Lifelong Learning & the World of Work:
CEET’s surveys
for the ACCI, ACTU & ANTA

Christopher Selby Smith, Fran Ferrier, Gerald Burke,
Kaye Schofield, Michael Long & Chandra Shah

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Contents

Executive Summary iii

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background 1
i. Background to the present survey 1
ii. Major themes 4
iii. The Australian context 5
iv. CEET’s approach 7

Chapter 2: The Australian Context 9
i. Current participation 9
ii. Projected need for skills and education in the labour force 17
iii. Motivations of governments, employers and employees 19
iv. Resources: levels, shares and mechanisms 23

Chapter 3: Survey of Stakeholder Views 32
i. What is lifelong learning in the Australian context? 33
ii. Drivers of lifelong learning in Australia 35
iii. What's working well? 37
iv. What is not yet right? 39
v. What needs to be done differently? 47
Attachment 1: Symposium Program 50

Chapter 4: Diversity and Lifelong Learning 52
i. Australia: A diverse population 52
ii. Education and training policy 53
iii. Education and training for existing workers 55

Chapter 5: Faces of Success 69
i. Developing a learning community: The PEEL district 69
ii. Access to appropriate training: Indigenous Australians 70
iii. Flexibility: Employer/Employee/Institution partnerships 72
iv. Competency-based training 73
v. Within firms 73
vi. Enterprise-community partnerships 77
vii. Unions and employers working together 77
viii. Meeting the challenges of distance 78

Chapter 6: Summary and Possible Future Directions 80
Tables
Table 2.1: Enrolment Rates by Age Group, Full-time and Part-time Students, Public and Private Institutions, 1999
Table 2.2: Education Participation Rates, Australia, 1985 to 1999 (%)
Table 2.3: Participation in Training Outside Formal Education, mid 1990s
Table 2.4: Persons Aged 15 to 64 with a Wage or Salary Job in Last 12 months: Study or Training Courses in the Last 12 months, Australia
Table 2.5: Persons Completing Training Courses, Number of Courses and Average Hours Per Person Trained and Per Course, Australia (1997)
Table 2.6: Employer Expenditure on Structured Training, Australia
Table 2.7: Population Aged 15 to 64 by Educational Attainment, Australia, 2000 (%)
Table 2.8: Population Aged 16 to 65 at Each Literacy Level (%)
Table 2.9: Participation in Job Related Education and Training and Hours of Training by Literacy Level (mid 1990s)
Table 2.10: Population Change by Age, Australia
Table 2.11: Labour Force Participation Rates by Age and Sex, Australia (%)
Table 2.12: VET Operating Revenues, Australia, 1992 to 2000
Table 2.13: Government Recurrent Expenditure per VET Annual Hour Curriculum, Australia, 1997 to 2000
Table 2.14: Public Expenditure on Labour Market Programs (% of GDP)
Table 2.15: Employer Expenditure on Structured Training, Australia, 1996 (3 months)
Table 4.1: In-house Training During the Previous 12 Months, Participation and Hours per Employee (Persons who were wage and salary earners; Australia; 1989, 1993, 1997)
Table 4.2: External Training While Working During the Previous 12 Months, Participation and Hours per Employee (Persons who were wage and salary earners; Australia; 1989, 1993, 1997)
Table 4.3: Study for a Qualification in the Survey Year: Participation and Financial Support by Employers for Study (Persons who were wage and salary earners; Australia; 1989, 1993, 1997)

Figures
Figure 2.1: Population in Full-time Employment by Age and Qualification, Females, Australia, 2000 (%)
Figure 2.2: Annual Job Openings for New Entrants 2000-08 by Occupation by Skill and Qualification Level ('000)
Executive Summary

This survey of lifelong learning lays particular emphasis on the world of work, the need for retraining and the upgrading of skills and knowledge, and the contribution of vocational education and training (VET).

ACCI, the ACTU and ANTA asked the Centre to

- draw the various elements together in a policy-relevant way;
- include best practice examples;
- indicate possible improvements; and
- provide a report of about seventy-five pages by 30 June.

Chapter 1 outlines the background to the survey. It includes some brief discussion of the OECD’s previous work in the area of lifelong learning. This included four key features (a systemic view of learning; the centrality of the learner; the motivation to learn; and the multiple objectives of education and training systems) and five areas for countries to consider (recognise all forms of learning; stress on foundation skills; incorporate access and equity priorities; consider resource allocation across all sectors and settings; and seek broad collaboration in both policy development and implementation).

The chapter also outlines the framework principles for the various national studies (of which Australia’s is the first); some key features of the Australian context; and the Centre’s approach to the survey task.

Chapter 2 reviews participation in learning in Australia by persons of working age. It considers four matters in particular:

- the current level and distribution of adult participation in training and education, inside and outside formal educational institutions (and including both educational attainments and literacy);
- indicators of the need for increased participation in training, skills upgrading and continuing education. Interestingly, the participation rate for males in the Australian labour force fell among almost all age groups until the mid-1990’s (and appears to have stabilised since then), whereas the participation rates for females have been growing, especially among women aged 45 years and over;
- the motivations of governments, employers and employees, together with the incentives and obstacles to their lifelong learning. Since the late 1980’s there has been a process of continuing reform to VET, including industry training arrangements. The reform agenda has had two broad purposes: to assist individuals in responding to technological and structural change; and to improve the competitiveness of Australian industry. The chapter notes the wide range of implementation actions which have been taken and also the continuing differences between States and Territories.
• the resources provided for lifelong learning by governments, employers and employees, together with various ways of increasing training expenditures. A key question is the proportion of the total resources for lifelong learning provided by the respective stakeholders.

Chapter 3 summarises stakeholder views, based on a full day symposium in mid-May. Participants affirmed the substantial contribution that VET is making to lifelong learning; identified a range of changes which are needed; and emphasised that a whole-of-government approach is required. While lifelong learning can be advanced in workplaces and in education and training institutions, it also needs to be advanced in the community more broadly. Participants argued that governments need to work in genuine partnership with employer and employee associations, and also with a wider stakeholder group, to stimulate an informed demand for learning.

Three main conclusions emerged from the symposium discussions about what is working well and what is not yet right. First, Australia has made substantial progress in developing a systemic approach to lifelong learning over the last quarter-century. Secondly, a number of important matters need further improvement, in particular: funding; incentives; cross-sectoral cooperation; recognition of prior learning; access and equity; and decision-making (eg. whether industry-led or learner-centred). Thirdly, despite considerable agreement among the key stakeholders there were also important areas of disagreement.

Chapter 4 explores aspects of diversity in Australia and their relationship to lifelong learning and the world of work. Australia’s population is diverse, much more so than for many other OECD countries, and it has become increasingly diverse over the last fifty years. A number of indicators show that some aspects of the diversity in the overall population are not fully represented in participation in paid employment, education and training, or lifelong learning. Different groups of workers, for example, do not enjoy the same levels of employer support for education and training or the same range of opportunities to participate in lifelong learning. While Australian education and training policies have attempted to identify groups under-represented in VET, higher education, and adult and community education, and many initiatives have been implemented to meet the needs of these groups better, more needs to be done if lifelong learning is to be available to all on an equitable basis.

Chapter 5 presents stories that illustrate the many facets of successful lifelong learning in Australia. Although the earlier chapters have shown that lifelong learning continues to face a number of challenges, it is nevertheless being successfully implemented in enterprises, educational institutions and many communities throughout the country. While each example tends to offer a rather different emphasis, many of them demonstrate the importance of cooperative arrangements, networks and partnerships between a wide range of stakeholders, such as employers, employees, governments at all levels, education and training organisations, communities and unions. These stories, there are many others
available, illustrate good practice, innovative thinking and the capacity to meet some
difficult challenges. They also illustrate the broad commitment of the Australian
community to expanding the opportunities for many different individuals and
groups to benefit from lifelong learning.

Chapter 6 draws on the five different approaches involved in CEET’s survey ie. the
surveys of the available quantitative and qualitative material, the survey of the
views of key stakeholders, the survey of the experience for disadvantaged groups
and individuals, and case studies. The framework principles of BIAC-TUAC have
been adopted, except for that relating to wide and equitable access. To meet this
principle adequately would require major changes in policy and practice, which – as
in other countries – are unlikely to be acceptable to the social partners or the wider
society. There is considerable overlap between the motivations of the key
stakeholders, but also some differences in important areas (such as changes in the
labour market and their relationship to lifelong learning). The survey makes it clear
that, at least in Australia, a tripartite view of lifelong learning is incomplete. In terms
of possible improvements chapter 6 identifies four areas for particular attention:
first, funding issues; secondly, better integration of lifelong learning activities across
the various sectors of education and training; thirdly, access and equity issues; and
fourthly, the importance of involving a wide range of partners in developing and
implementing policies for lifelong learning.
Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

Introduction

This chapter sets out the background to the present study, together with some brief discussion of the OECD’s previous work in the area of lifelong learning, the particular involvement of BIAC and TUAC, and the specific matters which CEET has been asked to investigate.

i. Background to the present survey: The Monash University-Australian Council for Educational Research Centre for the Economics of Education and Training (CEET) was approached by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) to undertake the present study of lifelong learning and the world of work. As part of the OECD’s work program aimed at developing studies and policy recommendations for use in member countries, BIAC (the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD) and TUAC (the Trade Union Advisory Committee) are collecting further information on the situation concerning lifelong learning from the viewpoint of their affiliates in individual OECD countries ie. the trade unions and employers represented by the ACTU and ACCI. Since the survey focuses on the world of work, and particularly on the need for retraining and upgrading of skills and knowledge, the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) agreed to support the survey.

The OECD has placed a high priority on lifelong learning. The case for lifelong learning is based on the importance of knowledge and skills, human capital, for economic growth and social development; and the recognition that education and training systems play a crucial role in fostering the development of the human capital which is needed. New and old skills demanded in the labour market need to be complemented by skills that help foster the social networks, norms and values, social capital, that are essential for well-functioning democracies, with active participation by citizens. Institutions for learning can help to create values for social cooperation and thus nurture social capital along with families, local communities and firms. There is an important role for education and training systems to play in promoting equity. Even though overall education levels have increased over the past few decades, education and training opportunities continue to be unevenly distributed. New risks of inequality may also be emerging. The OECD has expressed particular concern that unequal access to, and use of information and communication technologies could reinforce existing inequities through the development of a new “digital divide”.

Initially the concept of lifelong learning tended to focus on giving to adults access to formal courses at educational institutions. However, in 1996 the OECD Education Ministers adopted a more comprehensive approach. It covered all purposeful learning activities which aim to improve knowledge and competencies (OECD, 1996). The present BIAC-TUAC survey is only concerned with a part of the cradle to grave continuum, specifically lifelong learning and the world of work.
There are four key features of the lifelong learning approach, as conceived by the OECD (CERI, 2001). First, it offers a systemic view of learning, since it examines the demand for, and the supply of, learning opportunities, as part of a connected system covering the whole lifecycle and comprising all forms of formal and informal learning. Secondly, it emphasises the centrality of the learner and the need for initiatives which cater for the diversity of learner needs. This represents a shift of attention from the supply of learning to the demand side. Thirdly, the approach emphasises the motivation to learn, and draws attention to self-paced and self-directed learning. Fourthly, it stresses the multiple objectives of education policy, which include economic, social or cultural outcomes; personal development; and citizenship. The lifelong approach also recognises that, for the individual, the priorities among these objectives can change over the lifecycle; and that each objective has to be taken into consideration in policy development.1

The OECD argues that there are five key areas for countries to consider when seeking to implement strategies for lifelong learning for all and in determining the priorities for policy reforms (CERI, 2001, pp. 17-40). First, recognise all forms of learning, not just formal courses of study. Recognition of prior learning in Australian VET seeks to address this matter; it can also be significant in articulation pathways. The OECD notes that “highly flexible non-university-level tertiary institutions - such as ... Australia’s technical and further education (TAFE) Colleges - can have many advantages in creating learning pathways. They can provide flexible entry points, offer remedial and foundation programs for those lacking entry prerequisites, and provide programs at several levels to allow individual students to meet a range of learning needs within a single institution” (CERI, 2001, p. 21). The OECD also comments that, whatever the weaknesses of national information and guidance services for youth, the weaknesses and gaps in services for adults are even more evident.

Secondly, the OECD stresses the importance of developing foundation skills that are wider than those traditionally identified as central, including in particular motivation and the capacity for self-directed learning. The international evidence clearly shows that those people without an upper secondary qualification and without strong literacy skills are among the least likely to participate in further education and training as adults, or as adults to take part in training within enterprises. Across OECD countries as a whole, some one in four 20 to 24 year olds have not completed upper secondary school. VET in schools programs, such as those in Australia, may have a valuable role to play in this respect. Recent research has highlighted some of the techniques that are successful in motivating adult learners (US Department of Education and OECD, 1999; OECD, 1999a). In general, adults appear to be most motivated when they draw on past experience; when learning is

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1 For more detailed discussion see CERI (2001), on which much of this background material is based, and the wide range of references which are cited there. The CERI report summarises many of the main results of the OECD’s work on lifelong learning since 1996 and identifies a range of future challenges.
located in the context of their own lives; when it is applied to real problems; and when they have choice and control over what they learn. A culture of learning is important for promoting adult learning; and the OECD suggests that an important determinant is the degree to which governments and the social partners are convinced of the need to refresh and upgrade adult skills.

Thirdly, the OECD emphasises the reformulation of access and equity priorities in a lifelong context, by looking at the opportunities which are available to individuals across their life-cycle and in the different settings where learning can occur. The OECD argues that knowledge-based economies and societies cannot afford to exclude a large part of their population from access to education and learning resources. Furthermore, inequalities in society often raise problems of mutual understanding and adjustment within organisations, in society at large and in the democratic process. However, the issues of equity are broadly social, cultural and economic and not just educational. There are cultural and social norms at stake, political interests and active pressure groups at work, so that education policies alone are unlikely to be sufficient in addressing the equity challenge. Social inequalities existing outside the education system contribute to educational inequalities in terms of access, opportunity, process and outcomes as well as in terms of the consequences of achievements and attainment.

Fourthly, the OECD stressed the importance of considering resource allocation across all sectors and settings, including — one might add — the incentives facing the various participants and the likely effect of such incentives on outcomes in terms of lifelong learning. The OECD argues that public authorities need to consider three aspects particularly. First, are the resources adequate to support lifelong learning for different types and settings of provision and over different phases of the life cycle? Secondly, are resources well used or can efficiency gains be achieved? That is, can more output be obtained from given inputs or the same outputs be achieved using a lesser quantum of resources? Thirdly, there are issues relating to the sources of funding. If more resources are required, who will pay for them and how can those resources be mobilised? Many OECD countries are relying on expanded private contributions and increased competition in the provision of learning opportunities to improve efficiency and increase capacity. The development of a training market and the introduction of User Choice are interesting examples in Australia, to which CEET’s research has contributed. Over the 1990s, there was a clear trend in favour of greater private contributions in many OECD countries (OECD, 1999b). They tended to be most prominent at the tertiary level, in the field of adult learning, and for early childhood education (see CERI, 2001, pp. 35-36 for some innovative examples in the United Kingdom, the University for Industry, and Denmark, the taximeter payments and other forms of institutional support).

Fifthly, the OECD has emphasised the requirement for collaboration in policy development and implementation among a wide range of partners, including ministries other than education. For example, the OECD’s thematic review of adult learning emphasised the close interaction that is required between education,
training, labour market and social policies in meeting the needs of adult learners (OECD, 1999a). The recent report of the OECD review team on lifelong learning in Norway recommended that implementation adopt “a whole of government approach ... [and] that the Prime Minister ask the Minister for Education, Research and Cultural Affairs to coordinate the implementation of the lifelong learning agenda across the various ministries” (OECD, 2001). Of course, since lifelong learning involves a wide range of stakeholders, the need for coordination in policy development and implementation is much wider than within government alone.

**ii. Major themes.** While BIAC and TUAC recognised explicitly, in establishing their survey on lifelong learning, that there is great diversity among the OECD member countries, they suggested a framework “derived from a consensus on the matters which must be addressed”. This framework underlies the approach adopted by CEET and it also underlies much of the discussion in the individual chapters. It is, of course, especially concerned with the world of work, and particularly on the need for retraining, the upgrading of skills and knowledge, and VET.

BIAC-TUAC’s draft framework proposed three principles.

- **First**, employers and employees *share responsibility* for lifelong learning; and within this broad framework both trade unions and employers’ organisations have an important role to play. Relatedly, they argued that systems of qualification and recognition should be established through partnership.

- **Secondly**, there must be *wide and equitable access* to lifelong learning opportunities for everyone in the society. This principle is breached at present in every OECD country; to meet it adequately will require major changes in policy and practice.

- **Thirdly**, “motivation is a key factor in learning”; competency development, understood in a broad sense encompassing knowledge, skills and attitudes, is “a key concept for teaching and learning”; and, although no one model fits all situations, “sector/industry specific frameworks can be feasible”.

BIAC-TUAC also wanted the survey to address four particular matters. First, they identified *motivations*, since they argued that shared responsibility for lifelong learning in individual countries is based on the motivations of each of the main actors they identified ie. governments, employers and employees. BIAC and TUAC drew a distinction between individual enterprises and employers’ organisations, just as they distinguished between individual employees and trade unions in relation to employees.

Secondly, BIAC and TUAC asked that consideration be given in the survey to the *methods and approaches for providing lifelong learning* in each country. The elements they identified include some with particular relevance to vocational education and training in Australia. For example, the elements identified by BIAC and TUAC
included: qualification frameworks; recognition, including assessment of prior learning and work experience; accreditation of providers; flexibility of delivery; interaction between workplaces and lifelong learning providers; quality control; and private as well as public providers based on a well-functioning market.

Thirdly, BIAC and TUAC asked that consideration be given in the country surveys to *resources and facilities*. They noted the shared responsibility of governments, employers and employees – as well as employers’ organisations and trade unions – for promoting lifelong learning and the effective use of resources. Nevertheless, BIAC and TUAC emphasised that governments bear “the main responsibility” for providing a good initial education; and that this is essential for successful lifelong learning. BIAC and TUAC encouraged those undertaking the individual country surveys to consider various schemes for encouraging lifelong learning in the world of work.

Finally, BIAC and TUAC asked that the country surveys identify any major obstacles which exist to lifelong learning or its effective utilisation. For example, it may be that there is no obvious use in the workplace for workers to utilise the new or improved knowledge, skills or attitudes which they have developed through some aspect of lifelong learning; or that there are gender specific obstacles in particular countries, circumstances or workplaces. BIAC and TUAC asked that, wherever possible, where such obstacles are identified, consideration also be given to how they could be removed, or at least their impact reduced.

**iii. The Australian context**\(^2\): The policy environment relevant to lifelong learning and the world of work is complex. Australia’s large geographical area, the variations in climate and economic structure among the States, and its increasingly multicultural population suggest care in generalising from experiences in one part of the country to the nation as a whole.

Governments provide around 85 per cent of the funding for education in Australia, and are major influences on educational policy and practice. Because of the federal structure of government, there are ongoing debates about the clarification of roles of the different levels and arms of government, and how to achieve better coordination among them. Although the federal (or Commonwealth) government does not have constitutional responsibility for education, except in regard to student financial support, it plays an important role in financing and setting broad policy directions. Both the VET and university sectors are raising increasing levels of income from non-government sources such as student charges and fee-for-service activities. Governments are encouraging the education system to be more responsive to student and industry demand. The role of government is gradually shifting from direct provision of education to one of steering and monitoring the system, and guaranteeing its quality.

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\(^2\) A country education profile is provided in *Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (2000)*.
The institutional framework for industrial relations is another area relevant to lifelong learning and the world of work where responsibilities are shared between the Commonwealth and State governments. Minimum conditions of employment, including wages, are specified by industrial awards. Depending on the industry and occupation involved, the awards may come under the jurisdiction of industrial relations tribunals at either Commonwealth or State level. Over the past decade there has been a marked move away from centralised awards applying to large sectors of the economy towards a greater reliance on enterprise-based agreements between employers and employees within the framework of minimum award conditions. Only in regard to labour market programs for the unemployed does the Commonwealth not share financial or operational responsibility with the States.

The influence of the Federal government in the vocational education and training sector (VET) is principally through the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), which began operations in 1994. ANTA is an agency overseen by an industry-based board, but accountable to a Council of Federal, State and Territory Government Ministers. ANTA’s role is to provide strategic direction and advice to the States and Territories, to support innovation and to spread effective practice through the provision of Federally-provided growth funds, and generally to strengthen the quality, flexibility and responsiveness of the VET system to its clients and users. ANTA is supported by a network of Industry Training Boards (ITBs) that provide advice from enterprises and unions. Delivery of public vocational education and training, however, is still mainly through State Government Institutes of Technical and Further Education (TAFEs), although private VET providers are now able to access a significant quantum of government funding. Historically cooperation in VET has proved difficult to achieve. The disjunction of responsibility, funding and accountability has contributed to the often slow progress in implementing change. Nevertheless, ANTA has overseen the introduction of a more uniform national training system, although considerable differences remain among the States and Territories.

Progress towards labour market flexibility in Australia has proceeded at an irregular pace and has involved a contest between two models: one seeking to decentralise employment regulation to the enterprise or workplace without excluding union involvement; and the other emphasising a more individualised approach to employment regulation. The present federal government has legislated to encourage the making of individual agreements and confine unions to a more marginal role in the process of employment regulation. Allied with, but not necessarily resulting from, the changed forms of regulation have been important changes in the Australian labour market, notably the growth of non-standard employment. Of particular importance from the perspective of lifelong learning is the rise of self-employment and the casualisation of the workforce. These changes have potentially major consequences for the type of training provided, where it is delivered, and who bears the cost. For the most part, awards no longer can regulate employer provision of training (Selby Smith, Ferrier, et al, 2001, pp. 20-24).
Like the economies of many other OECD countries the Australian economy has undergone significant structural changes over the past two decades. It has become much more open to international competition, a number of public sector activities have been restructured and privatised, and economic activity has become more diversified, with less reliance on primary production and manufacturing. The economic changes have been associated with extensive initiatives to increase skill levels through education and training, although changing labour market arrangements may have worked in the opposite direction. Half of the labour force now holds a post-school qualification (certificate, trade qualification, diploma or degree), and the number of people currently in education will increase this further as they enter the labour force and less well-qualified persons retire. For example, over the past two decades the proportion of full-time workers with university degrees has tripled.

iv. **CEET’s approach:** In this section the approach taken by CEET is outlined, together with the process adopted for the survey and the structure of the report. First, members of the Steering Committee requested that the report should survey existing arrangements for lifelong learning in Australia (ie. “reflect national realities”), particularly those relating to experience in the world of work, the need for retraining and the upgrading of skills and knowledge, and the particular contribution of the VET sector. Secondly, it was emphasised that the survey should draw the various elements together in a policy-relevant way. Thirdly, it was requested that the report include “best practice examples”, especially those which illustrate successful cooperation between the social partners and between them and the public authorities. Finally, the Centre was asked, where possible, to indicate some possible improvements to the current arrangements which arise from the survey findings. The survey was to be no more than seventy to eighty pages in length.

The **structure** of the report is based on the CEET proposal which was approved by the Steering Committee in late February:

- Executive Summary
- Chapter 1: Introduction and Background
- Chapter 2: The Australian Context (A survey of existing Australian studies and data sources)
- Chapter 3: Survey of Stakeholder Views
- Chapter 4: Diversity and Lifelong Learning
- Chapter 5: Faces of Success
- Chapter 6: Summary and Possible Future Directions.

The report is a cooperative study by members of CEET. The overall direction of the survey rested with Chris Selby Smith, who also took responsibility for the executive summary and chapters 1, 3 and 6. Fran Ferrier was responsible for chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 2 was coordinated by Gerald Burke, with considerable contributions from Michael Long and Chandra Shah.
References:


Chapter 2: The Australian Context

Introduction

This chapter reviews participation in learning in Australia by persons of working age, providing a context for the issues considered later in the survey. The chapter considers four matters particularly:

i. the current level and distribution of adult participation in training and education in Australia;

ii. indicators of the need for increased participation in training, skills upgrading and continuing education;

iii. motivations of government, employers and employees in Australia, together with the incentives and obstacles to lifelong learning; and

iv. the resources provided for lifelong learning by governments, employers and employees.

i. Current participation: Australia has a high rate of participation of adults in formal education. The numbers participating in workplace training, however, appear to be lower than in several other high-income OECD countries.

Enrolment rates in formal education for 18 OECD countries are shown in Table 2.1. Among these countries, Australia has the highest participation rate for persons 40 years and over enrolled in formal education and is equal second with the United Kingdom (and behind Sweden) in the participation of 30 to 39 year olds. To a considerable extent the high levels of enrolment reflect the flexibility and the relevance of the offerings of Australia’s vocational education and training (VET) system. The VET system consists mainly of public providers, but also includes a growing number of private providers. Many students (Foyster, Hon and Shah, 2000, estimate about 50%) successfully complete units (modules or subjects) within the VET system, but do not complete a whole course. Older students, however, have a higher probability of course completion (Shah, 2001). The flexibility of the VET system allows enrolment as the need arises.

Table 2.2 shows that there has been a substantial increase in participation rates in formal education by older students in the last fifteen years. For persons aged 20 to 64 years, participation increased by about a half between 1985 and 1999. Table 2.2 shows that this increase has been distributed almost equally among 20 to 24 year olds, 25 to 29 year olds and 30 to 64 year olds.

There is a considerable participation in education and training outside that recorded in the formal education statistics. There are non-vocational enrolments in the technical and further education system and in the adult and community education...
There are large numbers of people in learning activities in churches and other institutions. There is also a large amount of training, especially in the workplace, that is not included in the statistics on formal education.

Table 2.1: Enrolment Rates by Age Group, Full-time and Part-time Students, Public and Private Institutions, 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>20 to 29 enrolments as % of the population aged 20 to 29</th>
<th>30 to 39 as % of the population 30 to 39</th>
<th>40 and over as % of the population over 40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
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<td>1.6</td>
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<td>7.3</td>
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<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
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<td>22.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unweighted average</strong></td>
<td><strong>24.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>6.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OECD 2001 Table C1.2
Table 2.2: Education Participation Rates, Australia, 1985 to 1999 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>15-19</th>
<th>20-24</th>
<th>25-29</th>
<th>30-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
<th>All ages 15+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra.

Note: Includes full or part-time participation in schools, publicly funded vocational education and training, and higher education.

Table 2.3 reports participation in training and further education outside formal education. Australians, on these estimates, participate in the equivalent of one year of training between the ages of 25 and 64 compared with over two years for persons in Finland, Norway and Denmark. About a quarter of all persons aged 25 to 64 are seen to participate in any year in Australia compared with over half in Sweden, Denmark and Finland.

Some further detail for Australia is given in Table 2.4. It shows the percentage of wage and salary earners who either studied or completed training courses in the twelve months prior to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) surveys in 1989, 1993 and 1997.

Training mainly attended by persons not working for the same employer and only partly financed by employers, i.e. external training, was markedly high in the 1997 survey. The percentage of wage and salary earners reporting this form of training rose from 12 per cent in 1993 to 20 per cent in 1997.

On the other hand, participation in in-house training, training mainly attended by persons working for the same employer, fell in the early 1990s and had not recovered its 1989 level by 1997.

Table 2.5 shows that the average length of training courses completed in a year was 26 hours in 1997. About half the labour force undertook training, on average about two training courses per year or about 55 hours of training in the year. This gives a total of over 200 million hours, which is equal in size to about two thirds of the hours delivered in the vocational education system.

The first results of a similar survey undertaken in 2001 became available as this report was being completed. The data are not strictly comparable with those in the earlier surveys. There is an indication of a small increase in the proportion of persons undertaking training courses compared with 1997. However, there was a decrease of over 15 per cent in the average hours duration of the training courses completed.
Table 2.3: Participation in Training Outside Formal Education, mid 1990s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Equivalent years</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>25-64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australia</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium (FL)</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), 1994-1998, as reported in OECD, 2001, Table C1.5

**Note:** m missing data

Table 2.4: Persons Aged 15 to 64 with a Wage or Salary Job in Last 12 months: Study or Training Courses in the Last 12 months, Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Study or Training Courses Undertaken (%)</th>
<th>Total study or training as % of wage and salary earners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Studied</td>
<td>In-house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** ABS, Catalogue Number 6278.0, Canberra.
### Table 2.5: Persons Completing Training Courses, Number of Courses and Average Hours Per Person Trained and Per Course, Australia (1997)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of persons completing training courses</th>
<th>'000</th>
<th>Average hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>While working</td>
<td>3,957</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not working</td>
<td>7,949</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8,306</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** ABS, Catalogue Number 6278.0, Canberra.

Table 2.6 shows a decline in the proportion of employers providing training in the mid-1990s, in the hours of training provided per employee and in expenditure on training as a proportion of the total wage bill. These changes perhaps reflect a shift towards greater *employee* responsibility for the funding of training (Long, 2002) rather than a decline in the total training effort (see also Smith, 2002).

### Table 2.6: Employer Expenditure on Structured Training, Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer size</th>
<th>1-19 employees</th>
<th>20-99</th>
<th>100 or more</th>
<th>All employers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of gross wages and salaries 1990</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of training per employee 1990</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% employers providing training 1990</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** ABS, Catalogue Number 6353.0, Canberra.

**Note:** Structured training is all training activities which have a predetermined plan and format designed to develop employment-related skills and competencies.

**Educational attainment and literacy**

Younger members of the population have higher levels of educational attainment than older persons. Table 2.7 shows that even among 35 to 44 year olds, persons who will be of working age for the next twenty years, only just over half hold a formal post-school educational qualification. Over a third of this age group did not
complete secondary school and did not report holding a post-school qualification, though some may have completed part of a program in vocational education and training.

Table 2.7: Population Aged 15 to 64 by Educational Attainment, Australia, 2000 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>15-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher education qualifications</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate diploma</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled vocational qualification</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic vocational qualification</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With post-school qualifications</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed highest level of school</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not complete highest level of school</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without post-school qualification</td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still at school</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ‘000</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,681</td>
<td>2,852</td>
<td>2,897</td>
<td>2,544</td>
<td>1,679</td>
<td>12,653</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS, Catalogue Number 6227.0, Canberra.

Literacy levels of the adult population were measured in an international literacy study in the 1990s. Table 2.8 provides information for document literacy. Level 1 indicates persons with very poor skills, where the individual may for example be unable to determine the correct amount of medicine to give to a child from information printed on the package. Level 2 respondents can deal only with material that is simple, clearly laid out and in which the tasks involved are not too complex. Level 3 is considered a suitable minimum for coping with the demands of everyday life and work in a complex advanced society. About 55 per cent of Australia’s adult population achieved at levels 3 to 5, better than in several countries such as the US, the UK and Ireland, but quite low compared with Sweden and Norway. This means that 45 per cent of adults in Australia are judged to have inadequate levels of literacy.

In Australia only 17 per cent of adults were measured at the higher literacy levels of 4 and 5. Only Ireland recorded a lower percentage at these levels. It is older persons that have the lowest levels of literacy (ABS, Catalogue Number 4228.0). Some 9 per cent of persons aged 20-24 years are at level 1 compared with 15 per cent of those aged 35-44 and 34 per cent of 55-64 year olds. Recent data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) show Australia's 15 year olds to be performing comparatively well internationally on such tests (ACER, 2001).
### Table 2.8: Population Aged 16 to 65 at Each Literacy Level (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IALS literacy level</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4 and 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australia</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** OECD (2000a).

**Note:** Literacy data from the International Adult Literacy Study (IALS) is reported for three domains: Prose, Document and Quantitative. The data here are for document literacy. Level 1 is the lowest level.

It is those persons with the lowest levels of literacy who participate least in further education and workplace training. While Australia has a high level of enrolment in formal education among mature age adults (and an average rate of participation in other forms of training) the education and training is undertaken mainly by those who completed secondary school and some further study. Table 2.9 shows that for Australia as a whole only 9 per cent of persons with Level 1 literacy participated in education and training, compared with over 50 per cent of those with literacy at Levels 4 and 5. This is the lowest rate of participation for those with low literacy levels among the countries listed, although those small numbers who did participate had more than average hours of participation.

Similarly, persons with qualifications in full-time employment participate more in study and in structured training than those without qualifications. (ABS, Catalogue Number 6278.0). Persons in full-time employment participate more too and, as indicated in Figures 2.1 and 2.2, it is persons with qualifications who are more likely to be in full-time employment, especially among females and older workers.
### Table 2.9: Participation in Job Related Education and Training and Hours of Training by Literacy Level (mid 1990s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Participation rate</th>
<th>Mean hours per participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IALS level 1</td>
<td>IALS level 4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IALS level 1</td>
<td>IALS level 4/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** OECD (1998), Table C5.4, Paris.

**Importance of education and training for full-time employment**

Among both males and females there has been a growth in part-time and in casual work. About 19 per cent of workers did not have leave entitlements (casual workers) in 1990, but this had grown to 27 per cent by 2000. Over a quarter of women aged 25 to 64 years who were in employment in 2000 worked part-time and about 7 per cent of men. Of total employment at all ages, the proportion working full-time declined from 79 per cent in 1990 to 73 per cent in 2000. At the same time those working full-time are tending to work longer hours, some very long hours, so that the average hour per person employed is changing very little.

Part-time work, casual work and unemployment are concentrated among those with lower levels of educational attainment. Full-time employment is held disproportionately by those with higher education qualifications. For example, among males aged 45 to 64 years nearly 80 per cent of degree holders are in full-time work, compared with less than 60 per cent of those who did not complete school. For females, as shown in Figure 2.1, the differences by qualifications are much greater than for males. For example, over 55 per cent of females aged 45 to 64 years with degrees are in full-time work, compared with 22 per cent of those who have not completed school.
An increase in educational participation, attainment and literacy among middle to older aged males and females may be a way of sustaining the labour force in the face of the reduced growth or decline in number of younger workers which is expected in the future.

**ii. Projected need for skills and education in the labour force:** The changes taking place in the Australian economy are resulting in a greater expansion in higher skill jobs, though there is also an expansion in some relatively low skill jobs. Job openings for new entrants are also created through the replacement of those who leave an occupation. Figure 2.2 provides estimates of the job openings for new entrants by major occupation groups ranked by skill level. It shows that the most job openings are at the highest skill levels, though it also shows that there are considerable openings at the lowest levels. Many of the jobs at the lowest level are part-time, so the equivalent full-time openings would be a little more skewed to the high skill jobs.
There appears to be a relatively small number of jobs at the middle skills and qualifications level. This should, however, not necessarily be taken to mean that there is little need for middle level skills. Figure 2.2 only deals with one dimension of the demand for training. It does not capture other major drivers of training such as:

- the need for retraining an ageing workforce;
- new work processes, quality assurance processes, new technologies and emerging industries;
- the need to raise the basic education, literacy and skill levels of many workers;
- the need for workers to be better educated or trained in the key competencies and in generic skills such as communication skills and working in teams.

Table 2.10 shows that the total population up to age 39 is declining or growing very slowly. All the growth is concentrated in the next decade on persons 40 years and over.
Table 2.10: Population Change by Age, Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>2001 ('000)</th>
<th>2011 ('000)</th>
<th>Annual rate of growth 2001 to 2011 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to 19</td>
<td>5,285</td>
<td>5,176</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 39</td>
<td>5,775</td>
<td>5,935</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 59</td>
<td>5,120</td>
<td>5,889</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 79</td>
<td>2,620</td>
<td>3,469</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 and over</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19,387</td>
<td>21,289</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS, Catalogue Number 3222.0, Canberra.

Table 2.11 shows that the participation rates of males in the labour force fell among almost all age groups until the mid-1990s, but appears to have stabilised since then at an average rate of 82 per cent for the age group 15 to 64 years. Participation rates of females have been growing, especially among women aged 45 and over. The rate for all females aged 15 to 64 years is 66 per cent. An increase in labour force participation among older males and females may be a way of sustaining the labour force in the face of the reduced growth (or decline) in number of younger workers.

iii. Motivations of governments, employers and employees:

From the late 1980s there has been continuous reform to the VET system. Cowan (2002) summarised these as having a twofold purpose. First, there has been a need to respond to technological and structural change. Secondly, there has been a need to improve the competitiveness of Australian business and industry in the global economy. Reforms were led by the Commonwealth through the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). ANTA came into effective operation in 1994 and reports to a board comprising industry representatives, nearly all employer/business representatives and one union representative, and through it to a council of the Commonwealth and all the State and Territory Ministers.
Table 2.11: Labour Force Participation Rates by Age and Sex, Australia (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-64</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS, Catalogue Number 6203.0, Canberra.

Note: The labour force comprises those in employment for one or more hours a week and those not employed but actively looking for work (the unemployed).

ANTA's policies have aimed to make the VET system more responsive to the needs of industry and more nationally consistent. They have included:

- a competency-based approach to training with increased industry involvement in the development of standards and an expansion of structured training from traditional trades into other industries and occupations;
- the articulation of career pathways between levels of education and training;
- a national framework for quality assurance and the recognition of training providers across State and Territory borders;
- the development of a more unified entry level training system; and
- the development of the training market.

Various actions have been taken to implement these reforms. They have included:

- ‘Training Packages’ developed under the guidance of industry training advisory boards with active and extensive employer and employee representation. The packages include competencies, articulated qualifications and the assessment procedures. Training packages are now available for nearly all industries.

- New Apprenticeships –
  - revision to the existing trade apprenticeship and traineeship schemes;
  - revisions to the subsidy to employers of apprentices;
  - extension to a wide range of new occupations and age groups;
  - support with information and assistance for employers and trainees through government funded New Apprenticeship Centres;
• provision for secondary school participation;
• part-time apprenticeships; and
• provision for wholly on-the-job traineeships.

- Extension of the provision of recognised vocational education and training in secondary schools, often delivered in conjunction with public or private VET providers.

- Putting to tender, by public or private providers of training, part of the publicly funded provision of training.

- ‘User Choice’ for the New Apprenticeship arrangements. Since 1998 this reform has given employers and New Apprentices (ie. apprentices and trainees) the choice of provider of the ‘off-the-job’ training or assessment, with the government funds flowing to the provider, whether public or private.

- The Australian Quality Training Framework to assure quality in the VET system, ensure that training meets the expressed needs of industry and results in portable skills and nationally recognised qualifications.

- A range of programs to promote equity among less advantaged groups and persons with a disability.

- Increasing recognition in policy statements of the importance of lifelong learning.

- Support for flexible delivery and in particular on-line learning.

- The development of a marketing strategy aimed particularly at
  • employers seen as pragmatic about training rather than 'high valuers', providing them with information on training and its benefits; and
  • the group in the general population who were classified as 'might give it away', to sustain their interest in training.

These reforms have taken slightly different forms in each of the States and Territories. They were made in concert with local funding and organisational decisions, particularly in regard to the devolution of management of their own finances to VET public providers and the encouragement for them to seek additional ‘fee for service’ private finances from individuals, employers and foreign students. In the pursuit of efficient use of resources there has been a move by States and Territories to be seen no longer as the operator of the public VET system, but instead as the purchaser of training from public and private providers.

Throughout this period of reform, and the push towards more market-oriented operations, however, student fees for publicly funded places in VET have remained in general very low (yielding only about 5 per cent of total revenues) and disadvantaged students were partially or wholly exempt from fees. Access to the system has remained very high, as indicated by the rapid growth in the number of students.

The reforms to VET initiated in the late 1980s were developed in a context of reform to the industrial relations system and linked to workforce flexibility and wage
rewards associated with skills. The ANTA Board and the Industry Training Advisory Boards at both Commonwealth and State levels were sites for employer-employee dialogue on the development of policy. Since that time, however, the industrial relations scene has changed substantially. Industry wide awards have become less important and enterprise and individual (or no) agreements more common. Trade union membership has fallen sharply, from 41 per cent of employees in 1990 to 25 per cent in 2000 (ABS, Catalogue Number 6310.0). This has been accompanied by (and at least partially reflects) changes in employment, including: a decline in public sector employment; stagnation in manufacturing employment; and a growth in casual and part-time employment.

There have been occasional surveys of Employer Training Practices, but the last was in 1997 (ABS, 1998; Long and Burke, 1998). These surveys have given valuable insights into employer behaviour in relation to training. A wide range of factors are associated with the provision of training, and there is a large variation in firms’ provision and practices:

- the main reasons for employers to provide structured training were to improve the performance of workers in their current jobs, followed by improvement in the quality of goods and services and to respond to new technology;
- larger firms, firms that made significant changes in their operations, that had been operating longer, were public rather than private, or firms that employed apprentices or trainees were more likely to undertake structured training;
- changes in technology appeared to be the main factor where increased expenditures on training occurred;
- changes in industrial relations were associated with structured training, but enterprise bargaining did not appear to be a notable factor;
- limitations to the provision of structured training appeared to be due mainly to demand factors rather than to problems of supply. Employers who did not provide training gave the response 'current employees adequately trained' as the most common reason for not providing training;
- time constraints and cost constraints were reported most by firms that did engage in training;
- relatively few firms reported limitations arising from 'no suitable training available', from a lack of suitable trainers or from unsuitable times or locations; and
- the main public provider, TAFE, was seen as less flexible than other training providers. It tended to be selected because of the convenience of its location, the timing of its courses and the extent to which the course could be customised.

The ANTA marketing strategy is relevant to the issue of the perception that current employees are adequately trained. In promoting the benefits of training it should be noted that research in most other countries shows a high rate of return to investment
in workplace training. Long (2001) has shown that the wage effects of training in Australia are surprisingly large and that employers appear to fund general training, which is useful to more than one employer, as well as training specific to their own enterprise. International research (see Long et al, 2000) suggests that (on average) about half the benefits of workplace based training are received by employees in the form of increased wages and about half by employers. The return to employers is still large enough to justify an expansion of investment.

Recognition of the benefits of training is one of the reasons underlying the move to have a firm's intellectual capital reported to shareholders. In general, there appears to be an incentive for firms that depend on intellectual capital to pay more attention to improving conditions for workers with higher levels of education, primarily in order to retain these workers and the knowledge and skills they embody. There is also an incentive to invest in knowledge creation and development in order to counter the tendency of knowledge to become redundant fairly rapidly. Ferrier has undertaken work on the recognition of intellectual capital in Australia and on ways of measuring and reporting it (Ferrier, 2002).

The importance to employees of the vocational benefits of education and training has been well established in surveys by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research in Adelaide (NCVER, 2001). About 80 per cent of those who graduate give vocational reasons for undertaking training in the publicly funded VET system, though the proportion is smaller, about 67 per cent, for those who only complete modules (part of a course) and then leave the training system.

The role of trade unions in training has diminished with the decline in union membership but the impact of unions does extend beyond their numerical membership. Workplace surveys suggest that there is more training in the workplace when the union has a sizeable presence as compared with non-unionised workplaces (Long, 1998).

iv. Resources: levels, shares and mechanisms: An increase in the provision of training over a lifetime has to be funded. Principally it is funded in Australia by governments, employers or the trainees and their families. This section briefly outlines what has been occurring in the funding of vocational education and training.

Table 2.12 covers the revenues of the public VET institutions, including their private funds, and the public funds that flow to private providers of VET. Table 2.13 provides more detail on the use of public funds and the hours of training which are delivered. Interesting points include:

- the rise and then slight fall in the Commonwealth government’s funding (though the funds have increased a little from 2001);
- the increase in private funds, which would include some payments by employers for training;
the decline in VET’s total revenues in recent years when the revenues are revalued to constant prices; and

public funds per publicly funded hour of training declined in constant prices by more than 10 per cent (possibly nearer to 20 per cent) in the years 1997 to 2000.

Thus, the rapid enrolment increases which have been occurring in the VET system have been funded with constant or declining funds when measured in real terms.

These tables do not include labour market programs or subsidies to employers of apprentices. The latter have been maintained, but the outlays on training programs for the unemployed have been reduced in recent years. Australia's provision in this area is relatively low by OECD standards (OECD, 2000b).

As noted in Table 2.6 there is some indication that employer expenditure, especially among medium sized employers (20 to 99 employees), had fallen in the mid-1990s. No later data are available. Table 2.14 provides some further detail from the survey. Very few small employers reported the provision of structured training and only about half of the medium sized employers.

In the early 1990s Australia had a training guarantee levy, which required medium and large employers to undertake expenditures on training or to pay a levy to the government. The scheme appeared to increase the level of expenditure of medium sized employers, but not larger ones, whose expenditure usually exceeded the required level prior to the introduction of the scheme. Arguments against the scheme were its unpopularity with employers and also that it took no account of the way in which the amount of training required could vary with the type of employment (Teicher, 1995).
Table 2.12: VET Operating Revenues, Australia, 1992 to 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1992</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td></td>
<td>($m)</td>
<td>($m)</td>
<td>($m)</td>
<td>(%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Recurrent</td>
<td></td>
<td>437</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Capital</td>
<td></td>
<td>220</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Specific Purpose - ANTA</td>
<td></td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Specific Purpose - Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Commonwealth</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>657</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>1027</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other government</td>
<td></td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Recurrent</td>
<td></td>
<td>1792</td>
<td>2071</td>
<td>2156</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Capital</td>
<td></td>
<td>113</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Government</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2562</td>
<td>3294</td>
<td>3415</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee for service</td>
<td></td>
<td>274</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancillary Trading and other</td>
<td></td>
<td>122</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student fees</td>
<td></td>
<td>98</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3056</td>
<td>3964</td>
<td>4260</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government funds at 2000 prices</td>
<td></td>
<td>$m</td>
<td>$m</td>
<td>$m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total at 2000 prices</td>
<td></td>
<td>3347</td>
<td>3773</td>
<td>3415</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3991</td>
<td>4540</td>
<td>4260</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Burke (2002) based on NCVER (2001 and earlier publications).

**Note:** Changes in the collection and the introduction of accrual accounting from 1997 affect comparisons over time.
Table 2.13: Government Recurrent Expenditure per VET Annual Hour Curriculum, Australia, 1997 to 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1997 ($m)</th>
<th>1998 ($m)</th>
<th>1999 ($m)</th>
<th>2000 ($m)</th>
<th>Change 1997 to 2000 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government recurrent expenditure - actual</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,114</td>
<td>3,207</td>
<td>3,219</td>
<td>3,297</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted Annual Hours Curriculum AAHC (millions)</td>
<td></td>
<td>228</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government expenditure per hour of training</td>
<td></td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actual / AAHC</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 prices (GDP deflator)/ AAHC</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 prices (alternative deflator)/ AAHC</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>-17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.14: Public Expenditure on Labour Market Programs
(% of GDP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1999 or year stated</th>
<th>Active labour market programs</th>
<th>Of which - labour market training for adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark 1999</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium 1998</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France 1998</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal 1998</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada 1998</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland 1996</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand 1998-99</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland 1998</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Australia 1997-98</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece 1997</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea 1998</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom 1997-98</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan 1998-99</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg 1997</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland 1998</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States 1998-99</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OECD (2000b), Statistical Annex Table H
Note:  m represents missing data.
Table 2.15: Employer Expenditure on Structured Training, Australia, 1996 (3 months)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer size</th>
<th>1-19 employees</th>
<th>20-99</th>
<th>100 or more</th>
<th>All employers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total expenditure ($billion)</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of gross wages and salaries</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure per employee ($)</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee costs ($)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other training costs ($)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training per employee (hours)</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>4.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure per training hour ($)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Employers Reporting Expenditure (Hours per employee)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers providing training (%)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector (% of gross wages)</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector (% of gross wages)</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS, Catalogue Number 6353.0, Canberra.

There are a wide range of possible ways of increasing training expenditures among adults, involving additional contributions from governments, employers and students/trainees. A wide range of schemes is discussed by Gasskov (2001) and Burke (2002). These include:

- Schemes to free government funds for the less advantaged by reducing subsidies to the advantaged without reducing their participation. Such schemes include fees and income contingent public or private loans.
- Entitlements that ensure that less advantaged people have access to the same or more government funds as the more advantaged and which encourage complementary private spending.
- Improved disclosure of a firm's human and intellectual resources in capital markets, that makes it easier to demonstrate links between training and profitability and to provide incentives for employer training.
- Promotion of employer social obligation and social partnerships.
- Continuation of contracts of training, especially apprenticeships, that permit below market wages in return for provision of general training.
- Reconsideration of a levy – perhaps voluntarily agreed among employers and employees - for minimum training requirements by employers and for provision of training leave.
• Increased subsidies or tax incentives encouraging employer expenditure on training, especially for small firms.

• Continued development of information systems for students and trainees, in order to optimise their choices and returns to training.

• Continued simplification and development of the training framework and qualifications infrastructure; and other training support for employers and trainees.

• Extension of schemes for student living costs for alternative forms of learning for adults.

References


Chapter 3: Survey of Stakeholder Views

Introduction

As part of the survey for BIAC and TUAC, CEET convened a full day symposium on lifelong learning and the world of work. It was held in Melbourne on 16 May 2002. A copy of the program is at Attachment 1. The symposium involved twenty-eight senior delegates representing a range of constituencies - employer associations, trade unions, national and state governments, public and private vocational education and training providers, small business and the research and consulting community. Of course, not every possible viewpoint could be accommodated in the limited time available; and in retrospect a particular absence was the adult and community education sector (ACE), which makes a small but significant contribution to adult learning, and to overall social and individual development in Australia.

The symposium opened with an overview of the BIAC-TUAC survey and the key features of OECD’s approach to lifelong learning. Delegates from trade unions, employer organisations and government each made brief presentations on their current experience and opportunities for improvement, followed by discussion of the commonalities and differences between the three perspectives.

Other stakeholders then offered their insights, providing different perspectives and also good practice examples of lifelong learning for people with disabilities, for nurses, for overseas-qualified professionals, for disadvantaged workers, for agricultural workers and for people working in non-government organisations.

Kaye Schofield, the executive director of RCVET, the Research Centre in Vocational Education and Training at the University of Technology, Sydney (an Australian National Training Authority key centre), prepared a report on the main themes which emerged at the symposium; and this chapter is largely based on it. CEET will be publishing the full proceedings later this year, including participant views, the more detailed information presented, and additional points made during the discussion.

Overall, the symposium acknowledged and affirmed the substantial contribution that vocational education and training (VET) has made to lifelong learning in Australia. It also identified a range of future changes which are needed. But lifelong learning is not the preserve of the VET sector alone. It must now join-up more effectively with all other parts of education and training in a whole-of-government approach. It was emphasised that while lifelong learning can be advanced in workplaces and in education and training institutions, it also needs to be advanced in the community more broadly. Participants argued that governments need to work in genuine partnership with employer and employee associations, and also with a wider stakeholder group, to stimulate an informed demand for learning across all parts of Australian economic and social life.
i. What is lifelong learning in the Australian context? A shared understanding of what lifelong learning means in the Australian context is a pre-requisite for advancing lifelong learning policy and practice. Although the symposium was focused on lifelong learning and the world of work, much of the initial discussion favoured a narrower rather than a wider interpretation. It assumed lifelong learning to be primarily formal post-school education and training provided through the publicly funded vocational education and training (VET) sector and delivered through registered public, private and community training organisations. Links to non-formal and informal learning were largely seen through the lens of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Recognition of Current Competence (RCC).

However, some participants emphasised that lifelong learning needs to be interpreted more widely, beyond formal education and training to encompass non-formal and informal learning in workplaces, institutions and in community life more broadly. Distinguishing between lifelong learning and lifelong training is important; it was emphasised that there can be a danger that lifelong learning degenerates into training credentialism.

Context matters
The state of lifelong learning in Australia, as elsewhere, needs to be considered in its context. Since 1974 Australia has used lifelong learning as a master concept, although not always under that title. Initially this policy direction was embodied in the Kangan Report (Kangan, 1974) which put into practice many of the principles of lifelong learning developed in UNESCO’s Faure Report (Faure, 1972).

The Kangan Report established a new sector comprising publicly funded Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges to provide both vocational and general lifelong and life-wide learning for adults. Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, the concept of lifelong or recurrent education came to be seen as the specific property of TAFE, rather than as an underlying vision for all education, formal and informal.

In the late 1980s Australian policy shifted to what has become known today as the national training system, with an emphasis on formal vocational education and training. Again, while not promulgated under the title of lifelong learning, the national training system in its various iterations has continued to reflect and pursue many of the core principles of lifelong learning such as:

- a national training system to support labour mobility;
- encompassing all labour market sectors;
- providing vocational learning opportunities for adults of all ages and from all social backgrounds;
- accessible to people in employment and also those looking for employment;
• client focussed;
• user driven;
• an emphasis on flexible learning, taking account of client and user preferences and utilising new learning technologies to enhance flexibility;
• multiple post-compulsory pathways, with a strong emphasis on articulation with other formal education and training sectors;
• continuing commitment to equity for those most disadvantaged in the labour market and society more broadly; and
• collaboration and partnerships between employers, trade unions and governments to achieve mutually agreed policy objectives.

Tensions
The symposium drew out some of the tensions underlying the assumption that the national training system can be equated to a lifelong learning policy. Four particular tensions recurred.

• The relationship between informal and non-formal education and training and the formal national training system currently in place.
• The respective roles and influence of the direct clients (individual learners) and users (enterprises/employers) in determining policy and resource allocations.
• Different perspectives on learning and the world of work held by the four education and training sectors: schooling; VET; higher education; and adult and community education. Symposium participants recognised that differences between these sectoral perspectives and workplace perspectives need to be addressed if a more holistic approach to public policy is to be achieved.
• Interpretations of lifelong learning as continuous personal development and as continuous skill formation.

Institutions and workplaces
The symposium also highlighted differences amongst stakeholders about the engine of lifelong learning – workplaces or institutions. All stakeholders recognised the need for a strong, dynamic, innovative and flexible system of institutional provision through publicly funded TAFE Institutes and Colleges. However, there were significant differences among the participants about what is the desirable balance between institution-based vocational learning and work-based vocational learning (and therefore resource allocations).

The trade union movement and the employer associations argued that the workplace must be the centrepiece of lifelong learning. As one stakeholder put it,

“…Lifelong learning must be a workplace based event and outcome…firmly rooted in workplaces, not in formal training institutions, if lifelong learning is to
have any chance of success. Lifelong learning must get out of the classroom and into the workplace culture.”

Teacher unions recognised the importance of enhanced work-based learning, but did not want this growth to be at the expense of the public TAFE system. The public system provides not only for those in the workforce but also for those not in the workforce or who work in places which have no commitment to lifelong learning or to training and development. They emphasised the need for a better balance between public TAFE provision on the one hand and private provision in enterprises and private training organisations on the other.

Stakeholders from government, while recognising the need for a high quality public TAFE system, tended to see the VET system moving inexorably from an institution-based system to a workplace-based system centred around contracts of training (apprenticeships and traineeships).

Interestingly, all stakeholders seemed to recognise that between institutional provision and workplace provision lies the matter of individual and employer choice; and that there is, as yet, no clear shared vision of how this might play itself out in the future.

**i. Drivers of lifelong learning in Australia:** Macro-factors such as globalisation, scientific and technological change, the changing nature of work, an aging workforce and the need to assure Australia’s economic competitiveness and social cohesion were widely recognised as factors driving increased interest in lifelong learning. However, participants emphasised that different factors play out in different parts of the economy and in society at different times.

**Industry and firm dynamics**
Each industry, occupation and enterprise has its own dynamic. Overall, however, there appeared to be a growing awareness of the importance of lifelong learning. A number of examples were provided at the symposium.

For example, in an ever-changing health environment, nurses need to be lifelong learners. New technology for management data, clinical outcome data, online reporting, tele-medicine and new machinery such as ECGs and CTGs are making new demands on nurses, while new medical techniques and improving diagnostics are changing the way nurses care for patients. Also, patient expectations of nursing services are higher than ever. Globalisation of information has made patients both more informed and more ill informed. They expect more choices and they expect nurses to provide more help with making those choices. Litigation is also a driving factor. Overall, there is a rising need for ongoing education and continuing professional development, not least as a risk management strategy.

Another example related to the emergent electrical contracting industry, where projected skill shortages, labour turnover and a changing industry were all identified as key factors in driving lifelong learning. A 2% growth in apprentice numbers is outweighed by a 5% growth in demand, 36% wastage during
apprenticeship and the fact that around 50% of tradespeople have dropped out of the trade by the age of thirty. There is also argued to be a need for different skill sets as the industry deals with technological change and the convergence of information technologies with traditional electrical and electronic trades.

Changing demographics and changing attitudes to work mean that many firms can no longer rely on recruitment of young people as the primary mechanism for replenishing the skills of their workforce. More attention is being directed to upgrading the skills of the existing and aging workforce. This will require new attitudes and approaches to the learning needs of older people, especially older workers, and the abandonment of negative stereotypes about them.

It was argued that the more sophisticated firms are aligning their training and development decisions increasingly with their long-term business strategy. In such cases, training and development strategies are used to support technological and organisational change, entry to new markets and the establishment of new structures in the marketplace. These firms approach training and development from the perspective of the needs of the enterprise rather than the needs of the individual. They are increasingly expecting individual employees to take responsibility for their own ongoing development. Companies are also looking for better ways to understand the previous skill development of their employees.

**Individual preferences and aspirations**

Changing attitudes of individuals are also driving lifelong learning and the symposium was reminded that lifelong learning should reflect not only the needs of globalisation, technological change and workplaces, it should also reflect the needs of workers and would-be workers as well as citizens.

How individuals manage their learning and their careers varies by industry, skills profile, age and previous educational experiences. But individual learners are not following linear pathways any more. They ‘swirl’ – dropping in and out of different learning sites and institutions and transferring freely between them and between work and study. Often linear pathways, embodied in traditional models of learner progression from education to work, as conceived by policy-makers, no longer apply. Symposium participants emphasised that learners are increasingly constructing their own routes – formal and informal – according to their own needs, aspirations and circumstances and assuming greater responsibility for their own employability.

e-Learning is beginning to open up new opportunities for lifelong learning in the workplace, in the home and in the community, although take-up is still relatively patchy. Often e-Learning appears to benefit those who are already advantaged. Symposium participants suggested that e-Learning cannot yet be considered as a driver of lifelong learning, when lifelong learning is conceived only in terms of formal vocational education and training.
A further consideration in understanding what is driving lifelong learning is the changing nature of learning itself. Breakthroughs in neuroscience, the emergence of new learning theory, recognition of new modes of knowledge production which emphasise non-codified and tacit knowledge and continuous learning work, together with the changing nature of skill are all combining to make us think differently about learning generally and vocational learning specifically.

iii. What’s working well? All participants in the symposium recognised the substantial progress Australia has made in developing a systemic approach to lifelong learning over the past twenty-five years.

Key achievements
There is little doubt that the achievements in lifelong vocational education and training in Australia have been significant. For example:

- Industry-defined vocational qualifications now cover more than 80% of the workforce below degree level and almost all industries are now covered by VET qualifications.
- Training which was in the past company-specific can now lead to nationally recognised, portable qualifications.
- Over the past six years the number of new workers under contracts of training (apprenticeships and traineeships) has increased by almost 50%.
- There have been large increases in the number of school students undertaking recognised VET programs.
- Some 13% of people aged 16-64 are currently engaged in vocational education and training.
- Significant financial incentives are available to employers to take on an apprentice or trainee and provide structured work-based training.
- More than 1.7 million Australians are engaged in publicly funded VET programs each year.
- The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) aligns formal qualifications across all sectors of education and training.
- Shared commitment by unions and employers to the national VET system.

Good practice
The symposium also identified many creative examples of good practice occurring throughout the country.

- The Skillmax program in NSW, which offers a collaborative, cross-agency program designed to meet the needs of overseas qualified professionals for more than twenty years, as part of a larger NSW Migrant Skills Strategy.
• The two-year pilot project by Edge Training Solutions in Perth, Western Australia, to secure and support apprenticeships for people with disabilities. Their achievements illustrate the possibilities of moving people with disabilities into the economic mainstream if sufficient resources are allocated to underwrite both their employment and training support needs.

• The Wyong Mature Workers Program (TAFE NSW), illustrating how the needs of mature-aged unemployed people can be met in new and flexible ways to enhance their employability.

• The Certificate IV in Interagency Practice - Child Abuse through the Adelaide Institute of TAFE, illustrating the principle of “shared responsibility” and “mutual respect” through successful cooperation between the social partners and government agencies.

• Innovative and flexible provision of agricultural training by the Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture to a very broad client base. Their clients include men and women aged from 15 to over 60 years, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people born overseas, people who speak a language other than English, prisoners, and people from regional, rural and remote communities. Almost half of the College’s clients in 2001 were people who had left school at or earlier than Year 10.

Broad policy settings
A widely held (but not unanimous) view at the symposium was that current policy settings provide an essentially sound framework which enjoys bipartisan support at the political level and strong support from both the trade union movement and employer associations. One delegate spoke for many with the following comment:

“Whilst there are some queries to be raised regarding the quality of outcomes produced by the VET sector, the fundamentals of the system are nevertheless sound. Much work has already been done.”

From the trade union perspective, lifelong learning is increasingly underpinned by policy settings such as award restructuring, skill-based classification structures, awards and agreements which promote a culture of continuous training, competency-based training, Training Packages and by assessment, including through recognition of prior learning and recognition of current competence. The establishment of traineeships is widely seen as a major contribution to building the culture and practice of lifelong learning in Australia.

From the perspective of employer associations, employer/employee choice is the basis of lifelong involvement in training and the policy of User Choice has been a key instrument giving it practical effect. Building relationships between the training organisation and the employer is also seen to be crucial. National companies appreciate the opportunity to engage in a national training system through the Australian Qualification Training Framework, rather than negotiate separately with eight different State/Territory training systems.
From a government perspective, Training Package specifications of competency standards, assessment frameworks and qualification pathways, the introduction of the Australian Qualification Training Framework, tripartite decision-making at national level and significant public funding are all working together to underpin a lifelong learning system.

However, there were some dissenting voices on the continuing appropriateness of current policy settings, which are discussed further in the next sections of this chapter.

The overall view of the symposium participants was that Australia is well on its way to implementing lifelong learning, but also that there is much more to be done. What is not working so well and what needs to be done differently were the subject of lively debate amongst stakeholders.

**iv. What is not yet right?** Stakeholders identified a broad spectrum of specific matters that need to be improved within the current policy framework discussed earlier. These are discussed in turn below under six headings: funding; incentives; cross-sectoral cooperation; recognition of prior learning; access and equity; and decision-making.

**Funding**

For most of those at the symposium, the value and necessity of lifelong learning was not in question, but who pays and for what outcomes was. This was seen as the core issue for lifelong learning in Australia (alongside cross-sectoral cooperation), and one which is yet to be openly debated and resolved.

There are three primary sources of funding for VET in Australia - individuals, industry and government. Other post-compulsory sectors - schools, higher education and adult and community education - also contribute in various ways and have drawn on VET sector funds for various VET-related initiatives.

Getting the funding arrangements right within the VET sector itself, and also between VET and other post-compulsory sectors of education and training, was seen as the most important step to further advancing the concept of lifelong learning in Australia.

**Government contributions**

Most of the symposium debate focused on government funding for VET. The size and direction of government funding is essentially a political issue and all Australian governments feel a need to conduct the debate without inferring that they should or will spend more on education and training. In this view, the existing financial cake needs to be cut in a different way. However, governments across Australia have differing views on the extent to which individuals or industry should be encouraged or required to increase their contribution. Stakeholders noted the
differential power of individuals and industry in influencing government funding policy. Unlike learners in higher education, VET learners are in a relatively weak position because of the absence of active representative organisations.

Employer associations made a strong case for establishing new funding models for the VET sector and for reforming the way funding decision are made. They argued that current funding mechanisms and accountability requirements have led to significant complexities in administering the distribution of funding and mismatches between funding and demand. For some employer representatives at the symposium, governments need to be more prepared to open the debate about funding systems and how funds should be allocated. In their view, governments should be more willing to consider alternative models, such as funding controlled by employer and employee organisations, vouchers, learning accounts and learning bonuses. They put forward three main arguments in support of reformed funding arrangements.

- **State Training Authorities (STAs)** currently control funding for VET, determine priorities and make funding allocations. Employer associations believe they do not represent industry, even though VET claims to be an industry-driven system. As one delegate put it, “Stalinist planning” adopted by STAs will always result in a mismatch between the bureaucracies’ views of industry and individual needs and the views of industry and individuals themselves. Notwithstanding the effort expended by STAs to plan for State/Territory provision through State Training Profiles, it was claimed that they consistently get it wrong by disregarding industry advice on priorities and by funding areas of low or questionable demand.

- **User Choice** for apprenticeships and traineeships has yet to be fully implemented in Australia and there are wide variations in its implementation across the country. Employer/employee choice is the basis of lifelong involvement in training and learning. Between 70-80% of public VET funds are allocated to institutional provision, which is often irrelevant to workplaces. For employers, the evidence shows that employment-based training arrangements lead to better outcomes for individuals and industry. Institutional programs are a second-best option, but they should nevertheless have substantial connection to the workplace. A greater proportion of public funds should be allocated to structured work-based training through apprenticeships and traineeships, on the basis of current and projected future demand, expressed through the mechanism of User Choice. Setting upper limits on the proportion of total VET funds available for apprenticeship and traineeship training is not justified.

- **Nominal training hours** are no longer a satisfactory basis for resource allocation and they should be replaced by unit costs of training. Unit costs need to be made fully transparent. Lists of training costs should be prepared and made available to all employers.

The trade union participants at the symposium had a somewhat different perspective on government funding. The general trade union movement wanted to
see additional funds made available for apprenticeships and traineeships, so that they can be accessed by existing workers. Teacher unions, on the other hand, argued that the focus on funding for apprenticeships and traineeships is too narrow. Declining Commonwealth funding for VET (down from 25% of all funding in 1997 to 21% in 2000), combined with cuts to labour market programs, have reduced unit costs from $14.22 per adjusted Annual Hour Curriculum in 1997 to $12.67 in 2000 (at 2000 prices). At the same time, funding for non-TAFE providers increased from $58.6m in 1995 to $268m in 2000. It is argued that consequent cost pressures have impacted negatively on training quality generally and, in TAFE, on student services, student withdrawal rates, teacher workload and stress and have led to significant financial difficulties for a number of TAFE Institutes and Colleges. Teacher unions want to see increased Commonwealth funding for growth, matched by increased State and Territory funding, to compensate for the freeze on growth funds for VET over the past three years.

Industry contributions
Substantial public funding is allocated to VET (around $3.5b per year), but this does not include the expenditure on formal and non-formal training by many companies and by government departments such as defence, health, community services and education, which is generally estimated to be at least of the same magnitude as government funding.

However, it has become harder for Australia to measure industry’s contribution to training since the abandonment of the Training Guarantee Levy and since the test of “respondent burden” caused the Australian Bureau of Statistics to cease conducting training expenditure surveys after 1996. However, negotiations are underway to conduct this survey again in the near future. Symposium participants were critical of the lack of up-to-date information in this area.

Employers were seen by all stakeholders as having a key role to play in advancing lifelong learning through provision of relevant on-job training and learning opportunities linked to off-job training. In many cases this is not happening. Employers also have a role in developing a learning culture within the workplace, yet the development of a commitment to training within industry is patchy, with some employers, especially small and medium sized companies, reluctant to commit and pay. The pressures of time and money mean that, in many organisations, funding for learning is an early casualty. In some sectors, including the non-government/community/third sector, gendered perceptions of skill formation also undermine investment in learning systems.

In some instances, cost-shifting is occurring, with firms substituting public funding for their own corporate funding. This prompted calls from some participants at the symposium to re-emphasise the national policy objective of increasing industry investment in training.
Individual contributions
Training is widely recognised as a co-investment by governments, individuals and industry. Increasingly, individuals are contributing to the costs of training, not only through income foregone and lower training wages, but also to the costs of administration and tuition themselves. This led some stakeholders to argue for a Higher Education Contribution Scheme-type arrangement, along the lines of that applying to higher education (where university fees can be deferred and subsequently repaid through the tax system on an income contingent basis), to be introduced in TAFE to make individual contributions more transparent. However, TAFE fees are a particularly sensitive political issue, the sector has an important access and equity role, and State and Territory Ministers have in the past rejected the idea of introducing HECS-type arrangements into the TAFE system.

Incentives: This matter is discussed in terms of incentives for employers; incentives for individuals; and in relation to existing workers.

Incentives for employers
Most debate around incentives for lifelong learning focused on incentives and subsidies to employers to employ an apprentice or trainee. These were generally accepted as being generous, but appropriate in the Australian context. They were also recognised as helping to change enterprise mindsets and encourage a training culture.

However, the additional costs of entering into a contract of training for people with disabilities do not seem to be adequately recognised in the current incentive regime.

Some delegates identified a need to have incentive payments made on the basis of both completion and commencement.

Incentives for individuals
There was argued to be a need to consider the role of incentives in motivating individuals to pursue lifelong learning. The achievement of nationally recognised qualifications can be an intrinsic motivator and can also have an extrinsic motivating effect where wages or career progression are linked to qualifications achieved rather than confined to qualifications used.

While there are many individuals who love learning and are lifelong learners, there are also many individuals who are simply not interested. Incentives are generally weak for these individuals with little personal motivation towards lifelong learning.

Low wage rates and poor working conditions, lack of access to unfair dismissal legislation and poor on-job training can all serve as a disincentive to completion of traineeships.

The concepts of learning accounts and training entitlements were briefly canvassed as mechanisms for achieving greater equity and more efficient use of public funds.
However, the recent UK decision to move away from learning accounts was noted, apparently because of difficulties in targeting expenditure and cost control concerns. All young people in Australia are entitled to at least twelve years of publicly funded education through the school sector. But there are many people currently in employment and who are unemployed who did not receive this core entitlement. Some delegates called for Australia to adopt a position of guaranteeing all people, including those currently in the workforce, a minimum, means-tested training entitlement to allow them to achieve at least a first post-school qualification.

Existing workers
Existing workers with little previous participation in education and training face greater access difficulties than new entrants to the labour market; and large segments of the adult workforce are not getting broader learning opportunities of any sort through their employers. Longer working hours, employer resistance and weak incentives for individuals and employers are all factors at play here.

Both employer associations and trade unions believed that, while apprenticeships and traineeships are generally open to new entrants and existing workers alike, government incentive payments to employers should be available to encourage them to provide recognised training for their existing workforce. Earlier policy decisions along these lines led to abuse of the system and substitution of government funds for company investment, leading to a policy shift. However, in abandoning incentive payments for existing workers to undertake apprenticeships or traineeships, the trade unions are concerned that the baby may have been thrown out with the bathwater.

Cross-sectoral cooperation
Cross-sectoral pathways are critical to lifelong learning. However, sectoral differences in organising, delivering, assessing and recognising learning continue. They pose significant barriers for individual learners and lifelong learning. All stakeholders at the symposium saw a need to find better ways to coordinate and integrate activities across the various sectors of education and training.

There is clear evidence of heavier traffic between the different sectors. In TAFE NSW for example, 44% of current students have previous qualifications, ranging from TAFE certificates to undergraduate degrees or higher. There were 27,000 students holding university qualifications studying in TAFE NSW in 2001. Estimates suggest that some 200,000 school students are pursuing formal VET qualifications in 2002.

School-VET cooperation
Schools and VET are moving progressively closer in their approach to vocational education and training; and this is a major step towards lifelong learning. However, there are concerns that the quality of VET in schools outcomes may not be consistent with those from other VET sites, because of the lack of vocational qualifications of teachers in schools and more limited access by schools to workplaces or work simulation.
There is still resistance to vocational learning in many schools, and many school teachers do not seem to understand the contextual dimension of learning and the need for their students to be exposed to learning in multiple contexts.

Some employer associations see that they have a key role in building the capacity of employers to train and believe in starting early in the school sector. Examples of school-industry cooperation which were cited at the symposium included creative initiatives such as getting employers to serve as “Principal for a Day” and placing teachers in industry to increase their understanding of the world of work.

**VET-higher education cooperation**

It is generally agreed that the barriers between VET and higher education have not been removed by the recent training reforms. In some cases, these barriers have been made higher by the refusal of traditional universities to accept competency-based training outcomes, inadequate attention to the knowledge dimension in industry defined qualifications and different funding and fee arrangements between the States and Territories.

The complexities of building seamless pathways between VET and higher education are considerable. TAFE NSW, for example, has had to negotiate 1,500 separate arrangements for credit transfer between TAFE NSW and the university sector.

From a more radical perspective, one employer associations expressed frustration with the interface and proposed that Australia needs to make higher education an industry-led sector.

**VET-ACE cooperation**

Co-operation between VET and the adult and community education sector received little attention in the symposium. Perhaps this suggests the need for a more holistic view of lifelong learning encompassing all formal sectors, even where they provide non-formal and informal learning opportunities rather than simply formal training.

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

Recognition of current competence (RCC) and prior learning of individuals, be they currently in work or looking for work, was widely seen as an important building block of lifelong learning, providing pathways from informal and non-formal learning settings and a real opportunity to engage with those with little formal post-school education and training. This was seen as a key access and equity issue for many individuals. The limited practical application of RPL/RCC was widely regarded, especially by the trade union and government participants, as one of the key weaknesses in the current Australian arrangements.

The mechanisms exist for implementing RPL/RCC, but the key barrier was argued to be funding arrangements. The costs of RPL for most providers are substantial and government funding arrangements serve as a disincentive to provide recognition
services and an incentive to provide training services, even if the person is already competent. There was an expressed need to fund RPL/RCC on a different and better basis.

However, a note of caution was signalled by stakeholders that RPL/RCC, while an important bridge between formal, informal and non-formal learning, can slip too easily into credentialism. Participants emphasised the need to be much clearer about why it needs to be improved and what employers will get out of the proposed changes.

Access and equity
One stakeholder at the symposium summed up the position as follows.

“…the relationship between education and training participation and socio-economic status remains clear and strong in Australia; ...the private benefits of education, and public subsidies at the post-compulsory level, still go predominantly to those from relatively privileged backgrounds; ...despite the impressively high rates of adult participation in education and training in Australia, relatively little is being done to help the many thousands of Australian adults who have serious deficiencies in their basic skills or are most at risk in the process of structural change…”

It is important to remember that there is a “dark side” of lifelong learning. The learning needs of those in education and training institutions and the needs of those in structured workplace training and enterprises with a commitment to training are generally well catered for. But those who are poorly educated, are unemployed and have few employment opportunities are overlooked too consistently in policy considerations. There was concern about a growing gap between advantaged and disadvantaged people in Australian society; and lifelong learning is necessary (if not sufficient) to bridge that gap.

The symposium noted the following, in particular:

- Australia has a large number of adults with low levels of literacy and skills, many of whom are very disadvantaged in the labour market. In a recent survey of OECD countries, Australia compared poorly with Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands, although better than most other countries, in the proportion of the population who were at the lowest level of assessed literacy (OECD, 1998). A higher proportion of older than of younger persons have low levels of literacy.

- People with a disability find access to VET hard. VET participation rates for people with disabilities lag well behind those for the general population. Within the apprenticeship and traineeship system, places for people with a disability are limited, there are few intermediaries such as specialist group training companies and the interface between Federal and State support mechanisms can cause uncertainty and restrict access.
• Stereotypes of the learning capacities and needs of older people, both in and out of the workforce, limit the learning opportunities available to them.

• Participation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are generally good relative to their proportion in the total population, but their social and economic position indicates the need for increased effort to enhance the quantity and quality of their participation and to link that with employment opportunities.

• Professionals with overseas qualifications need assistance to improve their awareness and understanding of Australian workplace ethics and culture, communication proficiency and local work experience. A program conducted by Adult Multicultural Education Services, which involves seven weeks of pre-employment preparation and six weeks in the professional workplace, has achieved considerable success.

Decision-making

Many delegates to the symposium argued that learners will steadily move to the centre stage of public policy, that citizen demand for education will increase and more sophisticated approaches to setting education and training directions will be needed to constantly engage with the next generation of possibilities.

If this is the trend, then it may render somewhat problematic a continuing emphasis on an industry-led system. Some delegates argued for the introduction of a voucher model of funding, which would put more decision-making power into the hands of individuals. At the same time they argued for greater industry involvement in planning VET delivery.

The tension between a system where the “learner is in the centre” and an “industry-led system” is obvious. Clearly, a shared view is needed on the respective emphasis to be given to individual demand and employer demand. This is an unresolved issue in Australia, where further dialogue will be needed.

The respective roles of government and industry in decision-making was another point of difference amongst stakeholders. Employer delegates believed there is a disconnect between the bureaucracies’ view of the world and what is really occurring in industry. They argued for the need to reclaim the VET system from bureaucrats and politicians. They wanted to ensure that the VET system is seen, not simply as a tool of government, but that all stakeholders have a say in setting directions. Employer delegates also suggested that State, Territory and Commonwealth governments, as well as ANTA, do not want industry to really take ownership and, as a consequence, industry is able to avoid its responsibilities.

Industry “…needs to bypass bureaucracies and get direct dialogue between Ministers and business and industry associations without the State Training Authority as intermediary. Industry has to have a position and government needs to make it an industry responsibility.”

Some other participants at the symposium, however, argued for an unavoidable and increasing role for the state in lifelong learning, although the character of those interventions may differ from those of the past.
Finally, two other points were made. First, the teacher unions argued that they need to be represented on the board of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and on the National Training Quality Council. Secondly, a case was made for wider stakeholder involvement in decision-making, including student representation.

v. What needs to be done differently? The previous two sections suggest that most symposium participants believed the current policy settings are essentially sound, but acknowledged that improvements in implementation are both desirable and possible. However, there were some who pointed to problems of a more fundamental kind, highlighting the need for a different approach rather than continuous refinements of the existing approach. Their arguments are presented below.

New policy settings
While Australia has a well-deserved reputation for grasping the nettle of change and undertaking bold or radical reform, it was argued that the directions of those changes are now a decade old. They do not reflect contemporary economic and social reality and the changing demands of the modern economy and labour market.

Four requirements for effective government action on lifelong learning were identified by these participants.

• Governments which take the long view, recognising education and training as long-term drivers of productivity performance in an economy increasingly based on knowledge and skills. This means a 5, 10 and 20 year perspective rather than the current 3 year electoral cycle perspective.

• Governments which take the wide view. Investments in education and training will only be fully effective, they argued, when the investments form part of a comprehensive suite of policies designed to foster economic growth, support the development of high-performance industries and protect the interests of the most vulnerable. In their view VET needs to more actively acknowledge and influence wider social and economic policies beyond VET. One stakeholder observed:

   “To what extent has VET been cornered into a little pocket and inwardly focused? We need to open up and take a whole-of-government approach. VET is at the crossroads of multiple policies and we need to engage with other policy-making frameworks.”

• Governments which create an environment conducive to lifelong learning. This, they argued, means governments which are active in raising awareness of the growing importance of knowledge and skills, which create incentives for private investment in education and training, which provide reliable information to guide choice and which ensure that high standards are established and maintained.
Governments with a strong commitment to equity. Participants emphasised that this means acknowledging the strong and well-established relationships between levels of educational attainment, labour market experience and income, and the dangers of social division from a widening gap between the skills-rich and the skills-poor. It also means acknowledging the need for action.

For some of the participants at the symposium, Australia’s performance against each of these criteria is mixed at best and, in some instances, quite unsatisfactory. For all its significance and undoubted achievements, the training reform agenda has failed to keep pace with the changing demands of the modern economy and labour market. National higher education policy, they argued, has been stagnant since the mid 1990s, although the Federal Minister has recently issued a discussion paper “to stimulate both discussion and debate of the challenges facing Australian universities and the policy choices before us” (Minister for Education, Science and Training, 2002). Also, there is still no coherent view on the shape of a national policy for education in the vital early childhood years. Until these things change, Australia cannot claim to have a systemic view of lifelong learning.

The changing nature of work

Many stakeholders spoke of the impact on VET of the changing nature of work, evident, for example, through:

- the rise of non-standard precarious employment through casual work, outwork, agency/labour hire work, part-time work and self-employment;
- relentless demands for greater workplace flexibility;
- longer hours of work and the consequent stress on family life;
- the decline in some traditional manufacturing industries and the rise of new service industries; and
- contraction of the public sector.

These developments are, in this view, antithetical to lifelong learning (and even to resolution of skill shortages at a societal level).

The concept of the learning organisation is often put forward as a solution to the changing nature of work and new forms of knowledge production and as a mechanism for supporting lifelong learning. However, it was emphasised at the symposium that few organisations aspire to be learning organisations and even fewer achieve the status of a learning organisation. It was argued that differences between organisations are the norm and unitary views about how workplaces should be managed obscure this reality. Lifelong learning needs to be more than throwing responsibility back to employees.

Accordingly, these participants concluded, until workers are able to negotiate effectively with their employers, until challenging work and opportunities for skill development are available to all workers, and until genuine teamwork and effective
dialogue between management and workers occur in a climate of mutual trust, efforts to promote lifelong learning through workplaces will inevitably be constrained.

References


Attachment 1: Symposium Program

BIAC-TUAC Survey on Lifelong Learning: Australia

Melbourne Symposium: Thursday 16 May 2002
Monash Conference Centre
Level 7, 30 Collins Street, Melbourne

Program

8.30 a.m. Registration

8.45 a.m. The BIAC-TUAC Survey – Overview
Chris Selby Smith, CEET

9.00 a.m. – 10.05 a.m. Employee and Trade Union Perspectives: current experience, opportunities for improvement
Chair: Michael Long, CEET
   • Presentations (10 minutes each)
     - Therese Bryant, Industrial Officer, Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association
     - Keith Harvey, National Industrial Officer, Australian Services Union
     - Rex Hewett, Federal TAFE Secretary, Australian Education Union
     - Julian Teicher, National Key Centre in Industrial Relations
   • Discussion (25 minutes)

10.05 a.m. – 10.20 a.m. Morning Break (1)

10.20 a.m. – 11.25 a.m. Employer and Employer Organisations’ Perspectives: current experience, opportunities for improvement.
Chair: Steve Balzary, ACCI.
   • Presentations (10 minutes each)
     - Gary Collins, Manager, Training Services, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of WA
     - Peter Costantini,** General Manager, Employment Services, Commerce Queensland
     - Peter Glynn, CEO, National Electrical and Communications Association
     - Pam Jonas, Training and Employment, Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
     - Maria Tarrant, Assistant Director, Business Council of Australia
   • Discussion (25 minutes)

11.25 a.m. –

11.40 a.m. Morning break (2)

11.40 a.m. –

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* Mr Bill Mansfield was intending to Chair this session. However, in the event, he had to participate in an ILO meeting in Geneva. Mr Michael Long, Senior Research Fellow with CEET, agreed to Chair the session at short notice.

** Unfortunately, due to last minute unforeseen circumstances, Mr Constantini is unable to attend.
He tendered his apologies to all.
12.55 p.m. Governments: ‘Steering and Rowing’
   Chair: Moira Scollay, ANTA
   • Presentations (10 minutes each):
     · Peter Grant, formerly Deputy Secretary, Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
     · Paul Byrne, ANTA
     · Robin Shreeve, Deputy Director-General, TAFE, NSW Dept of Education
     · Madeleine Woolley, The Director, Adelaide Institute of TAFE
     · Geoff Creek, The Principal, Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture
   • Discussion (25 minutes)

12.55 p.m. – 1.45 p.m. Lunch
1.45 p.m. – 3.00 p.m. The Three Perspectives: commonalities, differences
   Chair: Chris Selby Smith
   • Presentations (10 minutes each):
     · Rex Hewett,*** AEU
     · Steve Balzary, ACCI
     · Moira Scollay, ANTA
   • Discussion (45 minutes)

3.00 p.m. – 3.15 p.m. Afternoon break
3.15 p.m. – 4.30 p.m. Other Initiatives: a wide diversity
   Chair: Fran Ferrier, CEET
   • Presentations (10 minutes each):
     · Greg Lewis (LLL for people with disabilities), Edge Training Solutions, Perth
     · Jenny Duncan (continuing education of nurses), Mayne Health, Sydney
     · Thit Tieu, NSW Adult Migrant Education Service
     · Peter Waterhouse, Workplace Learning Initiatives, Melbourne
     · Bruce Wilson, Union Research Centre on Organisation and Technology & RMIT
   • Discussion (25 minutes)

4.30 p.m. – 4.45 p.m. Summary of Main Themes
   Chair: Gerald Burke, CEET
   Kaye Schofield, Research Centre for VET, UTS, Sydney

4.45 p.m. Close

*** Mr Rex Hewett has kindly agreed to take Mr Mansfield’s place for this discussion.
Chapter 4: Diversity and Lifelong Learning

Introduction

Australia’s population is diverse and in this respect it presents a striking contrast to many other OECD countries. Indeed, Australia’s population has become increasingly diverse over the last fifty years. This diversity has many dimensions; and offers substantial potential benefits for individuals, the nation as a whole and particular enterprises. For example, diversity in worker characteristics brings a range of skills, ideas and social and cultural understandings from which enterprises can benefit. As work requirements change and lifelong learning becomes increasingly important, ensuring that access to opportunities for education, training and re-training is available to all workers helps to ensure that the potential benefits are maximised. There can also be social benefits from diversity. Australia has become a more vibrant, culturally enriched and outwardly-oriented, global society as its population has become more diverse. However, diversity can also contribute to social disharmony if access to wealth and opportunities are inequitably distributed and social groups compete for limited resources.

Diversity can be measured in many ways, including gender, cultural background, age, and ability. A number of indicators show that some aspects of the diversity in the Australian population are not fully represented in participation in education and training, or in paid employment. Different groups of workers do not enjoy the same levels of employer support for education and training or the same range of opportunities to participate in lifelong learning. While education and training policies have attempted to identify groups under-represented in VET, higher education and ACE, and initiatives have been implemented to better meet the needs of these groups, much more needs to be done if lifelong learning is to become really available for all.

i. Australia: A diverse population: Overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic at the beginning of the 20th century, Australia’s population is now one of the world’s most multicultural societies (Hugo, 2001). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) identifies a quarter of the population (24%) to be ‘overseas born’ - the largest group among them from Europe and the USSR (13%, including 7% from the UK and Ireland). Six percent are from East and Southern Asia. A further 2% of Australians are Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders (‘Indigenous Australians’). For the majority of immigrants from overseas, many of their Australian-born children and some Indigenous Australians, particularly from remote areas, English is not their first language. Language barriers can affect their full participation in education and work (and in society more generally). The recent census found that the number of households where a language other than English is spoken rose from 18% in 1996 to 21% in 2001.
Overall, Australia’s population is ageing. The median age has risen from 31.8 years in 1989 to 34.9 years in 1999. Indigenous Australians, although ageing, are younger than other Australians: their median age was 20.2 years in 1999, because of premature mortality. While the median age at death for the overall population is 77 years, for Indigenous Australians it is 50 years.

Physical and intellectual disabilities that create specific restrictions and difficulties for participation and achievement in education, training and employment affect a significant group (and the number of people who are affected rises with age). 19% of the New South Wales population had a disability in 1998. The rate of disability was 4% among people aged 0-4 years, but rose to 83% of people aged 85 years and over. In nearly all age groups men were more likely to have a disability than women, although the total number of women with a disability exceeded the number of men because women live longer.

The geographical distribution of the population is important for lifelong learning. Australia covers an entire continent; it is the sixth largest nation in the world with a land area of about eight million square kilometres. Much of the country, and a significant proportion of the population, is ‘remote’ from access to facilities and services for education, training and work. However, the majority of the population lives around the south and east coast and particularly in the State/Territory capital cities (64%), which are growing fast and are of low density, so that services may be restricted, especially in outer suburban areas. Outside the capital cities the population is growing a little in some regional centres, while in others the population is declining (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000).

**ii. Education and training policy:**

Education and training policies have tended to address issues of diversity in Australia primarily through a focus on ‘target’ or ‘disadvantaged’ groups of people (Selby Smith, Ferrier, et al, 2001). This approach has focused on groups who are under-represented among participants in vocational education and training (VET), higher education and adult and community education (ACE), compared with their share of the population. They include some groups of women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people of non-English speaking background, people with disabilities, people from low socio-economic backgrounds, people with low literacy and numeracy skills, people from rural and isolated areas and people in correctional institutions. Taken together they are a very significant proportion of the population – on some definitions more than half.

For each education sector, the barriers and problems faced by these groups have been investigated, in some cases extensively. A variety of special programs and initiatives have been funded and some success has been achieved in addressing the identified difficulties. For example, in higher education, equity plans are prepared annually by institutions and performance against the plan targets is monitored by the Commonwealth government using indicators of access, participation, success and retention for each group. Participation by some recognized disadvantaged groups improved from 1991-1997 (DETYA, 1999). However, there has been little
change across the system as a whole for students from low socio-economic backgrounds or from rural and isolated regions, despite some successes at the level of individual institution. In VET and ACE all registered training organisations receiving public funding are required to collect statistics and report on the participation and outcomes for different disadvantaged groups.

In recent years the focus on target groups has been supplemented by a stronger concern for individuals and the capacity of education and training sectors to recognise and respond to their many different aspirations and demands. For instance, in *Achieving Equitable Outcomes* (a ‘supporting paper’ to the national strategy for VET entitled *A Bridge to the Future*) ANTA set out a new equity objective for VET:

> “The overall goal must be an equitable vocational education and training system able to offer inclusive and appropriate products and services for a full range of clients and potential clients” (ANTA, 1998, p. 2: italics added).

This new approach has emerged as drawbacks have been identified in the use of target groups. First, there can be substantial differences in the characteristics and circumstances of individuals who are members of the same group. For instance, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples include those living in urban, rural or remote environments, with varying levels of literacy and numeracy, participation in formal education, and income or family support. Secondly, membership of the groups may overlap. For instance, a person of low socio-economic status could also be an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, of non-English speaking background, a person with disabilities, from a rural or remote area, and a woman. Thirdly, the groups can be placed in competition with each other for resources and opportunities and become ‘competing victims’. Students can also be stigmatised by the ‘disadvantaged’ label. (Butler and Ferrier, 2000).

The existence of multiple group membership is particularly important, for research has indicated that where individuals (and groups) are represented in more than one category the problems and barriers they experience ‘compound’ to increase the magnitude and impact of the disadvantage they experience. A study of students in higher education, Clarke et al (1997) concluded that low SES is a ‘common central element’ in the disadvantage experienced by students in other groups and affects the impact of other forms of disadvantage. For example, they noted that low SES females are less likely to overcome the barriers of gender disadvantage than high SES females. Similarly, a comprehensive study of 7000 students in three states, which examined the attitudes and aspirations of school students towards tertiary education (James et al, 1999) noted the influence of a complex mix of interacting elements. More specifically, it found that rurality and low socio-economic status combined to produce the greatest educational disadvantage.

In VET, a longitudinal study of student experience (Golding and Volkoff, 1998) noted the spread and strength of ‘intra-group factors’ and ‘cross-group factors’ in
addition to ‘group factors’. Intra-group factors were described as those which ‘apply to sub-groups within particular target groups’. The researchers found that:

“Not all women, people from non-English speaking backgrounds or rural and isolated people we interviewed were disadvantaged, and not all those that were disadvantaged were disadvantaged in the same way” (p. 39).

Cross-group factors are those which apply irrespective of, and in addition to, intra-group and group factors, commonly entrenching disadvantage. Two of these factors, which were identified as influential in shaping educational course and provider selection, intention and outcomes from VET, were low skills and unemployment:

“Long-term unemployment and low skills are such debilitating factors that they act, irrespective of other learner characteristics, on all VET participants who experience them” (Golding and Volkoff, 1998, p 40).

iii. Education and training for existing workers: While the Australian workforce is diverse, not all groups in the community are fully represented, for example in access to employment and to certain occupations. Importantly, these differences are reflected in access to lifelong learning opportunities and in support from employers for education and training or re-training.

Diversity in the workforce

Gender

Of a total labour force of 9.3 million, over 60% are males. The male participation rate has declined from 75.2% in 1989 to 72.8% in 1999, while the female participation rate has risen from 50.4% to 53.9%. Thus, the differential has declined by nearly a quarter over a decade, a substantial rate of change.

Occupational segregation between different occupations and industries remains a feature of the workforce. It is significant since lifelong learning opportunities and employer support for education and training are unevenly distributed.

ABS figures show that over 56% of women in the labour force are concentrated in four industries: Retail trade (17.4%); Health and community services (17%); Property and business services (12.1%); and Education (10.4%). Males are more evenly distributed across industries, with the largest groups being in Manufacturing (16.3%), Retail Trade (12.5%) and Property and business services (11.8%).

The main occupations for males are Tradespersons (21%), Professionals (16.5%), Intermediate production and transport workers (13.4%) and Associate professionals (12.7%). For women workers the main occupations are Intermediate clerical, sales and service occupations (28.2%), Professionals (20.6%), Elementary clerical, sales and service occupations (14.9%) and Associate Professionals (10%). Very few female workers are employed as tradespersons (2.9%, compared with 21% of males).
Women earn less than men, which is likely to affect their ability to invest in their own lifelong learning. In 2001 average weekly total earnings for males were $789 compared with $525 for females. This difference, in part, reflects differences in occupations and that persons in lower skilled jobs tend to receive lower wages. For example, in May 2000, full-time managers and administrators received estimated average weekly total earnings of $1,308, while full-time elementary clerical, sales and service workers earned on average $593 per week. However, men have higher average earnings than women even within the same occupation group. The difference is smallest among managers and administrators (women's average earnings are 85% of men's) and largest among tradespersons and related workers (women's earnings are 70% of men's) (ABS, 2001; and ABS, 2000a).

Age
The median age of both male and female workers is rising. In 1998 it was 37.7 years for males (up from 35.6 in 1989) and 36.5 years for females (33.4 in 1989). Consequently, as skill requirements change, access to re-training is becoming more important for existing workers. Also, it is well-known that, with secular increases in the level of completed education over time, older workers tend to have lower educational attainments than their younger colleagues; and that formal education and enterprise training are positively correlated.

In addition, declines in Australia’s manufacturing and mining industries have contributed to an increase in the number (and proportion) of older job seekers. Among jobseekers, those who are 'older' (aged 45-59 years) are less successful in obtaining work than their younger counterparts. They are more likely to gain part-time or casual employment with low pay, more likely to drop out of the labour force and less likely to gain employment as a result of a training course. Many have low level or non-transferable skills. Compared with the equivalent age group in the general population, older job-seekers are more likely to be male, born overseas, living alone, and divorced or separated.

Education and training can be an important factor in assisting older workers to gain or regain employment. Overall, those who have a qualification are more successful in gaining employment than those who do not. However, discriminatory attitudes among employers can be a problem. Although older jobseekers participate in training at a similar rate to other jobseekers (19-20%), they have less success in obtaining a job as a result (11% compared with 19%) (ABS, 1999).

Indigenous Australians
Employment rates among Indigenous Australians are much lower than for the population as a whole. In 1996 21.3% of the Indigenous population was employed, compared with 41.7% of the total population; and their unemployment rate was 22.8% compared with 9.3% for the total population. Low levels of education and skill contribute to their high levels of unemployment.

The proportion of Indigenous people employed in low-skilled labouring jobs is substantially larger than for the population as a whole: in 1996 24.3% compared with
8.7%. Also, a smaller proportion are employed in the high skilled occupations of managers and administrators (3.7% compared with 9.3% in 1996). As employers favour the provision of education and training for more highly skilled workers, this pattern of employment influences adversely their lifelong learning opportunities.

Indigenous workers are disproportionately employed in the Health and Community Services industry, reflecting the participation of many Aborigines from rural and remote regions in government-funded community development programs. Here they learn the skills to work with their local communities, but may not as often develop skills to compete effectively in the wider labour market (ABS, 2000).

**Migrants**

In recent years, government policies have favoured migration by skilled workers. Of all settlers in 1999-2000 aged 15 years and over, 68% stated an occupation on arrival: 36% were Professionals; 13% were Tradespersons and related workers; 12% were Managers and administrators; and 12% were Intermediate production and transport workers.

An ABS survey in 1999 classified as ‘migrants’ persons who were not born in Australia, who arrived in Australia after 1980, were aged 18 years or more on arrival and had obtained permanent Australian resident status. In November 1999 there were 1.1 million migrants, or 8% of the civilian population aged 15 years and over. The majority (77% of males and 52% of females) were employed. Migrants born in Northern America had the highest participation rate (82.2%), followed by those born in Oceania and Antarctica (75.4%), while migrants born in the Middle East and North Africa recorded the lowest participation rate (54.1%).

The overall unemployment rate for migrants was 6.8% (5.8% for males and 8.1% for females). This rate was only slightly above the 6.6% recorded for all persons born outside Australia and the 6.4% recorded for the Australian born population.

74% of migrants had a job just before they migrated, but 48% were in a different occupation group since arriving in Australia. While 55% arrived with a post-school qualification - 35% with a skilled or basic vocational qualification and 34% with a bachelor degree – only 48% of those with a skilled or basic vocational qualification had it recognised in Australia. Only 30% of migrants with post-school qualifications obtained in Southeast Asia had their qualification recognized, compared with 61% of migrants from Oceania and Antarctica, Europe and the former USSR.

**People with disabilities**

The term 'disability' includes a wide range of disorders that vary in degree. Specific restrictions include a restriction (mild to profound) in communication, mobility or self-care, education or employment. These restrictions may exist by themselves, or in combination.
The workforce participation of people with disabilities depends on the type and severity of the disability, the education level they are able to reach, and the opportunities they are offered to work. People in the 15-64 years age group with a disability spend over 30% less time on education and employment activities than people without a disability in Australia. Up to the age of 15 years the vast majority are able to participate in school. After this, school participation declines rapidly to 60.8% of 16-17 year olds (compared with 72.5% for people without a disability).

While they are less likely to be in the labour force than people without a disability and more than a quarter are permanently unable to work, people with disabilities are also less likely to have their demand for work met. A 1993 ABS survey of disability, ageing and carers found that 13% of people with a disability aged 15-64 were unemployed (ABS, 1993). However, the unemployment rate among people with a restriction caused by a disability was 21%; and 85% of unemployed working-age people with a disability experienced employment limitations. 81% were restricted in the type of job they could do, 21% indicated that they would often need time off work, and 30% were restricted in the number of hours they could work (ABS, 1993 and unpublished data).

Labour force participation rates for people with disabilities decline with age; and the number of people with a disability rises with age. Age-related factors account for some of the difference. However, when adjusted for age, the differences in demand for employment remain significant, which suggests considerable unmet demand for employment among people with disabilities. This is the case, particularly, for people with sight or hearing loss, who tend to participate in the workforce at a rate higher than that for people with other forms of disability. Improving education, training and re-training opportunities for people with disabilities could assist more to access employment. In addition, the reluctance of some employers to take them on needs to be addressed.

Education and training for existing workers in formal education and training
Opportunities for existing workers to re-train for a new occupation or to upgrade their existing skills are available in VET, higher education and ACE. Informal opportunities are also available, within enterprises, in a range of activities from practical demonstrating to mentoring and ‘in-house’ courses. For those concerned with diversity, an important issue is whether - and to what extent - different groups are offered, or are able to take up, these opportunities.

In higher education, opportunities for first degree and post first-degree study have expanded substantially over the past three decades. High demand for first-degree study from school-leavers has reduced opportunities for other participants; however, at the post first-degree level the number of courses and places offered has expanded substantially. In particular, during the 1990s the number of students beginning the shortest postgraduate program – a Graduate Certificate – increased by 568% from 1991 to 2000 (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2000).
Expansion in the provision of post-first degree opportunities by higher education institutions is connected with the progressive liberalization of regulations governing the charging of fees for education at this level, as government funding for higher education has declined. Anderson, Johnson and Milligan (1997) examined the impact of fees on the enrolment of students from designated equity groups and found that:

- Women are disadvantaged compared to men, since they tend to enrol in (non-fee) places and are less likely to have fees paid by their employer.
- Students from Australian Indigenous backgrounds have similar patterns of enrolment, possibly exacerbated by differing cultural understandings of debt.
- People from low socio-economic backgrounds tend to have fewer financial resources and are under represented in fee-paying courses.
- Enrolments of students from rural and isolated areas are lower than for urban students, though whether this results from isolation or lack of income was not clear.

A new loans scheme was implemented by the Commonwealth government in 2002 to assist students undertaking post-first degrees to pay course fees (which can be substantial). The ability of the new arrangements to open up access to fee-based courses to a wider group of students has not yet been evaluated.

In VET, the great majority of students are already in employment. Thus, the major question in relation to diversity is whether all community groups are adequately represented in the student population. Participation measures show that the sector has achieved a reasonable representation of Indigenous, non-English speaking background and rural students and that more women have enrolled in recent years, particularly as provision of vocational courses in adult and community education providers has expanded. However, Watson, Kearns, Grant and Cameron (2000) point to some continuing problems:

- Participation by women is confined to a narrow range of programs and little progress has been made in non-traditional areas.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are clustered in training programs at the lower end of the qualifications spectrum with poor success rates and employment outcomes.
- People with a disability are under-represented and have higher attrition rates than other students.
- Low levels of literacy and numeracy are a barrier to participation for a significant proportion of the community.

In Australia, the adult and community education (ACE) sector is envisioned as integral to lifelong learning, promoting family and community learning as well as dialogue between people of different cultures and background (Campbell and Curtin, 1999, p. 19). The sector provides a range of accredited vocational courses and also general courses, including a general certificate of education for those who did
not complete secondary schooling in Australia. The ACE sector provides special programs to assist people with low levels of literacy and numeracy. It performs a valuable function in relation to lifelong learning, including for many members of the less fortunate groups in Australian society.

However, most participants in ACE programs tend to be young, employed and educated (AAACE 1995). The sector is now developing a strong role in providing training for small businesses, particularly those owned and operated by women. Clemans and Bradshaw (1998) found, for example, that women use ACE courses particularly in the early stages of the development of their business, to assist them in setting it up successfully.

Participation by males in ACE programs is much lower. This is a particular concern in rural and remote areas, where few other education or training opportunities are often available. However, a small number of Aborigine-controlled ACE providers have been established; and some of them have been successful in providing education and training opportunities for both Indigenous males and females.

Employment-based education and training
Employment-based surveys reveal some differences in the incidence and volume of education and training among categories of workers. Results are presented from three major surveys of education and training conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics — *How Workers Get Their Training* (1989), *The Survey of Training and Education* (1993), and *The Survey of Education and Training* (1997). The surveys allow consideration of the overall level of employment-based education and training; changes in the incidence and volume of training in recent years; the distribution of education and training; and changes in the distribution of training.

Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 below present results for in-house training, external training while working, and study for an educational qualification respectively. The tables are restricted to persons who worked as wage or salary earners at any time in the twelve months preceding the interview. Each table provides results for: gender; age; country of birth; occupation; hours of employment; and permanent or casual status. Unfortunately, the comparability of the 1997 survey results with those from previous surveys is problematic. Unlike the two earlier surveys, the 1997 survey included young people who were still at school. These respondents are excluded from the results presented in this section, in order to improve comparability with the earlier surveys.

The 1997 survey also collected detailed information about fewer training courses and those training courses were selected differently from the approach taken in the two earlier surveys. The 1997 survey collected detailed information on only the four most recent training courses undertaken in the twelve months preceding interview. The 1989 and 1993 surveys collected detailed information on up to four in-house training courses and four external courses undertaken in the preceding twelve months. The courses for which detailed information was collected were the longest
rather than the most recent. The effect of the differences in the recording of information about training courses should be to produce lower estimates of participation and (especially) hours of training.

The size of the effect of differences in methodology on the estimates of training depends on the extent to which there were training courses about which details were not collected. In the 1997 survey, only 13% of respondents had completed more than four training courses. In the 1993 survey, 24% of respondents reported attending more than four in-house courses and 7% had attended more than four external training courses. Surprisingly, it seems that estimates from the 1993 survey may have omitted more courses than the 1997 survey.

**In-house training**

In-house training courses were those attended mainly by employees working for the same employer or business as the respondent. The term “in-house” thus emphasises the organisation of the course rather than who provided it or where it occurred. Table 4.1 shows that the incidence of in-house training for wage and salary workers has been similar across the three surveys – about a third of employees participated in at least one in-house training course during the twelve months prior to being interviewed. The hours of training per employee, however, declined sharply between the 1989 and 1993 surveys (from 18.4 hours to 12.2 hours) and were maintained at that lower level in the 1997 survey.

The distribution of in-house training varied with the characteristics of the workers and their employment. Males were no more likely to receive some in-house training than females, but received about 50% more hours of training than females. The relative difference in hours of training was slightly greater in the 1997 survey than in either of the two previous surveys.

Receipt of in-house training had a curvilinear relationship with age — younger and older workers both received less than workers towards the middle of the age range. Within that pattern, however, the results showed a shift of training away from the 20 to 24 years age group towards the 35 to 49 years and 50 to 64 years age groups across the surveys.

Workers who were not born in Australia had a substantially lower incidence of in-house training than other employees. Between the 1989 and 1993 surveys, however, the difference in receipt of hours of training, although still evident, declined substantially.

Provision of in-house training also varied substantially between occupations — managers, administrators, professionals and para-professionals (generally) received more in-house training than plant and machinery operators. There has, however, been a shift, particularly in the 1997 survey, towards greater relative provision of training to workers in the less skilled occupations. For instance, the 1989 survey showed that, for every hour of in-house training labourers received, managers and
administrators received more than six hours. By the 1997 survey, this ratio had halved to one hour of training for labourers to every three hours of in-house training received by managers and administrators. A similar convergence to that for labourers can be observed for plant and machinery operators.

Finally, there were strong differences in the level of provision of in-house training between full-time and part-time employees and between permanent and casual employees. The results presented in Table 4.1 are not sufficiently different, however, to conclude that this pattern has changed over time.

**External training**

External training courses were those that were not in-house. The results in Table 4.2 are only for courses undertaken while the employee was working, and therefore exclude participation in labour market programs. No distinction is made, however, between whether the training was supported by an employer or not.

The most prominent feature of the results in Table 4.2 is the substantial increase in the incidence and hours of receipt of external training in the 1997 survey. It is an open question as to whether this is an artefact of the change in methodology between the 1997 and earlier surveys; but probably this factor alone is unlikely to be able to explain a change of the size reported in Table 4.2 — participation and hours of external training doubled in 1997 compared with the earlier surveys.

The shift is broadly spread across the different categories of workers, but there is a pattern. With the possible exception of younger workers, the increase in external training was greatest for those categories of workers that had the lowest rates of training — females, older workers, employees born in non-English speaking countries, plant and machinery operators, labourers, part-time employees and casual employees. There is, therefore, a decline in relative difference in the receipt of external training among categories of workers during the period covered by the three ABS surveys (even although substantial differences persisted in the most recent survey). The shift indicated a rather more equitable pattern in the provision of external training.
Table 4.1: In-house Training During the Previous 12 Months, Participation and Hours per Employee (Persons who were wage and salary earners; Australia; 1989, 1993, 1997)

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**Notes:**
1. Refer to discussion in the text of comparability of 1997 results with earlier surveys.
2. Results may not correspond to published results because of adjustments to improve comparability.
Study
Table 4.3 shows the incidence of employees enrolled to study for an educational qualification, together with rates for employees who received some financial support from their employer for their study. There has been reasonable stability in the extent to which employees are enrolled to study for an educational qualification — 15% or 16% across the three surveys. The proportion of employees receiving financial support from employers, however, has declined from 6% to 5% and then to 4% across the three surveys. Although it is not as marked as for external training, the decline in employer financial support for study by their workers has often been higher for those categories of workers who were typically more likely to receive financial support. Although the pattern of financial support is confounded with shifts in the overall proportions of employees engaged in study, there does appear to be some decline in the differences among categories of worker.
### Table 4.2: External Training While Working During the Previous 12 Months, Participation and Hours per Employee  
(Persons who were wage and salary earners; Australia; 1989, 1993, 1997)

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**Notes:**
1. Refer to discussion in the text of comparability of 1997 results with earlier surveys.
2. Results may not correspond to published results because of adjustments to improve comparability.
Table 4.3: Study for a Qualification in the Survey Year: Participation and Financial Support by Employers for Study (Persons who were wage and salary earners; Australia; 1989, 1993, 1997)

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References


Australian Association of Adult and Community Education (AAACE) (1995), Who are Australia’s adult learners?, AAACE, Canberra.


Australian Bureau of Statistics (2000a), Employee Earnings and Hours, Australia May 2000, Catalogue Number 6306.0, ABS, Canberra.


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Chapter 5: Faces of Success

Introduction

The surveys in chapters 2, 3 and 4 have shown that lifelong learning in Australia continues to face a number of challenges. Nevertheless it is being successfully implemented in enterprises, educational institutions and many communities throughout the nation. This chapter presents stories that illustrate some of the many faces of successful lifelong learning in Australia. Each example offers a slightly different facet, but many demonstrate the importance of cooperative arrangements, networks and partnerships between a wide range of stakeholders (including employers, employees, communities, governments at all levels, education and training organizations and unions).

These stories represent only some of the faces of successful lifelong learning in Australia. There are many others. However, the stories which are presented illustrate good practice, innovative thinking and a capacity to meet some difficult challenges. They also illustrate the broad commitment of the Australian community to expanding opportunities for lifelong learning for many different individuals and groups.

i. Developing a learning community: The PEEL district

The Peel region centres on the City of Mandurah, south of Perth in Western Australia and includes the shires of Boddington, Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Murray and Waroona. Traditionally Mandurah has been a holiday and retirement haven, but the region is experiencing substantial population growth. Unemployment levels have become higher than the national and state averages and there are particularly high levels of youth unemployment. Two major community sub-groups are developing: one which is well-resourced, with waterfront homes, access to country clubs and boating; and the other with limited work opportunities, low levels of resources and limited access to community resources and facilities.

In the past lifelong learning has not been a priority in the region. Based on the YourPlace database of one hundred communities in Australia, the City of Mandurah scored only 15 out of a possible 100 points on a measure of preparedness for lifelong learning only a short time ago.

In 2001 the Peel Education and Training Campus, on which several education providers are co-located, including a TAFE college, a senior high school and part of a university, gained government funding through the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) to explore a learning community model for the region and to identify how it could support regional development, industry and community effort. The Campus was aware that the problems of the region required both innovative solutions and active community and industry co-operation.
As a first step the PEEL Education and Training Campus set out to establish effective links with community interest groups and people grouped by geographic locations and cultures. An Education Development Unit was established to develop relationships with local industries and to collaborate with the City of Mandurah, the Peel Development Commission, the Peel Chamber of Commerce and a range of interest groups. A learning audit was also conducted to identify the stakeholders in formal, non-formal and informal education and the services which were available. This supplemented existing information collected by the Peel Development Commission on services, agencies and contact people. The additional information has been added to a database available to the PEEL community and industry. It has also helped the Peel Campus to identify learning needs and develop plans and strategies to target these particular areas.

The City of Mandurah has now declared itself to be a learning community and is developing planning processes to extend and support lifelong learning and to encourage adjoining shires to participate. A working group has been established to assist the City to create a community consultation forum. Specifically, six areas of activity have been identified for improvement:

- to gain insight into the current demands for learning and for various population segments and geographic sub-regions;
- to resource lifelong learning through a cooperative approach to planning across agencies and sectors;
- to develop and extend the network of working partnerships in the region;
- to facilitate access to learning opportunities for all sectors of the community;
- to take a cooperative approach to the development of a learning culture by promoting consistent messages about learning in all sectors and sub-regions; and
- to strive for excellence in the provision of lifelong learning (Nevard and Lucks, 2002).

**ii. Access to appropriate training: Indigenous Australians.** Access to vocational education and training for Indigenous Australians (Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders) has improved significantly over the past decade. In 1990 only 1.6 per cent of all VET students were Indigenous. By 1998 this had risen to 2.9 per cent, which exceeds the proportion of Indigenous people in the population as a whole.

This success has been achieved through the work of Indigenous communities, which are often also major employers of Indigenous people (especially in rural and remote areas), together with governments, TAFE institutes and other VET providers. These groups are now working on extending this success by improving outcomes for Indigenous people from education and training and broadening the range of programs in which Indigenous people participate.

Aboriginal-community controlled adult education colleges have been at the forefront of developing innovative education and training programs for Indigenous people.
They now play an important role in providing opportunities for lifelong learning to Indigenous adults, particularly for those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

In the past, the colleges provided many non-accredited programs in areas such as literacy and numeracy, health and nutrition and other life skills. Over the past decade, however, they have expanded particularly into accredited VET programs that reflect the specific needs of their communities. These specific needs can vary widely from inner-city communities to isolated rural outstations. One college provides on-campus higher education courses in partnership with universities. Two have their own publishing and book distribution operations. Another is associated with an Aboriginal people's aged-care facility and specialises in aged-care training. Several are independent community-controlled health services which have become registered training organisations in order to be able to deliver Aboriginal health worker training courses.

Although a large proportion of the students enrolled in these colleges come from severely disadvantaged backgrounds, including many who have had little or no adequate prior educational experience, they are achieving outstanding results. Indeed, in 1997, educational outcomes for Indigenous students in these VET courses (pass rates) were higher than for the VET sector as a whole. This is thought to be due to the additional support and more accommodating environment provided for Indigenous students. A high proportion of participants also went on to further study, about one third in the same sector and a further 24 per cent in other places.

Also, over the past decade, many TAFE institutes have established Indigenous organisation structures, usually Aboriginal/Indigenous education units, and some have also set up special Indigenous advisory arrangements. They have developed strategies, courses and arrangements to encourage Indigenous participation and have recruited more Indigenous staff. Particular efforts have been made to improve access for Indigenous students in rural and remote areas through flexible delivery, including trainers travelling to distant locations. In 1998, less than 36 per cent of Indigenous VET students lived in the capital cities of the states and territories, compared with 56 per cent of all VET students. Most lived in rural (39%) and remote (24%) regions. Almost a quarter (24%) lived more than one hundred kilometres from their training provider.

The availability of government funding, such as that provided under the Indigenous Education Strategic Institute Program (IESIP), has supported some valuable initiatives, including the employment of Indigenous staff by VET providers. Funding for research, such as to improve understanding of Indigenous learning, has also been important. For instance, a project Djama and VET, explored VET delivery in remote cross-cultural contexts and identified a set of best practice principles:

- VET delivery is culturally appropriate;
- partnerships are established between providers and Aboriginal client enterprises;
• workplace learning is central;
• training responses are customised so that they are appropriate to Aboriginal training needs through flexible delivery based on workplace learning and networking between providers and Aboriginal enterprises;
• quality student support and learning management systems involve provider/client agreements, workplace learning, on-site and off-site trainers and tutors and interactive communication technologies; and
• staff development for providers and clients to support partnership-driven VET which is focussed on workplace learning (Durnan and Boughton, 1999; and Robinson and Hughes, 1999).

iii. Flexibility: Employer/Employee/Institution partnerships. Employers may be reluctant to support lifelong learning for their staff if options are not available that suit their particular needs. This problem is being addressed by flexible arrangements that enable education and training to be customized to suit particular enterprises and their employees.

For example, at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), new work-based learning (WBL) programs have been developed that provide tailored professional development to meet the specific needs of individuals and organisations. The emphasis in the programs is on developing knowledge through the performance of work. The aim is to take the tacit knowledge of individuals and organisations and make it explicit. WBL is thus based on a fully negotiated curriculum, which is also flexible in time and content.

Employees of an organisation are usually admitted to these WBL programs in groups or teams. The employee, the employer and UTS together map out a study program and an individualised curriculum, based on the employer’s work requirements and the employee’s development needs for their role. This can include work-based projects, class-based courses or in-house training and development programs. Academic credit towards a WBL award can be claimed by ‘recognised current capability’ or learning acquired through the performance of work. In this way, a Masters degree can be completed in a much shorter period than normal. Participants report that the programs are challenging, but that the skills they learn have immediate applicability to their work (Kearney, 2001).

Many TAFEs offer similar flexible arrangements. In Queensland, Bremer Institute of TAFE (a public provider) and the meat processing company Australian Meat Holdings have developed an agreement, which covers ongoing training for workers at all levels in the company and also pre-vocational courses and traineeships for new employees. Programs are delivered both on and off-the-job, using the facilities of both the company and the TAFE Institute.

The agreement followed a decision by Australian Meat Holdings to invest in a new plant and to support this investment with a highly skilled and productive workforce. One shared aim was to ensure that employees know about the operations of the
overall company and not just their own role within it. Training provided under the agreement is negotiated and includes leadership training for senior staff as well as training for new workers in economics, administration, workplace health and safety and literacy and numeracy (O’Brien, 2000).

iv. **Competency-based training.** The adoption of competencies as the basis for assessment and advancement in vocational education and training is helping to change attitudes to training among some workers who previously held negative views. This extract from a case study of South Sydney City Council tells the story of Mick, who had been a civil construction worker for many years.

“When competencies were first proposed as a way of workers achieving high skill levels, Mick, like other workers, was a bit skeptical. Once he became aware of the potential impact that competencies offered, including national recognition and portability across jobs and industry, he looked harder at the scheme.

*Before we had skill recognition, the truck drivers were the only ones thought to have skills and they were the ones who progressed, so they ran all the jobs. Now we can all run jobs if we get our skills recognized.*

As Mick and others began to record and develop their skills and competencies they gained opportunities within Council to progress. Mick has become heavily involved in training and has been to Adelaide to benefit from train-the-trainer work in a registered training organization...

...Mick believes that the trick to helping people who are uncomfortable about taking up training is not to give them too much (ie. learning material or thick log books) at the start or they won’t do it. The instructions must be written in plain English and relate to work practice and the material is self-paced without needing a great pile of books. Then, he says, put together the workplace assessors and get them accredited. Mick has also observed that this process has stopped the supervisors ‘picking heads’ and given the construction workers a better opportunity to learn” (Alderson, Butorac, Zubrick and Figgis, 2000).

v. **Within firms:** Here, there is no one set pattern or form to lifelong learning. It varies according to contextual factors, including the importance given to human capital, competitiveness in the industry and the nature of the industry itself.

Within some of Australia’s largest companies, a common mantra is that *your career is your responsibility.* However, this does not mean that the firms take no interest in employees’ development, or are unwilling to support them. For instance, in the area of business and financial services, competition for staff can be strong. The need to attract staff with appropriate skills and attributes, together with a desire to retain staff – and the skills and knowledge they embody – encourages firms to provide opportunities for staff to develop their skills and to move to higher levels of responsibility (and pay).
One major business services company that focuses on human resources and business solutions is fairly typical. Recruitment of new staff emphasises attributes rather than skills, on the basis that skills can be learned, but attributes cannot. All new staff receive structured induction training in a program lasting several weeks. Through this, they have the opportunity to learn about all facets of the business and what is expected of them as an employee, as well as some specific skills, such as interviewing, that will be required in their day-to-day work. Following this induction program, a number of opportunities to pursue further learning are available and all staff members are expected to have a personal development plan and report against it on an annual basis. Shadowing a more senior staff member for a defined period is one option that staff can choose; but support for more formal learning is also available. For instance, arrangements negotiated with educational institutions have enabled some aspects of employees’ work to be included within the requirements for qualifications at the graduate diploma or masters levels. Staff may be given the opportunity to participate in advanced short courses, either individually or in teams; and arrangements have been made for staff members to be released from work for short periods to participate in other forms of study. Thus, while ‘your career is your responsibility’ is the overall approach taken to staff development, many options are available to staff in the enterprise to increase their skills and to work toward personal career goals.

Providing opportunities for staff to learn from each other is common in many Australian firms. These opportunities are sometimes structured and formal, such as through organised in-house training. However, they can also be highly unstructured, as in the form known as ‘sitting next to Nellie’.

Within one firm in financial services, a strong emphasis has been placed on providing staff members with opportunities to learn from each other, within a framework of personal development that also includes more formal mentoring and opportunities to participate in both in-house and external programs. This emphasis has included restructuring the architecture of the firm’s main building and using team-based approaches in the organisation of work.

To create an environment in which staff members are able to interact as much as possible, a building that was fairly typical of offices two decades ago, with a mix of open-plan cubicles and separate offices joined by an often complex labyrinth of corridors, has been completely transformed. The process has involved hollowing out the centre of the building and creating themed zones. In order to create an atmosphere of openness, domestic rather than commercial architects and designers were used. The result is a unique mix of features of home and work with comfortable seating and facilities such as open fully-equipped kitchens, as well as desks in open spaces and quiet work areas.

Staff at all levels from the most junior to the most senior mingle in central stairways and around large tables in open kitchens or on couches in lounge areas. Teams form and re-form and are temporarily accommodated within themed zones, moving on
when a project is completed or to another area and another team when involved in more than one project simultaneously. Laptop computers that can be plugged into any one of the numerous points around the building allow staff the freedom to move around the building to complete their work. There are special private and quiet zones available for short term use when needed.

Within this open, comfortable and non-threatening environment a major aim is to ensure that staff members know each other, are aware of each others’ knowledge and skills, and can learn about and from each other. In addition though, learning from and about clients has also been an important element in the design; and so clients and staff also mingle informally.

Within some firms, less emphasis is given to ongoing learning than to just-in-time training ie. specific training which occurs when and where it is required. This does not necessarily mean that training is disjointed, or that no learning occurs between one short period of intense training and the next. However, it does mean that more resources and effort are devoted to learning at some times than others. For instance, greater emphasis tends to be given to training when new equipment is introduced, particularly where this is substantially different from the equipment it replaces.

An example arises in the spinning and weaving industry, where Australian firms face a continuing challenge from overseas competition, particularly from regions with an abundant supply of cheap labour. Some firms have found themselves in difficulties, unable to compete against cheaper imported products. However, one firm in particular has grown, securing a larger proportion of the local and global market. This firm chose to introduce new high-technology equipment, re-skill its staff and re-organise its production processes. Introduction of the new machinery involved an intense period of re-training for existing staff, as new higher-level skills were required. However, longer-term skills development has also been given more emphasis. Changes have included the re-organisation of workplaces, a stronger emphasis on teamwork and additional support for the induction of new staff. The firm’s skill needs are being met through a mix of formal and informal learning and training. The provision of opportunities for staff to learn from each other has been an important element of the adjustment process adopted by the enterprise.

Lifelong learning in Australian firms has been supported by two different approaches involving communities. The first approach has involved the creation of ‘communities of practice’ – groups of people with some common interests who come together in person or virtually (eg through intranets) to discuss their work and to develop their knowledge and skills. These communities have tended to be more common among workers with higher levels of skills, and those in ‘white collar’ occupations. While such communities are often created within firms, such as major financial services organisations, they can also develop across firms through informal networks or more formally through professional associations.
The second approach has been more likely to include workers at all skill levels. It involves firms engaging in different ways with local communities or community groups. For instance, one major Australian company operating in a number of industries (including building and business services) encourages its staff to work actively in their local communities and participate in community groups. It recognises the importance of these activities in the development of their staff members, as well as in creating goodwill toward the firm. It has declared one day per year as a special day on which all staff are required to participate in voluntary activities of some kind that will benefit communities.

A large mining company has also placed a strong emphasis on community engagement. Alcoa was recently recognised with a national training award. This company has adopted ‘triple bottom line’ accounting practices, which include social and environmental reporting alongside financial statements. At its site in Kwinana, Western Australia, the company has recognised that each of its jobs supports four other jobs in the region. It has worked to strengthen community links through a range of initiatives, including a vibrant apprenticeship and traineeship program and activities with schools and local TAFE colleges. This occurs within an overall framework that aims to create a learning organisation and that recognises people as the linchpin of the enterprise.

Statistically, lifelong learning opportunities within firms often favour the most highly-skilled employees. However, there are examples which demonstrate that some firms provide lifelong learning opportunities for workers with special needs; and recognise the benefits that result for both the individuals and themselves.

Brite Industries in Melbourne, for example, employs mainly people with intellectual disabilities in a range of activities including packaging, manufacturing, warehousing and horticulture. The firm is run on a commercial basis and is required to meet contractual arrangements with clients, as would any other organisation, including fulfilling quality standards and on-time delivery. The previous educational experiences of the staff members are varied; and some of them have low levels of literacy and numeracy. However, what might be regarded as difficult problems elsewhere are not seen as such here. Rather, emphasis is given to the potential for the individual staff member to develop his or her skills, to achieve career goals, and to participate in satisfying employment in a socially supportive environment.

Staff members have a variety of learning and training opportunities, both formal and informal. Rotation of work teams around different tasks requires new skills to be learned and put into practice regularly. As many staff as are able complete a training package program that has been specially negotiated. Some staff are selected to be trainers themselves and complete a ‘train the trainer program’. Some staff complete programs to meet legislated requirements eg fork-lift driving, occupational health and safety. The result is a vibrant workplace where contractual obligations with clients are consistently met and workers feel valued and appreciated.
vi. **Enterprise-community partnerships.** Salty Seas is a relatively new enterprise processing oysters. It has an ‘energetic and supportive learning environment’ and a strong commitment to training. The enterprise is located in St Helens, a regional centre on the east coast of Tasmania. St. Helens, like many other regional centres, has a significant problem with youth unemployment.

What is unusual about the Salty Seas story is that the business grew out of a training program established in the community to assist unemployed young people. The program was developed by the Tasmanian Fishing Industry Training Council and customized to meet the needs of individuals and the local shellfish industry. It was a formal traineeship in Aquaculture at Certificate II level that included both on and off-the-job activities.

The traineeship not only gave participants a certificate that has become highly valued, but introduced them to the VET system and thus to other training possibilities. A valuable outcome of the program was a greater understanding of the VET system and the development of useful networks through which it could more easily be accessed. Better knowledge of the VET arrangements, particularly the system for recognition of prior learning, is bringing more training to the area, improving training in the local fishing industry and promoting training more generally.

Many of the original trainees have now moved on, but others have stayed. The business continues to emphasise training for all its staff, both formally and informally through mentoring or demonstrating skills on-the-job. Staff are encouraged to share their experience and the local knowledge they bring with them is particularly valued (Alderson, Butorac, Zubrick and Figgis, 2000).

vii. **Unions and employers working together.** The ACTU has worked to place training near the top of the list of issues when unions negotiate Enterprise Agreements and to have training recognized as a right for all workers. It identified that some employers neglect training and failed in particular to provide opportunities for lower skilled workers, women, and workers from non-English speaking backgrounds. These workers were particularly disadvantaged when new work practices and equipment were introduced. It has also recognized the importance of ensuring that training is not dominated by enterprise needs at the expense of industry needs. This ensures greater portability of skills and qualifications and thus better opportunities for workers in the longer term.

At vehicle manufacturer Ford, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and management have combined to promote the Vehicle Industry Certificate (VIC), which gives non-trade workers a recognized qualification. As workers complete each level of the certificate they are also able to gain higher pay. A vehicle division shop steward reported that:
“Employees used to do the same thing day in and day out for years. Now with the VIC they can earn more money and move to other work areas. Initial resistance to the idea of training for the VIC didn’t last long. Nor did the fear that some people might fail. Once people saw VIC qualified people getting more money or moving up, a lot more wanted to do it.”

Ford believes that building a highly skilled workforce is responsible for its competitive edge. The company has become a registered trainer and provides on-site training leading to recognized qualifications.

Similarly, at food processing company Golden Circle, a committee of management, workers and representatives of the National Union of Workers (NUW) wrote training goals and conditions into the first Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. The committee set down the details to make training relevant to people’s jobs, to meet the costs, to link training to pay levels and for training to be delivered at appropriate times and places. The agreement enabled workers to be able to train on-site towards a recognized qualification. An NUW delegate has found that the arrangements meant that all workers had access to training if they wanted it and that because a skills development policy had been agreed between the various interested parties workers have ‘been made to feel we’re not sweat hogs’. A clearly laid out classification structure also made it possible for workers to see what training they needed to complete to achieve the next level (Australian Council of Trade Unions, 1997).

viii. Meeting the challenges of distance. Though most of the Australian population lives in coastal areas, the vastness of the continent offers significant challenges for the provision of education and training. Meeting the needs of remote or isolated communities draws on some special skills and often requires the fulfilment of multiple roles by a small number of players.

On the mainland, employment, education and training opportunities for remote Indigenous communities are improving, including through those initiatives described earlier. However, Australia has other remote regions. Indian Ocean Group Training (IOGT) provides adult education and training for people living on the remote territories of Christmas Island (2700 kms north-west of Darwin) and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands (900 kilometres west-south-west of Christmas Island). On Christmas Island phosphate mining has been the main industry in the past, but a tourism industry is now developing. The Cocos Islands were formerly a copra plantation, but they are ideal for the development of aquaculture and eco-tourism. Many of the islands’ inhabitants are of Indonesian, Malay or Chinese background. In order to be successful, IOGT has had to become firmly established as a member of the islands’ communities and to meet their needs for employment and training support.

IOGT fulfils several roles. It is a group training company, negotiating with industry to provide work and training opportunities for apprentices and trainees. It is a licensed employment agency, assisting industry to find workers and people to find
employment. It provides small business services as an agent for the West Australian Small Business Development Corporation. As a registered training provider it operates a computer training facility and undertakes employment programs. It is also developing an adult and community education program based on language classes, fitness and arts and culture programs.

IOGT trainees work in fourteen fields, ranging from business administration to mining. Most training takes place on the islands in collaboration with Western Australian providers or through IOGT’s registered training arm. However, apprentices undertake block release training in Perth, which involves a five hour flight once a week. Christmas Islander May Yeow completed a traineeship with the Retail Trader’s Association of Australia, having been hosted by the Christmas Island newsagency. This achievement would not have been possible without IOGT’s assistance.

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Chapter 6: Summary and Possible Future Directions

CEET’s survey for BIAC-TUAC of lifelong learning in Australia involved five different approaches: a survey of the available quantitative and qualitative material; a survey of the views of key stakeholders; a survey of the experience for disadvantaged groups and individuals; and case studies.

We found that lifelong learning has often been given a narrower rather than a wider interpretation. At the symposium to ascertain the views of key stakeholders, for example, it was widely assumed to be formal post-school education and training, particularly that provided through the publicly-funded vocational education and training sector (VET) and delivered through registered public, private and community training organisations. Other participants argued, however, that lifelong learning should be interpreted more broadly; and also that lifelong learning should not be debased into training credentialism.

The principles proposed by BIAC-TUAC in their draft framework for the country surveys were shown to be adopted in Australia, except that “wide/equitable access for all” was honoured in rhetoric rather than in reality. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 all show that to meet this principle adequately requires major changes in policy and practice. These changes are unlikely to be acceptable to the social partners or the wider society.

In relation to the motivations for lifelong learning identified by BIAC-TUAC, the different survey approaches revealed considerable agreement between trade unions, employer organisations and governments, for example in relation to human capital as a strategic asset for enterprise competitiveness, individual advancement and national prosperity. The policies of the Australian National Training Authority, its industry-led board and its Ministerial Council have aimed to develop individual capacities and national competitiveness. However, the stress in technical and further education (TAFE) has increasingly been on the technical rather than the further education elements.

Yet the surveys show that the motivations of the different stakeholders are not identical. Three examples illustrate this. First, employers and unions differ in their views on the labour market and its relationship with lifelong learning. The rise of non-standard, more precarious employment through outsourcing, casual and part-time work, labour hire and self-employment are much more strongly supported by employers than unions. These changes have major implications, for example for who obtains what work, for its relationship to education and training, and for lifelong learning, family life and community participation.

Secondly, the dynamism and unpredictability of intensified competition in a globalising world is tending to push enterprises towards flexibility, productivity improvement and often a short-term focus on survival, especially perhaps in small businesses (which with the unemployed, represent half of the labour force). Lifelong
learning, at least within institutional settings which remain heavily influenced by the social partners, may be argued to benefit from more settled, long term arrangements, for example in relation to incentives, information to guide choice and quality assurance. On the other hand, there has been an overall shift in the locus of responsibility for lifelong learning towards the individual.

Thirdly, unions lay greater emphasis, at least publicly, on equitable outcomes in education, training and employment than individual enterprises or employer organisations.

The surveys also make it clear that, at least in Australia, a tripartite view of lifelong learning is incomplete. There are many institutions in Australian society other than governments, trade unions and employer organisations which contribute to lifelong learning; and a framework for policy and practice which fails to take them adequately into account is unsatisfactory. For example, professionals and para-professionals, including through their professional associations, make major contributions to both the demand for, and the supply of lifelong learning. Similarly, the voluntary and community sector, equivalent to some 8% to 10% of GDP, provides many opportunities for learning – prior to employment, during working life and subsequently.

The OECD conceived lifelong learning as having four key features; and the survey findings for Australia can be considered in relation to each of them. First, the Australian arrangements do not provide a fully systemic view of learning. There are links, but there are also discontinuities between the sectors of education and training. It is notable, for example, how the points of transition, such as from school to higher education or VET, from education into employment or disjunctures during working life, present particular difficulties for the less educated and generally less advantaged citizens. Secondly, the Australian system does seek to cater for a diversity of learner needs; and there has been a substantial shift of emphasis from the supply of learning to the demand side. It has been a particularly marked change in VET, including through the introduction of user choice and the development of a training market. Thirdly, there has been some increased emphasis on self-paced and self-directed learning, although there is more which could be done in this area, for example for students with a disability. Fourthly, policy and practice have recognised the multiple objectives of education in both VET and in higher education– and in adult and community education perhaps even more so. This is despite the increasing emphasis on an industry-led system.

Overall, the Australian education and training system performs creditably, but there is plenty of room for further improvement. The surveys make it clear that substantial progress has been made in developing a more systemic approach to lifelong learning in Australia over the last two or three decades. There have been many significant achievements, both qualitative, such as the improved portability of enterprise training, financial incentives for employers to provide structured work-based training for apprentices and trainees, development of the Australian Qualifications...
Framework, recognition of current competency (RCC) and recognition of prior learning (RPL), a competency-based approach and quality assurance, and also quantitative achievements. There is a substantial measure of shared commitment to the national VET system from unions and employers. There are many examples of good practice across the country – and some extremely creative ones.

Possible improvements to current arrangements: Our surveys have identified four areas which warrant further attention. First, there are funding issues relating to who pays for lifelong learning and for which purposes. Individuals, enterprises and governments – at both national and State/Territory levels – will all contribute, but in what proportions and by what mechanisms? Getting the funding arrangements right, both within VET and between VET and other sectors, appeared to the stakeholders as the most important step to further advancing the lifelong learning concept in Australia. Future funding arrangements would need to include consideration of the incentives for active participation in lifelong learning: incentives for individuals, incentives for employers and incentives for existing workers.

Secondly, all of the key stakeholders saw a need to find better ways to coordinate and integrate activities across the various sectors of education and training. Cross-sectoral pathways are critical to lifelong learning, but sectoral differences in organising, delivering, assessing and recognising learning continue to pose barriers for individual learners. While progress has been made, there is still more to be done. Relatedly, RCC and RPL for individuals, be they currently in work or looking for work, are important building blocks of lifelong learning. RCC and RPL can provide pathways from informal and non-formal learning settings and a real opportunity to engage with those who possess relatively little post-school education and training. Their limited practical application was widely regarded, especially by trade unions and governments, as a key weakness in current arrangements.

Thirdly, there are access and equity issues. As one stakeholder stated at the symposium: “the relationship between education and training participation and socio-economic status remains clear and strong in Australia ... the private benefits of education, and public subsidies at the post-compulsory level, still go predominantly to those from relatively privileged backgrounds”. The learning needs of those in education and training institutions, in structured workplace training and in enterprises with a commitment to training are generally well catered for. But those who are unemployed, who are poorly educated or who have relatively few employment opportunities (for example, those with low literacy levels, in remote locations without adequate employment, with a disability or in prison) tend consistently to be overlooked in policy considerations and inadequately provided for in practice.

The surveys identified two other groups with restricted opportunities for lifelong learning. The first was older workers, who (as a group) tend to have substantially lower levels of education and training than younger workers and whose learning opportunities can be limited by stereotypes of their employability, learning
capacities and needs. The second group was professional workers with overseas qualifications. Their qualifications are not always recognised for employment in Australia. They may also need assistance to improve their understanding of Australian workplace ethics and culture.

Finally, there is the importance of involving a wider range of partners in developing policies for lifelong learning and in implementing them than is sometimes appreciated. Lifelong learning is not a matter only for education and training portfolios. It can impinge on labour markets, social policies, industry, regional and defence policies. Policy development and implementation benefit from collaboration between the three tiers of government in Australia (national, State/Territory and local) and from the contributions of both public and private enterprises. Also, since lifelong learning involves a broad range of other stakeholders, including learners and their families, institutional and other providers, as well as the social partners, the need for coordination in policy development and implementation is much wider than within government alone.