



# **Vocational Education in NSW**

**Commentary on the Board of Vocational Education** and Training Bill 1994

by

**Sharon Rose** 



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## Introduction

The purpose of this briefing note is to provide a context for consideration of the *Board of Vocational Education and Training Bill 1994*.

## Background

In her second reading speech in relation to the above bill, Mrs Chikarovski states that three major reports have influenced the development of national consensus in relation to the vocational education and training system: the Deveson Committee Report; the Finn Report; and the report of the Employment and Skill Formation Council's report on the Australian vocational certificate training system. The major points contained in these reports are outlined below.

However, prior to examining these reports, it is appropriate to consider the development of what is usually referred to as the *National Training Reform Agenda*, of which the three reports previously mentioned, form part.

The impetus for examination and consideration of the relevance of education and training can be seen to have arisen out of economic considerations in relation to the competitiveness of the Australian economy.

"The framework for the training agenda is most clearly shown in Australia Reconstructed (ACTU/TDC, 1987). This report advocates a corporatist, consensus based approach to managing Australia's economic crisis through negotiated national economic and social objectives. Skills formation is central to economic reconstruction. Enhanced performance, 'competence', rather than academic merit, is presented as the key to educational and occupational mobility".<sup>1</sup>

The necessity to be more competitive saw moves to encourage more flexibility in work practices with such policies as 'award restructuring' where unions negotiated structural efficiency adjustments with employers in order to receive the pay rises established in National Wage Case decisions. "This perceived need for more flexible and sophisticated forms of work organisation signalled increasing demand for more highly skilled and flexible workers. The Government argued that our education system had to be able to deliver a more highly skilled work force if our economy was to prosper".<sup>2</sup>

The undernoted reports represent attempts to address some of the issues raised above.

A Training Costs of Award Restructuring: Report of the Training Costs Review Committee (The Deveson Report)

An historical reckoning: education and training reform, Terri Sneddon, Education Links 44

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> National Training Reform Agenda ; A Guided Tour for Community Youth Services, *Twelve to Twenty-Five*, Vol 3, No.1, 1993.

- B Young People's Participation in Post-Compulsory Education & Training Report of the Australian Education Council Review Committee (The Finn Report)
- C The Australian Vocational Certificate Training System Employment and Skills Formation Council (The Carmichael Report)

## A Training Costs of Award Restructuring: Report of the Training Costs Review Committee (The Deveson Report)

The Ministers of Labour Advisory Council, meeting in Queenstown, New Zealand on May 24, 1990:

- 1 Noted that there is a need to enhance the skill base in the Australian economy.
- 2 Recognised the training cost implications of award restructuring will be substantial.
- 3 Agreed to publish the consultant's report, Costs of Award Restructuring.
- 4 Resolved that there needs to be a full consideration of all the options available to secure the additional resources for training because governments alone can not and should not be responsible for meeting all of the costs involved.

Against this background, Ministers established a review group, headed by Mr Ivan Deveson, to look at the issues. They determined the terms of reference for the review to be:

- (a) The provision of estimates of resources required:
  - \* distinguishing between initial and continuing costs; and
  - \* balancing the reasonable demands by individuals for training for recognised vocational skills and the needs of the workplace.
- (b) The proposal of options for securing additional resources, which have regard to:
  - \* the economic benefits accruing to:
    - individuals;
    - enterprises/organisations in the public and private sectors; and

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- the wider community;
- \* the need for equity in access to training for all groups in the community;

- \* the balance of provision between public and private providers and the role of private providers in the broader training system;
- \* the skill assessment requirements;
- \* interfaces with schools and higher education sectors.

The Committee prepared a paper outlining the issues and key questions and sought views and further information in relation to the issues raised. A consultation process took place and the Committee received 69 submissions.

A precis of the Committee's findings are noted below:

#### • Demand for Training

- A. Award restructuring is expected to have an impact on training costs that is likely to be felt over a timeframe extending to five years rather than two as initially envisaged.
- B. Unmet demand for technical and further education is already high and demand is likely to increase as award restructuring provides benefits to individuals.
- C. It will be necessary for governments to take action to enable and encourage industry to increase its training effort and to promote high quality and wide acceptance of industry-provided training.
- D The change in the balance of TAFE activities which would increase the proportion of its activities related to industry on a full cost recovery basis, will require:
  - \* new, more flexible TAFE staff employment, development and career path arrangements to both encourage TAFE staff to take part in commercial activity and remain with the TAFE system;
  - \* financial and administrative arrangements which enable TAFE to compete in the market for training services; and
  - \* the setting of targets for entrepreneurial activity.

#### Government Funding of Training

- E. Governments need to commit themselves to a steady increase in the volume of publicly funded TAFE activity.
- F. Over and above such increases, TAFE needs to examine rigorously its present arrangements in respect of:

- \* better sharing of training materials among States;
- \* greater use of existing plant and equipment including the sharing of facilities with industry;
- \* duplication between on-the-job and off-the-job training;
- \* class contact hours in some courses which seem to be excessive; and
- \* attrition rates in some courses which seem to be unacceptably high.

#### • Fees and Charges in TAFE

G At present, the financial benefits to individuals arising from TAFE training are modest. Award restructuring should change the financial rewards for participation in training but, given the present situation, there is no persuasive case for substantial individual contributions to meet the cost of TAFE. Data presented to the Committee indicate that equity problems could arise if substantial fees were set in TAFE colleges without adequate exemption or concession arrangements but this is not to say that no fees should be charged for TAFE courses.

#### Literacy and Numeracy

J. Unless workers and those seeking jobs have these skills they will be denied access to training and career advancement.

#### • Other Government Programs

- K. The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth should provide an opportunity for industry to present evidence on the importance of CRAFT (Commonwealth Rebate for Apprentice Full-time Training) and ATS (Australian Traineeship System) employer subsidies and that the Commonwealth should discuss with industry and union groups the options for the possible re-allocation of the \$120 per annum involved to other industry training priorities or a restructuring of employer training subsidies.
- L. The present arrangements for AUSTUDY appear to be based around the traditional higher education concept of a full-time student. AUSTUDY arrangements need to be reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate to the training sector.

#### • Negotiating a New Set of Training Arrangements

N. The clarification of the appropriate role of market processes will

assist in determining relative contributions to training costs. The Committee recommended that:

- \* governments contribute more through real funded growth and equity initiatives. In addition, the Commonwealth Government may restructure and redirect its training subsidies;
- \* individuals contribute through more open and rationalised fee arrangements and through various arrangements negotiated in the industrial relations arena; and
- \* industry to contribute more as it expands training effort inhouse and through greater expenditure in the industry-funded training market.
- Training Cost Projections

The Committee expects the changes listed above to occur over a timeframe of several years rather than overnight. Against this background the Committee concluded that:

- O. The costs and implications of award restructuring for training are uncertain at present. Governments need to establish a co-operative arrangement with the industry partners to keep these issues under review and to monitor progress in the implementation of the training reform agenda.
- P. Governments should provide reasonable stability in their own policies and programs related to training so as to encourage industry and private investment in training.<sup>3</sup>

#### B Young People's Participation in Post-Compulsory Education & Training Report of the Australian Education Council Review Committee (The Finn Report)

At its meeting in October 1988, the Australian Education Council; (AEC) resolved to establish a working party on links between schools and TAFE. The report of the working party was considered by Ministers in June 1990. One of the resulting agreements at that meeting was to form a small group of officials to develop an issues paper and to recommend an agenda for a national review of post-compulsory education and training.

It was agreed that the Review would consider:

a. the appropriate form and level of a new national target for participation in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Training Costs of Award Restructuring, Report of the Training Costs Review Committee, AGPS, October 1990.

post compulsory education and training, an appropriate basis of measurement of that target, and a recommended timetable and strategies for its achievement;

- b. appropriate national curriculum principles designed to enable all young people, including those with special needs, to develop key competencies, with the associated implications for curriculum development, initial teacher preparation and continuing professional development;
- c. the means by which links can be drawn between different education and training pathways and sectors to expand the options available to all young people, including those with special needs, and to achieve national coherence in entry and exit points between education, training and employment;
- d. the appropriate roles and responsibilities of schools, TAFE and higher education in the provision of post-compulsory education and training for young people consistent with the principles and objectives identified in (b) and (c) above, and the roles of private and industry providers;
- e. current barriers to the effective participation of disadvantaged young people, including those with disabilities, in post-compulsory education and training, and strategies for increasing their participation and improving their educational and labour market outcomes;
- f. the implications of current and prospective changes in post-compulsory education and training for the provision of careers education, information and counselling to students, including the requirements for information on educational pathways and associated career paths; and
- g. the likely resource and funding implications of existing trends in, and further strategies for, post-compulsory education and training.

The Committee met for a total of 15 days between 23 January and 1991 and 29 July 1992. Two working groups were formed which worked between meetings of the full Committee to give closer attention to specific terms of reference.

The Committee invited submissions from individuals and organisations through direct contact and through newspaper advertisements. As with the Deveson Report, the Committee released an issues paper in order to focus public input. A total of 82 submissions was received.

The major points made in the Report's Executive Summary are noted below:

#### **Convergence of General and Vocational Education**

Both individual and industry needs are leading towards a convergence of general and vocational education. There is an increasing realisation internationally that the most successful forms of work organisation are those which encourage people to be multi-skilled, creative and adaptable.

There is also a related process of convergence between the concepts of work and

education. Increasingly, as regular updating of skills and knowledge becomes essential to maintaining and enhancing productivity in the workplace, the concepts of working and learning will converge.

This view implies that in order to serve their clients' needs, both schools and TAFE will need to change. In industry, all parties will need to take a more active role in the development and support of on-going training which is integrated with employment.

#### New National Targets

The Committee believes that these imperatives should be recognised in the establishment of a set of new national targets for post-compulsory education and training which encompass schools, higher education, TAFE and other training, and which identify target levels for attainment as well as participation. In essence, the Committee proposes that almost all young people should take sufficient post-compulsory education and training to complete Year 12 or some other initial post-school qualification, and at least half should go on to higher levels.

#### **New Measures for Participation**

To support the above the Committee proposes that:

- \* governments should agree to introduce a post-compulsory Education and Training Guarantee whereby all young people would be guaranteed a place in school or TAFE after Year 10 for two years of full-time education or training or its equivalent part-time for up to three years;
- \* State and Territory Governments should introduce a uniform compulsory requirement to attend school (unless exempted) to at least the end of Year 10;
- \* current entry level training arrangements should be reformed;
- \* a new entry-level training system should be developed which extends these reformed arrangements beyond the existing apprenticeship and traineeship occupations.

#### **Key Competencies**

The Committee believes that there are certain essential things which all young people need to learn in their preparation for employment and these are in the areas of:

- language and communication;
- mathematics;
- scientific and technological understanding;

- cultural understanding;
- problem solving; and
- personal and interpersonal characteristics.

Young people should be able to develop these Key Competencies regardless of the education or training pathway that they follow. To facilitate this, a standards framework should be developed with a 'profile' for each Key Competency to describe clearly the nature of each competency at a range of levels.

The Committee proposes that an appropriate process be established as soon as possible to take on this work so that there can be national reporting on students' levels of attainment in Language and Communication and Mathematics by 1993.

#### National Curriculum Principles

The Committee has identified a set of national curriculum principles to enable all young people, including those with special needs, to develop the Key Competencies. These principles emphasise the need for a comprehensive and flexible postcompulsory curriculum which offers an appropriate mix of general and vocational education, allows for a range of learning styles, maximises students' choice and is structured in terms of clear outcomes.

#### **Implications for Teachers**

The Committee's proposals imply significant changes to curriculum, assessment, participation and organisational arrangements across the school and TAFE/training sectors and the successful implementation of these changes is dependent upon the capacity and willingness of teachers in both sectors to deliver them.

#### Pathways

It is important at the post-compulsory level that young people should have access to a range of different pathways and should be able to move from one to another without 'losing ground'.

The real level of skills and knowledge acquired by an individual on one educational setting should be given due recognition when that individual moves into a different setting. Young people also need to know, in advance, the implications of any significant educational choice in terms of possible employment outcomes and opportunities for further education and training.

#### **Education and Training Delivery Arrangements**

Industry, private and community providers, higher education institutions, TAFE colleges and schools all have roles to play in the delivery of post-compulsory education and training. The role of each will expand as the scope of post-

compulsory education and training expands.

Each State and Territory government must determine its policy orientation to education and training delivery in the two years immediately following the end of compulsory schooling. There are two general approaches which overlap substantially in practice. One emphasises the primary role of school-based provision to Year 12 and therefore a long-term objective of full retention to Year 12 in schools. The other aims to provide a range of options after Year 10, including pathways which involve a substantial level of vocational training.

If implemented, several of the strategies proposed by the committee will contribute to improved community understanding of and esteem for TAFE courses, for example, the renewed emphasis on vocational education, revised and expanded entrylevel training, and improved credit transfer and articulation between sectors.

Of particular importance are improved linkages between TAFE and higher education through cooperative curriculum design, bridging arrangements, course articulation and maximum credit transfer.

The Committee believes that there is a need to define the principle role of TAFE more clearly and communicate it better to the community.

#### Support for the Disadvantaged

The major proposals developed by the Committee will substantially improve the participation of disadvantaged groups in post-compulsory education training. The Committee believes that there are some specific areas for improvement in relation to:

- young people with disabilities;
- \* the process of transition from school for some 'at risk' young people; and
- \* the coordination of education and training systems with other support structures for young people.

#### **Careers Education**

The pace of change in the world of work and the increased integration of education and training pathways make an effective system of careers education even more important now than previously. There is a need to raise the profile of careers education, provide greater national consistency, involve industry to a greater degree, and ensure a more effective use of resources across systems and across the country.

#### **Resource Implications**

The resource implications of current trends in post-compulsory education and training are substantial, involving an increase by 2001 of between 14 per cent and 23 per cent over 1991 recurrent expenditures depending on wage cost assumptions.

The Committee's proposed targets involve an increase of about \$450 to \$500 million or 2.5 per cent over the trend level by 2001. Even in the target scenario, expenditure would fall as a proportion of GDP to between 3.6 per cent and 4.1 per cent. In additional to the recurrent costs there would be very substantial capital costs in all sectors.

The Committee believes that governments need to consider a comprehensive range of options for TAFE funding with a view to removing anomalies, improving boundary arrangements and providing a mechanism which can provide a more balanced approach to setting funding priorities across the sectors.<sup>4</sup>

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## C The Australian Vocational Certificate Training System Employment and Skills Formation Council (The Carmichael Report)

In August 1991, the former Commonwealth Minister for Employment, Education and Training, the Hon John Dawkins MP, asked the Employment and Skills Formation Council (ESFC) of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) to consult groups and individuals in all States and Territories who are interested in or affected by key aspects of four related issues:

- a new entry-level training system for Australian;
- the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) systems in the 1990s;
- Commonwealth subsidies for employers under the CRAFT (apprenticeship) and Australian Traineeship systems (ATS) programs; and
- allowances for education and training, including the possible extension of AUSTUDY to part-time students and people being trained by private providers of vocational education and training.

The ESFC was also asked to take into consideration changes proposed in the Finn Report and to prepare advice for Federal, State and Territory ministers of the Australian Education Council (AEC) and the Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET).

After distribution of a consultation 'package' of five documents, the ESFC undertook three rounds of extensive consultation. Subsequently, over 160 written submission were received.

In essence, the ESFC recommends:

• that a new entry-level training system be introduced for Australia and that such a system should be known as the Australian Vocational Certificate Training System.

the Vocational Certificate Training System should provide training pathways

Young People's Participation in Post-Compulsory Education & Training, Report of the Australian Education Council Review Committee, July, 1991.

for the attainment of vocational competencies for ASF levels 1.4 and that all education and training pathways in the Vocational Certificate Training System should provide for the attainment of the generic key areas of competence specified in *the Finn Report*.

the implementation by 2001 of the following targets:

- \* 90 per cent of all young people at the age of 19 should have completed Year 12, or an initial post-school qualification, or be participating in formally recognised education and training;
- \* 90 per cent of young people by the age of 20 should attain a vocational qualification recognised by the NTB as level 2 in the Australian Standards Framework, and/or be progressing to a higher level qualification;
- \* 60 per cent of young people by the age of 22 should attain a vocational qualification recognised by the NTB as a level 3 or higher level qualification in the Australian Standards Framework; and
- \* there should be equality between young men and women in terms of overall rates of participation or levels of attainment.
- supports the Finn Report approach of multiple pathways through vocational education and training.
- that Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers for Vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET) adopt a general framework for vocational certificate training.
- that integrated networks be developed for the flexible delivery of education and training.
- a flexible industry or enterprise based approach to development of workbased vocational certificate training arrangements.
- that MOVEET initiate arrangements for the development by each industry and, where appropriate, large enterprises by the end of December 1993 of industry and/or enterprise plans for the introduction of vocational certificate training.
- training agreements negotiated flexibly at the industry or enterprise level should define the obligations of employers and trainees under work-based training programs, including provision for the acquisition of the key areas of competence and relevant vocational competencies to at least ASF level 1, 2 or 3.
- supports the development of a more open training market with a greater diversity of providers. Greater cooperation between providers, to increase delivery options and achieve economies of scale, is also seen as desirable.

- proposes a staged program for ensuring that by 2001 there is equality between young women and men in rates and levels of overall participation in vocational education and training.
- The Australian Committee for Training Curriculum (ACTRAC) develop a core curriculum for the reading, writing and speaking of English, based around the concept of contextual learning.

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- a staged program for ensuring equity by the year 2001 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in rates and levels of participation in a vocational training system.
- all publicly funded labour market programs which deliver pre-vocational and vocational education and training should articulate into formal mainstream vocational certificate training, or be required to demonstrate why that is not appropriate for particular clients.
- asserts that trainee wages and payment for training time are matters which will be determined by the industrial parties, but which may be underpinned by a 'minimum rate' allowance paid by the Commonwealth Government.
- an increase by 1998 of \$1.2 billion in real terms above current levels in annual Commonwealth expenditure on vocational certificate training including TAFE and Skill Centres.<sup>5</sup>

## National Employment and Training Plan for Young Australians

On 21 July, 1992, the Prime Minister announced that Commonwealth, State and Territory governments had agreed to establish a new national system of vocational education and training which centres on a Council of Ministers and a new body to be known as the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA).

The Key functions of ANTA will be:

- to develop for the consideration of the Ministerial Council a draft National Strategic Plan
- to develop, in conjunction with State training agencies, detailed State Training profiles based on the National Strategic Plan
- to advise the Ministerial Council of principles to be applied for the allocation of funding between States
- to provide information and advice to the Ministerial Council to assist the Commonwealth Minister to make decisions on growth funding levels

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The Australian Vocational Certificate Training System, Employment and Skills Formation Council, March, 1992.

- to assist the Ministerial Council in determining planning parameters for the system
- to administer any programs agreed by the Ministerial Council as requiring national delivery.

Industry has involvement in key aspects of the new national system through membership of ANTA and by participating in the development of national policy and priorities and through participation in the State training agencies and involvement in the development of State Training Profiles.

ANTA was established by the Australian National Training Authority Act 1992 which lists the objectives of ANTA as being to promote:

- a national vocational education and training system
- close interaction between industry and vocational education and training providers
- an effective training market
- an efficient and productive network of publicly funded providers
- increased opportunities and improved outcomes
- improved cross-sectoral links<sup>6</sup>

### The Board of Vocational Education and Training Bill 1994

The bill was introduced by The New South Wales Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment, on 3 May, 1994, in the Legislative Assembly. According to the Minister's second reading speech, the bill:

represents a major milestone in the reform of the vocational education and training system in this State. Over the last four years or so there has been a major focus by all governments in Australia on the reform of vocational training. There has been unprecedented national agreement that investment in this area represents one of the most significant ways to improve our national economic performance.

The proposed bill:

• establishes the New South Wales Board of Vocational Education and Training as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Joint Statement by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Employment, Education and Training - A National Employment and Training Plan for Young Australians, 27 July, 1992.

as the State Training Agency nominated by the Minister to meet the requirements of the Australian National Training Authority Act 1992 of the Commonwealth;

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- sets out the objects and functions of the proposed Board;
- dissolves the Industrial and Commercial Training Council;
- makes provisions in relation to the accreditation of vocational courses by the Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board.

In her second reading speech, the Minister made the following points in relation to the bill:

- \* a key aspect of the ANTA agreement is that the State should speak with one voice in its negotiation with the australian National Training Authority
- \* the agreement and the Commonwealth legislation require the establishment of a State training agency
- \* the New South Wales Government appointed Sir Nicholas Shehadie to head up an interim New South Wales vocational education training agency
- \* that agency recommended the establishment of the New south Wales Board of Vocational Education and Training to carry out the functions of the State training agency
- \* in keeping with the commonwealth legislation, the Board of Vocational Education and Training has been nominated as the State training agency for New South Wales.

## Comment

The national training reform agenda, particularly the issue of competency-based training, has attracted much comment, especially within the education and training fields and a selection of such comment is noted below.

• An article in *Education Australia* stated: Despite the strong support from these inquiries, the competency movement appears to be faltering through lack of support from certain sectors of the education community. For while TAFE has wholeheartedly embraced the changes, undertaking major overhauls of its curriculum and certification procedures, the school sector remains diffident about launching a major overhaul of the secondary system along competency lines, and higher education appears to have rejected most of the proposals out of hand.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Competencies: Falling Off the Agenda? *Education Australia*, Issue Nov.\Dec. 1993, John Patrick Hughes.

- In an edition of *Education Monitor*, Christopher Bantick suggests that: Vital to the implementation of a new curriculum is assessment and testing. The relative success of education reform in England and New South Wales owes much to an insistence on some form of external testing. The Commonwealth's national curriculum has not bitten this particular bullet. The success of the Finn proposals will hinge to a considerable degree on the same issue. Methods of assessment will play a part in determining whether the currently fashionable emphasis on skills reduces emphasis on content and mastery of knowledge. This is a potent danger, particularly in subjects not externally tested.<sup>8</sup>
- An article in *Twelve to Twenty-Five* states that: Fixing the nation's education and training system is not enough to fix the economy if employers (and unions) do not change their forms of work organisation.

The Finn Report argues that there is a great deal of overlap between the requirements for an effective and satisfying life as an individual or citizen, and the requirements for a productive and satisfying life at work in today's world. For many people this is a controversial statement. It is important that the focus on vocational preparation does not drown out the provision of less concrete types of education for young people which involve, say, creativity and artistic expression.

There is a danger that society's expectations of all young people will be set too high and become unattainable for those young people who have other issues to face.<sup>9</sup>

• An edition of *Education Monitor* states: Many would agree that the main purpose of education should be to prepare students for a happy, useful and satisfactory life. Nothing contributes more towards such a goal than having a secure job, which in turn would enable most people to afford a house, a car, and other contemporary necessities. Most other desirable outcomes of education would flow from this. This does not mean that all education should be vocational, but rather that there should be an optimum mix of curriculum offerings for each level of ability and interest. Pupils need to acquire basic skills, adequate knowledge of science and technology, culture the humanities, vocational preparation, and a positive attitude towards our country. At present we are failing to impart the humanities properly.<sup>10</sup>

Finn and Vocational Education, Education Monitor, Vol 3 No.1, Autumn 1992, Christopher Bantick.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Twelve to Twenty-Five, Op Cit.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> The Convergence of Vocational and General Education, Finn, Carmichael and After, *Education Monitor*, Vol 3 No.2., Winter 1992, A Baklien.