. However, in the main, implementation of these principles remains specific to each country.
- Arrangements in Australia stand out in terms of ease of movement and flexibility between the vocational and higher education sectors. Australia provides a good example of a lifelong learning system in action. However, international practices in relation to harmonisation and credit transfer frameworks have important lessons for improving portability of qualifications across Australian state and territory jurisdictions.
- Apprenticeship pathways associated with formal contracts of training and industry involvement in the development, delivery and assessment of competence continue to be key features for training, especially in the traditional trades in all three countries, and for other recognised occupations in Germany. In Australia and the United Kingdom they are increasingly being applied to occupations with no formal history of apprenticeship.
- Moves to establish consistency between countries and even states to facilitate student mobility and credit transfer may not require wholesale re-alignment of country and state-specific approaches to the provision of education and training. The challenge is to develop relationships between education and training systems so that they have clear and open communication. In this way, qualifications and credits can be more easily transported across education and training sectors and within and between education and training systems.

*Vocational education and training in Australia, the United Kingdom and Germany* can be found on NCVER's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1670.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the NCVER Core Research Program; see page 42 for details

## Building learning communities: Partnerships, social capital and VET performance

*Janelle Allison, Scott Gorringe, Justine Lacey*

This research examines the impact of vocational education and training (VET), and its project-based activities and partnerships, on the development of sustainable communities in regional Australia. It finds that VET plays a critical role as the entry point to learning and builds considerable social and other forms of capital in regional communities. 'Building capital' means making the most of available resources and trying to generate more resources when required. Social capital refers to the network of relationships and skills which result from community and civic activities. This study points to new opportunities for integrating these assets into strategic regional development.

### Key messages

- Vocational education and training, VET partnerships and project-based training have created and mobilised social capital, as well as human, environmental, cultural and built (that is, physical) capital in regional Australia. These various types of capital are core requirements for sustainable regional development.
- Vocational education and training and VET partnerships play a critical role in creating individual and community confidence and are often the key entry points to learning and employment.
- There is a need for a more holistic approach to training, giving consideration to the continuing learning pathway along which an individual may travel, as opposed to focusing on discrete packages and modules. This is especially apparent in Indigenous communities where training can impose community obligations.
- There are excellent examples of VET leadership in regional development but, in general, vocational education and training and VET partnerships are not full participants in regional development plans and strategies. The changing regional landscapes will benefit from more input from the VET sector.
- VET has responded well to a growing consolidation of larger regional service centres, where the 'higher order' skills associated with new technologies and electronics are often required. Less well resolved is the role of VET in smaller centres. There is a need for effective regional delivery models which link these service centres.

*Building learning communities: Partnerships, social capital and VET performance* can be found on NCVET's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1673.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program; see page 42 for details.



## Learning collaborations between ACE and vocational education and training providers: Good practice partnerships

*Sue Gelade, Tom Stehlik, Peter Willis*

This study examines partnerships and collaborations between the adult and community education (ACE) and vocational education and training (VET) sectors in Australia, where organisations come together initially to expedite delivery of courses to vocational students. The research is aimed at identifying those good practices which support and promote both formal and informal partnerships and how such practices, in turn, benefit the communities in which they operate. The key messages arising from the research follow.

### Key messages

- Successful partnerships are highly dependent on having lead personnel based in each of the collaborating organisations who are strongly committed to the partnership effort. A key factor of the partnership's success is the length of time it exists. The longer a partnership has been operating, the more committed its personnel become to continuing the collaboration.
- The development phase is a particularly crucial time; those partnerships that fail appear to do so within the first two years. Partnerships also fail because of misunderstandings between organisations about the aims and objectives each has for the collaboration, and the expectations about what students involved can achieve.
- A key factor in promoting positive relationships between organisations in a partnership is maintaining respect both for each other and the varied stakeholders involved.
- Good communication, shared understanding of goals and the ability to be flexible in relation to both teaching and administrative aspects are among the most crucial aspects of good practice in successful partnerships or collaborations between ACE and VET.

*Learning collaborations between ACE and vocational education and training providers: Good practice partnerships can be found on NCVER's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1708.html>>*

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program; see page 42 for details.

## Schools, vocational education and training, and partnerships: Capacity-building in rural and regional communities

*Helen Stokes, Kathleen Stacey, Murray Lake*

This report uses case studies from seven rural and regional areas to examine the impact of schools and vocational education and training (VET) on building community capacity.

### Key messages

- Rural and regional communities use at least three different models to organise school–VET partnerships.
  - Regional communities may use: a regional cluster model based on collaboration and characterised by the central coordination of student needs and industry resources and/or a specialised program model that targets students with specific needs and/or has a particular industry focus.
  - Rural communities are more likely to use a whole-of-community model that attempts to engage many community members in a joint effort to respond to the broad range of students' needs.
- The success of VET programs in these areas is dependent upon the capacity of a rural or regional school–VET partnership to: analyse and respond to identified community issues; harness community resilience (a 'can do' approach); connect the program with shared community values; and develop a shared purpose that includes a range of community representatives.
- School–VET partnerships can provide a positive way of keeping students engaged in school, as community work placement can refocus students' understandings of why they are at school.
- School–VET partnerships can assist rural and regional communities to keep more young people in the community, preventing their moving to metropolitan or larger regional areas. This contributes to community capacity-building and viability and maintains or strengthens economic capital.
- Where schools and/or their students have low credibility with local business, school–VET partnerships can be a pathway to the creation of stronger community relationships. Further, school–VET partnerships with a social justice agenda can provide work-related networks and connections for some of the most disadvantaged students in the school community. In both contexts the degree to which marginalised individuals or groups are included within the existing social capital in the community is increased, with a corresponding increase in social capital overall. Social capital refers to the network of relationships and skills which result from community and civic activities.
- The capacity for young people to directly contribute to school–VET partnerships has not been fully explored in programs. Young people are usually passive rather than active participants in school–VET partnerships. Although most partnership decisions are made with the benefits for young people in mind, they usually occur on behalf of, rather than with, young people.
- Providers of VET programs to small and isolated rural/remote communities must demonstrate flexibility in content, delivery and policies, in terms of class sizes and curriculum content, to ensure that the needs of young people have priority over administrative convenience.

*Schools, vocational education and training,  
and partnerships: Capacity-building in rural  
and regional communities*  
can be found on NCVET's website  
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1686.html>>

Note: The above publication was produced through the National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation Program; see page 42 for details.

## Vocational education and training, health and wellbeing: Is there a relationship?

*John Stanwick, Koon Ong, Tom Karmel*

Using data from the Household Income and Labour Dynamics Australia (HILDA) Survey, this report explores the relationship between education, including vocational education and training (VET), and health and wellbeing for individuals.

### Key messages

- Evidence in the research literature suggests that there is a positive relationship between education and measures of health and wellbeing. However, the relationship is complex and involves intermediate variables such as employment, income and socialisation.
- The analysis found that males and females with degrees as their highest qualification were more likely than people with only Year 11 and below to have better physical and mental health, although the size of the effects was small. The magnitude of the effects for males was greater than that of their female counterparts.
- Males and females with diplomas or advanced diplomas as their highest qualification were more likely to have better physical and mental health than those with Year 11 and below, although the size of the effect was smaller than that for those with degrees. Once again, the magnitude of effects was greater for males than for females. Males and females with certificate-level qualifications were not found to be substantially different in terms of physical and mental health from their Year 11 and below counterparts.
- The analysis also demonstrated the importance of the indirect effects of education on health. To prevent the benefits of education being understated, these need to be taken into consideration when looking at the total effect that education has on health. In particular, a key impact of education on health is through its influence on employment and income.

*Vocational education and training, health and wellbeing:  
Is there a relationship?*  
can be found on NCVET's website  
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Note: The above publication was produced through the NCVET Core Research Program; see page 42 for details.

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