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The funding of vocational education and training for students with disabilities

Volume 2

Chris Selby Smith

Fran Ferrier

Publisher's note

This volume is a companion to *The funding of vocational education and training for students with disabilities: Volume 1*. The detailed report of the project is contained in volume 1 while volume 2 contains the appendices.

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ISBN 1 920895 06 X web edition

TD/TNC 75.14

Published by NCVER

ABN 87 007 967 311

Level 11, 33 King William Street, Adelaide SA 5000

PO Box 8288, Station Arcade SA 5000, Australia

<<http://www.ncver.edu.au>>

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Appendix 1: Background data

In 2000, over 62 000 VET students reported a disability. This was a substantial increase on the 47 300 reporting a disability in 1996.

Statistics on disability are collected on enrolment, when students are asked if they have a ‘permanent and significant disability’ and can choose to identify their disability from a list consisting of:

- ✧ visual sight/seeing
- ✧ hearing
- ✧ physical
- ✧ intellectual
- ✧ chronic illness
- ✧ other disability.

About a third of students do not indicate a specific disability, but of the rest, the largest group in 2000 reported a physical disability (20.7%).

Overall, about 4–5% of VET students report a disability, but there are some variations between states and territories. In 2000, the proportion of VET students reporting a disability was lowest in the Northern Territory (2.9%), Western Australia (3.7%), and Victoria (3.8%) and highest in New South Wales (5.3%).

Compared with all VET students, those with a disability are less likely to be in employment (40%, compared with 77%). They tend to have lower levels of schooling—only 30% achieved Year 12 compared with 43% of all students. Students with disabilities also tend to be older than all VET students. In 2000, 38% were aged over 40 years, compared with 30% of all students.

More students with disabilities enrol in multi-field education than all students. This field includes enabling programs addressing generic study, interpersonal and job-search skills. However the proportion choosing this type of VET has declined since 1996 from 47% to 27%. In 2000 a smaller proportion of VET students with disabilities than all VET students were studying at AQF certificate III level (16% compared with 20%) and more were studying at AQF certificate I level (12% compared with 5% of all students). However, in 2000, most were studying a similar mix of qualifications as all VET students.

Perhaps surprisingly, students reporting a disability undertook, on average, more hours of training in 2000 than all VET students (243 compared with 198 hours annually). However, this reflects that a higher proportion are engaged in full-time study (12% compared with 9%).

Students reporting a disability are less likely than all VET students to achieve successful module outcomes (74% compared with 80%). However, the success rate has risen since 1996, when it was 71%. Perhaps important is that a larger proportion of students with disabilities withdraw from study (13% compared with 9%).

Employment outcomes for VET graduates are poor for students with disabilities. The proportions in employment before and after training are almost identical, leading to the conclusion that participation in training makes little difference to these students in the labour market.

People with disabilities are under-represented among all VET students, compared with their share of the population—even in the states where their representation is highest. For instance, in 1998 in New South Wales about 19% of the population had a disability, rising from 4% of those aged 0–4 years to 83% of those aged 85 years and over. However, as noted earlier, in 2000 in New South Wales, 5.3% of all VET students reported a disability (Selby Smith et al. 2002).

Appendix 2:

Some theoretical considerations¹

Key stakeholders

It can be argued that there are four main stakeholder groups concerned with the provision, funding and use of vocational education and training (VET) in Australia. The first group consists of governments, both state and federal, who are the major funders of VET and who have a powerful influence on VET policies and practice. It could, however, be argued that for some purposes, the levels of government should be separated, that the different jurisdictions (for example, New South Wales compared with Tasmania or Western Australia compared with Victoria) warrant separate analysis, and that governments are not always seamless and that, on occasions, differences need to be considered (for example, between different operating agencies such as education, health and infrastructure; between regulatory and industry-focussed authorities; or between central and operating agencies).

The second group consists of the providers of VET facilities and services. Traditionally, the technical and further education (TAFE) sector, the public providers of VET, have been the dominant group of providers. They remain so overall; and especially in relation to particular industries and regions. However, elsewhere there has been a growing role played by private providers, especially in metropolitan areas and other large centres of population, and in certain fields of study, such as business studies, information technology, hospitality and tourism (particularly perhaps where student demand is high and the cost of additional capital facilities is not excessive). The adult and community education (ACE) sector also provides valuable services, including in vocational education and training, especially for some groups of clients (including people with disabilities). Especially where capital facilities necessary for providing particular VET programs are expensive and where student demand is relatively low, as happens in many locations in non-metropolitan Australia and even for some courses in metropolitan centres, there can be issues about the degree to which third parties, such as a private provider, an enterprise or an industry association, have access to the facilities on reasonable terms and conditions (Selby Smith & Selby Smith 1997).

Employers are the third group of important stakeholders concerned with the provision, funding and use of VET in Australia. Governments, including departments of state, trading enterprises and other agencies, employ large numbers of staff, although there are many more in the private sector. Here, governments act as an employer with similar interests and concerns to private enterprises, whereas in their role as governments they also act for society as a whole in relation to VET, including funding it, setting the broad policy direction for the sector, striking an appropriate balance between different objectives, such as efficiency and equity, and establishing mechanisms through which the sector is accountable to taxpayers and the wider community. Employers, in both the public and the private sectors, are users of trained personnel, provide on-the-job training and, increasingly, are active participants in the design and implementation of off-the-job training. For example, in relation to VET students with disabilities, if employers are less willing to provide on-

¹ This discussion incorporates a range of work previously undertaken at the Monash University–Australian Council for Educational Research Centre for the Economics of Education and Training in Melbourne.

the-job components of initial education and training or to facilitate the accumulation of relevant work experience for disabled workers compared with those without a disability, then their level of VET attainment and their career advancement in employment will be reduced. This is additional to the issue of whether there are extra costs for employers in such circumstances.

Fourthly, there are the students, trainees and workers themselves who participate in VET, or who might participate if policies or practices changed. It is individuals who actually undertake VET, not industry or governments. The human capital individuals acquire through VET—the knowledge, skills, aptitudes and attitudes that it imparts—becomes embodied in them, and only they can own it. Individuals undertake VET for different reasons, which economists divide between consumption and investment reasons.

VET can be seen as an end in itself and demanded as a consumption good; the determinants then tend to be such things as the tastes and preferences of particular individuals, their level of income, the time they have available to devote to it, demographic and cultural factors, the price of VET courses (such as fees, books or travel) and the opportunity cost in terms of the alternative uses for their time and money (e.g. the job given up or the leisure foregone). Can it be assumed that the consumption benefits from a course are not systematically different for students with disabilities compared with all students? It is known, of course, that individual students, whether disabled or not, are likely to value differently the consumption benefits from a course of study in VET, depending on their preference function, their circumstances and the alternative opportunities which are open to them.

However, in VET as a whole, the bulk of the demand by individuals is not for VET as an end in itself, but rather as a means to help achieve other ends. It is a derived demand, since the demand for VET is being determined by the individual's demand for whatever VET may lead to. The more they perceive that VET will allow them to achieve that end, the greater will be their demand for VET. There are two ways of looking at this derived demand. First, VET can be seen as an intermediate good, that is, as an important ingredient in the achievement of, say, a more fulfilling lifestyle after retirement, an improved personal resume or curriculum vitae, or as a highway to higher education. Secondly, VET can be viewed as an investment good that will yield a favourable return in some way in the future, such as contributing to achieving a good job, higher pay, promotion, a new career direction or successful re-entry into employment. Crucial to the level and composition of the private demand for VET is the relationship between the costs of acquiring vocational education and training and the benefits that flow from it; and how the relationship compares with what the individuals would be able to obtain from alternative uses of their time and other limited resources.

In the context of the present study two points are worth emphasising. First, the costs and benefits for students with disabilities in VET are not necessarily equal to those for all VET students; and there can be significant variations within VET (e.g. by location, field of study or Australian Qualifications Framework level) and between different students with disabilities (e.g. different sorts of disability, different levels of severity, one disability compared with several). In addition, if the base level of funding provided for all students in VET is limited, and rather lower than what might be argued to be desirable, perhaps this has a greater than average impact on disadvantaged students, including those who experience a disability, if they are less able to compensate in other ways for any shortcomings in what is provided. Secondly, the costs and benefits for students with disabilities can be affected, and may be affected substantially, by the actions of other stakeholders. For example, VET organisations can provide (or not provide) easier access, financial assistance or other support; governments can give the needs of students with disabilities more or less priority in many ways; and employers can aid (or hinder) the VET study of students with disabilities and their subsequent individual development and employment progress. If the disincentives are too strong it can be reflected in a reduced willingness to enter VET by the individual with a disability; reduced levels of

learning and course completion among those who enter; and slower progression in employment, even for those who obtain it.

General and specific training

This distinction is relevant to the distribution of training costs between VET students and training firms; and the relationship may differ systematically for students with disabilities compared with other students in VET. In particular, the costs of training are likely to be higher, and in some cases could be substantially higher, while the benefits to both firms and trainees could be lower. If so, training levels will be reduced for students with disabilities, unless another stakeholder reduces the costs or increases the benefits. The latter is generally less feasible than the former; and the relevant stakeholder in a market economy is likely to have to be the government (and perhaps, to some degree, the students with disabilities themselves).

Becker (1964) originally assumed a perfectly competitive labour market, with no active role played by governments in either the funding or the provision of training. In this model, firms provided all training and the only issue was who financed the training—the trainee or the firm undertaking the training. Becker’s contention was that this would depend upon who was in a position to earn an acceptable return on the investment that training represented.

Becker defined general training as that which imparts skills that are employable not only in the enterprise conducting the training, but also in other enterprises using similar types of labour. Examples include language and literacy training, pre-vocational training, and most tradesmen and operative training of the sort covered by apprenticeships and traineeships. Specific training, on the other hand, was training that is only of use to the organisation conducting the training. It raises the productivity of trainees within the training organisation, but the skills it imparts cannot be applied anywhere else. Examples include company orientation programs, training in the manufacture of patented products, and in the ins and outs of processes, equipment and techniques unique to the training firm. A lot of training, of course, has both general and specific elements. Some, but not all, of the skills and knowledge acquired through a training program are portable, the rest are particularly applicable to the training firm.

Becker contended that, in a perfectly competitive labour market, a firm would conduct general training but not finance it, since it would not be in a position to earn an acceptable return on its investment. The trainee, on the other hand, would be in that position, and so would agree to bear the full cost of the training. The situation would be the reverse in the case of specific training—the training firm could earn an acceptable return on its investment and therefore would be in a position to fully finance the training undertaken. However, for trainees with a disability, training costs would tend to be higher, sometimes substantially so, and the benefits from training will often be lower (for both the enterprise and the students with disabilities or trainee). The actual differences in costs and benefits, for enterprise and trainee, are matters for empirical determination. Note that there is likely to be an asymmetrical situation in terms of the alternatives available to the enterprise and the disabled trainee or student. Whereas the former can choose between the disabled and non-disabled, and may tend to find good reasons to select the latter for training opportunities, the latter may face higher costs and/or lower benefits in alternative uses of their time and other resources, as well as in VET.

Labour mobility is clearly a crucial consideration in determining who will bear the cost of training. The question is whether the trained worker will stay with the training firm long enough for the latter to recoup its investment. Such may be the case where the firm faces little effective competition for its workers (the obvious example is a company town); if there are high levels of unemployment in the occupations in which the training is undertaken; or if the firm is able to lock the workers into the firm, for example through bonding agreements, through superannuation benefits or accumulated leave entitlements. Becker’s original model relied on there being complete freedom for workers to move

between jobs in response to wage differentials that adjust continually to productivity differences. In reality, of course, wages are not as flexible as that, nor workers as mobile. If disabled workers are less likely to move between employers, as seems quite possible a priori, this will tend to redress some of the imbalance between disabled and other workers which was identified earlier.

In a world of pervasive uncertainty and less than perfect labour mobility, the difference in the cost sharing and wage patterns between generally and specifically trained workers may not be as marked as the original Becker model predicted. Nevertheless, three broad propositions that arise out of the distinction are still useful. First, workers have an incentive to at least contribute towards the costs of their training to the extent that the skills they acquire are generally marketable. Such would be the case in most pre-employment, pre-vocational, apprenticeship and traineeship programs. Secondly, it appears likely that firms will be reluctant to *pay for* any sort of training on which they do not consider they will be able to earn an adequate return. Thirdly, firms are likely to be reluctant even to *provide* general training if they cannot pass on the costs to, or at least share them with, the workers to be trained (or another interested party). If the costs of training students and workers with disabilities are higher than for others, *a fortiori* if their benefits are also lower, then additional assistance (to lower costs or raise benefits for those with a disability) is required if they are not to be further disadvantaged. Knowledge of the relevant costs and benefits for the different stakeholders in relation to the alternatives they face is clearly essential for effective policy-making, if either efficiency or equity objectives are to be pursued.

The government's role in training

In the Becker model just described, even in the face of a moderate degree of uncertainty and imperfection in labour markets, rational decision-making on the part of profit-maximising firms, and by individuals wishing to maximise their lifetime earnings, will ensure that an optimal amount of both sorts of training would be undertaken. That is, the private calculus involving the matching of marginal private costs and marginal private benefits of training would result, if other things are equal, in a socially optimal allocation of resources to training, where the marginal social costs and benefits would also be equalised. There is, in this scenario, no active role for governments to play in either providing or funding VET. Their function is restricted to ensuring that the playing field is as level as possible. The situation which is observed in practice, both in Australia and overseas, is, of course, that governments across the whole spectrum of political viewpoints take an active, indeed dominant, role in both the provision and financing of VET. Even where there is a strong commitment to establish a viable and healthy training market there may not be any serious suggestion that governments should completely get out of the business of providing vocational education and training.

Justification of public funding of training—either to supplement funding by enterprises and trainees, or to substitute for either of these other sources—is generally offered on the grounds of efficiency or equity. That is, it is argued that (a) unsubsidised training markets inevitably lead to serious under-investment in training by both firms and individuals, and/or (b) unsubsidised training markets typically restrict access to training to an unacceptable extent, and would be inherently inequitable.

It can be argued that something less than a socially optimal level of resources would be devoted to training by an unsubsidised training market, on at least three grounds. First, it can be argued that training generates significant externalities that a privately financed market would fail to take into account. The contention is that there are substantial benefits that flow from training that are not 'captured' or appropriated by either the trainees—in the form of higher earnings, improved employment prospects, greater job satisfaction and so on—or by the training firms—in the form of say, higher profits or increased market share. Society as a whole also stands to gain in a variety of other ways, so it is argued. However, these extra, external benefits (termed 'spillover' benefits by economists) are generally not taken into consideration by either trainees or firms when they decide

how much training to undertake, and, to the extent that they do not do so, private decision-making will lead to an under-investment in training. If so, governments need to step in with financial inducements to either or both parties to encourage them to undertake more training.

Secondly, it can be argued that unregulated training markets would operate under an abnormally high level of ‘imperfections’. It has already been noted that private provision and financing of training under conditions of *some* uncertainty and *some* imperfections in the labour markets are still able to allocate a socially optimal level of resources to training. What is claimed, however, is that if the uncertainties and imperfections are too great, private markets will allocate too few resources to training. A number of examples of where this can happen have been put forward. For example, it has been argued that the existence of legislated minimum wages can restrict trainees’ capacity to fund firm-provided general training by accepting a much lower wage during the training period. So too can rigidly administered wage structures or those that include unduly narrow wage differentials. Another example relates to lack of knowledge of the true value of training, by individuals or firms, which could lead to serious under-investment (or over-investment) in training. In addition, firms may overestimate the value to them of training undertaken by other firms, in which case they may seek to poach rather than train their own workers. A third example concerns capital market imperfections, which may present difficulties for both trainees and firms in the financing of training. Lending for training purposes encounters the same difficulties as it does for any other form of human capital investment. Finally, workers and firms may be more risk-averse than society as a whole. This may be particularly true of smaller firms and less educated workers.

Thirdly, it can be argued that the provision of training involves significant economies of scale. Firms may not provide enough training (irrespective of whether it is general or specific) because they lack the specialised physical facilities, the specialised managerial, supervisory and instructional expertise, the financial resources or the capacity to cover for employees off the production line while they are undertaking training. These deficiencies would obviously be greater in smaller firms, but may be less of a problem in larger ones. This, too, helps explain why smaller firms typically train less than larger ones. The further question of whether the provision of the off-the-job component of training can be regarded as a natural monopoly—that is, whether the economies of scale are so great as to render this aspect of training most efficiently conducted by a large and centralised organisation such as a state TAFE system—needs further investigation. *A priori*, it seems unlikely, however, that this would be the case across the whole range of courses provided by TAFE systems in the states and territories. For specialised activities, however, the argument may be stronger.

Governments on behalf of their constituents at the national, state and territory levels have their own, and very significant, perspective on the demand for VET. Part of their demand, of course, is like that of the private sector, since governments are major employers in their own right. However, the government demand for VET is much broader than merely meeting their own workforce requirements. Progressively, but especially throughout the 1980s and 1990s, VET has become recognised as a vital element in the achievement of national, state and regional economic and social policy objectives. This is well illustrated in the mission statement for VET, and its underpinning objectives, contained in the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) national strategy for VET 1998–2003, *A bridge to the future*:

To ensure that the skills of the Australian labour force are sufficient to support internationally competitive commerce and industry and to provide individuals with opportunities to optimise their potential.
(ANTA 1998)

The five objectives were: equipping Australians for the world of work; enhancing mobility in the labour market; achieving equitable outcomes in vocational education and training; increasing investment in training; and maximising the value of public vocational education and training expenditure (ANTA 1998, preface). All of these objectives are relevant for people with disabilities, although the third objective is especially focussed on disadvantaged groups in Australian society. What is clear from ANTA’s mission statement is the explicit acknowledgement of, and the primacy

given to, both the private (individual) and industry (employer) perspectives on the demand for VET. However, the underpinning objectives demonstrate that, from a public (government) perspective, the individual and industry perspectives are both to contribute to the achievement of the economic, social and political objectives of governments.

In assessing the demand for VET from this perspective, however, the two considerations that were important in assessing industry demand for VET remain important. First, the public demand for VET is a derived demand, arising directly out of the policy objectives and political agendas of governments. Secondly, forecasts of the skill requirements of the country, or a particular state or region, and the assessment of the training needed to ensure their supply, only translate into demand when the public policy frameworks, and their accompanying funding and other incentive structures, allow that demand to be realised. This applies as much to students or potential students with disabilities as to any other VET students.

The public demand for VET has an important social dimension, often overlapping with that of the economy. To the extent that these are legitimate roles for VET, there is a case for them to be costed and funded separately, since making the ‘community service obligations’ of VET institutions explicit, and funding them separately, can minimise the consequences of any incompatibility that may arise between them and VET’s more narrowly focussed objectives for enterprises and individuals (and reduces the likelihood of that arising). Three aspects of these social policy objectives warrant particular mention:

- ✧ *Equity and access:* Public VET providers especially have long had a ‘community service obligation’. Ensuring VET places are accessible and that VET services are delivered to individuals from disadvantaged groups in society are established functions of TAFE institutes throughout the country. These groups are identified using a variety of criteria—gender, ethnicity, culture, language, location, disability, and socio-economic background. Many private providers and those in the adult and community education sector also acknowledge their responsibilities to the disadvantaged, including those with a disability. For example, a registered private provider in Victoria whose managing director was interviewed for this study, states in its public quality policy that: ‘The Company is committed to a policy of access and equity for all learners, regardless of literacy, language or learning needs and/or physical/intellectual disability’.
- ✧ *Unemployment:* Unemployment has both a social and economic dimension. At times, especially under the previous national Labor administration, it has been a significant element in the public demand for VET. Labour market training programs, targeted primarily at the long-term unemployed of all ages (among whom people with disabilities are a significant component), formed a major element of the *Working nation* report of 1994 (Keating 1994). However, the Coalition Government has substantially reduced these programs since it was elected in March 1996 (Burgess 1998).
- ✧ *Regional development:* Public and other VET providers are more widely distributed across regional Australia than other post-school education institutions and have played a significant part in rural and regional development. In the current political climate their importance to both national and state governments is being re-emphasised. While the ‘expansion of the range of [VET] programs undertaken by people in rural and remote communities, including programs that take advantage of computer technology’, is listed in *A bridge to the future* as one of the areas of disadvantage being addressed, it is likely that the emphasis on this particular aspect of the public demand for VET will increase in the future. This role is especially important for those many people with disabilities who live in rural and regional Australia.

Pricing and charging, including subsidies

All students in VET face a pricing structure, including financial costs (such as fees, books and travel), time costs, subsidies (if any) and the opportunity costs involved in using their resources in

VET rather than elsewhere. VET students with disabilities are no exception. However, the magnitude of the costs and benefits may be rather different for them than for other students. This section examines some relevant general principles that apply to students with disabilities as well as other VET students. Since TAFE represents the bulk of VET provision in Australia, *a fortiori* for VET students with disabilities, particular attention is given to theories of public utility pricing. (For a more detailed discussion see Maglen & Selby Smith 1995.)

Pricing according to the marginal costs of production is the criterion used by unsubsidised profit-maximising private firms under competitive conditions. Thus, if students with disabilities in VET cost more, for example since they require extra assistance with note-taking or interpreting services, pricing would be higher than for other students (unless a stakeholder—probably the government or the training provider—subsidises the costs of their provision for equity or other reasons). If other things are held constant, this will result in a socially optimal allocation of resources. Because both producer surplus² and consumer surplus³ rise as price moves toward marginal cost, from either direction, total surplus is maximised when price is set equal to marginal cost. Deviations of price from marginal cost reduce total surplus and impose costs on society. ‘By setting prices efficiently we can maximise the size of the welfare “pie”—the sum of consumer and producer surplus—which we can then (in principle) divide up as we please’ (Brown & Sibley 1986, p.34).

Although the practical problems of estimating marginal cost can often be substantial, Kahn has argued that the economic principles are clear-cut. Causal responsibility is the essential criterion of what belongs in marginal cost, and what does not. All purchasers of any commodity should be made to bear such additional costs (*only* such, but also *all* such) as are imposed on the economy by the provision of one additional unit. And second, it is short-run marginal cost to which price should at any given time be equated, because it is short-run marginal cost that reflects the social opportunity cost of providing the additional unit that buyers are at any given time trying to decide whether to buy. Kahn comments, however, that ‘the practically achievable version of short-run marginal cost pricing is often likely to be pricing at average variable costs’ (Kahn 1970, p.84). This result, that total surplus is maximised when price is set equal to marginal cost, continues to hold when allowance is made for non-zero cross-elasticities of demand between services and for marginal costs that vary with the level of output.

However, the rule of setting price equal to marginal cost does not necessarily produce optimal results if it is applied only partially, that is, ‘it does not necessarily provide a correct guide for pricing in individual markets or industries if it is not being followed uniformly throughout the economy. This “problem of the second best” is obviously a very serious one in an economy shot through with imperfections of competition, monopoly power, and government taxes and subsidies, causing all prices to diverge in varying directions and degrees from marginal cost’ (Kahn 1970, p.69). While the existence of pervasive imperfections in the economy greatly complicates the problem of efficient pricing, Baumol has advocated avoidance of piecemeal ameliorative measures that have not been sanctioned by careful analysis and the liberal use of common sense (Baumol 1965). He notes that the problem of piecemeal solutions demonstrated by the theory of the second best is one of interdependencies; but emphasises that some interrelationships are more remote and therefore more safely ignored than others. Kahn concludes that there is no substitute for judgement when one comes to the job of applying the principles—judgement in identifying the imperfections

² Producer surplus is defined as the area to the left of the aggregated supply curve, where the supply curves for each producer (defined as marginal cost above the point where revenue covers the variable costs) are summed across producers. This is also the sum of quasi rents for each individual producer.

³ The change in consumer surplus due to the change in price of a commodity can be measured geometrically as the area between the two prices to the left of the demand curve (the schedule of quantities demanded as price falls from the old price to the new price). The definition of consumer surplus can also be thought of as total consumer benefit or utility from their aggregate consumption of the commodity minus expenditure on the quantity actually consumed.

elsewhere that bear most directly on the wisdom of the policy under consideration and in deciding in what way these imperfections counsel modifications of that policy.

For a utility, such as a state or territory TAFE system, which produces more than one product, the allocation of overheads that define fixed cost is necessarily arbitrary. Obviously this can affect the measured marginal costs. If an activity is to pay its own way, it will have to contribute something to fixed costs over and above the variable costs that by definition are zero if the activity were to be terminated. This benefit, defined as ‘quasi-rent’ by Alfred Marshall (1980), is equal to the difference between revenue and total variable cost. This brings in the important dimension of time. Quasi-rent makes sense as a measure of the change in benefits due to short-run changes in prices. In the very short term, all costs are fixed. However, it can be argued that for a sufficiently long period of time all costs are variable. Moreover, the marginal cost will itself depend on the scale of production defined by the fixed cost commitment. In general, it is important to specify the period for which the costs and benefits are to be defined.

Note also that the responses of individuals to price changes are not observable using aggregated market data. Consequently, aggregating the responses of individuals to price changes implies that the welfare measures are measurable, at least potentially, at the aggregate level. However, formally two conditions have to be met. First, the error from using surplus to approximate compensating (or equivalent) variation must be small for all consumers; Hicks considered consumer surplus as a means of expressing, in terms of money income, the gain that accrues to the consumer as a result of a fall in price. It is the ‘compensating variation’ in income, whose loss would just offset the fall in price, and leaves the consumer no better off than before (conversely for a price rise). The ‘equivalent variation’ is another measure of welfare, which uses the new price as the welfare comparison point and asks how much the consumer would have to be paid to accept the old price (and to be no better and no worse off overall) (Hicks 1939). Secondly, all consumers are to be treated equally. The welfare of society in this case is a simple summation of the welfare of each individual in society. For most public utility service offerings, such as a large state TAFE system, the first condition is probably reasonable. However, if those consumers who are disadvantaged by a given policy are not actually compensated by those consumers who benefit from the change, there can be difficulties arising from the second condition.

On reflection, it is apparent that a pricing scheme that maximises surplus can cause the enterprise, whether public or private, to incur a loss. In general, whenever average costs are declining with increasing output—and this would be a typical situation for a large TAFE system—marginal cost is less than average cost and organisations that pursue a marginal cost pricing policy will fail to break even. Efficient public utility pricing may then require that prices be set so as to maximise total surplus, subject to the constraint that the firm at least covers costs from its sales revenue. These are called ‘optimal second-best prices’. The literature argues that, if constant marginal costs and independent demands can be assumed, prices will increase in markets with low price elasticities of demand. In markets with relatively high price elasticities mark-ups will be lower. This strategy alters markets as little as possible from the equilibrium providing the highest possible value of total surplus, that is, price-equal-marginal cost. The proportionate constant adjusts mark-ups in all markets uniformly to the point where the enterprise breaks even.⁴

This second best pricing rule is, perhaps, the best-known result of the entire literature on efficient public utility pricing, where marginal costs decline with increases in output. For any pair of markets served by a regulated firm, the percentage deviations from marginal cost, weighted by the price elasticities of demand, should be equal for both markets to the mark-up. This has become known as the Inverse Elasticity Rule (or IER). The Inverse Elasticity Rule was anticipated in 1927 by Frank Ramsey (1927). Prices that maximise total surplus subject to a breakeven constraint are often called

⁴ For further discussion, see Brown & Sibley 1986, pp.194–9.

Ramsey prices and the constant is termed the Ramsey number. In the special case where the price elasticity of demand in each market is constant, a value can be derived for the constant term that adjusts mark-ups in all markets uniformly.

Although Ramsey pricing can be extended to the case where demands are not independent and where marginal costs are not constant, the analysis becomes more complicated. Instead of the simple own elasticity terms, the mark-ups are weighted by 'super elasticity' terms, which depend not only on the cross-elasticities, but also on the prices and quantities themselves. The rule becomes equating the percentage deviation of price from marginal cost, weighted by the super elasticity across markets. However, the fundamental reasoning remains. Markets where a small change in price would alter consumption relatively little (compared with the situation where price is equated to marginal cost) receive high mark-ups (and conversely). The change from including the cross elasticities is that when a rise in price exerts a large distorting effect in other markets, then a low mark-up is in order (even if the price elasticity of demand in the original market is quite low).

Of course, a model that presumes that an industry sells all its production to final consumers is not descriptively accurate for many public utilities. It is clearly not accurate for an industry supplying education and training services to individuals and enterprises. In such cases it is important to consider not only the direct but also the indirect (or what Brown and Sibley [1986] call the 'flow through') effects of price changes for the utility's services. Different customers can be affected through downstream market equilibrium relationships. The evaluation proceeds much as before, provided that the demand and supply curves are equilibrium demand and supply curves, which reflect industry response to changes in the utility's prices (Schmitz, Just & Heath 1982). Otherwise the price impact on every downstream firm and input supplier has to be considered. Clearly this is difficult, if not impossible, in practice. However, if these conditions are not met, so that efficient pricing principles require an accounting of the flow-through effects from the markets of the regulated firm into myriad other markets, then substantial difficulties face the analyst in terms of required data and computational complexity.

Even if a state or territory TAFE system is a natural monopoly in the sense that its costs are sub-additive, it may not be an actual monopoly. It may supply a large part of the total industry output, but there may also be a substantial fringe of competitive suppliers. In the particular case with which this analysis is concerned, movements in the fringe boundary between the TAFE providers and alternative suppliers, such as private registered training organisations or the adult and community education sector, may be an important outcome of competition, including in relation to pricing strategies, support mechanisms and subsidy arrangements. An alternative paradigm, of course, is to consider a model of regulation that comprehends both the dominant firm and the competitive fringe.

A practical problem concerns the allocation of costs to particular services, where substantial amounts of cost represent facilities which are used in common by several or all services (e.g. the library for a TAFE college, or departmental administration for courses provided by that department) and which cannot be allocated in a clear cost-related way to any single service or user. It is standard practice to break the cost of the firm down to, first, the attributable cost of each service and second, common costs, which are unattributable to a particular service or user (i.e. fixed costs). In Ramsey pricing the common costs are covered: each service makes a contribution to covering common costs (depending on its price elasticity of demand), so that the enterprise breaks even overall. Much of regulatory practice, however, takes a different point of view, requiring that each service be assigned a portion of the common cost and that its revenues equal the cost figure given by the sum of its attributable cost and its share of the common costs.

Under the approach known as Fully Distributed Costs (FDC), common costs are allocated to services and prices are set so that each service just covers its fully distributed costs. In general, economists have been scathing in their criticisms of Fully Distributed Costs. They particularly single out the fact that different Fully Distributed Costs allocation methods are essentially arbitrary, yet can lead to widely different results. Secondly, they argue that the cost concept is not marginal cost,

but an 'average cost' with no clear rationale. Thirdly, they are critical that price elasticities of demand have no place in setting Fully Distributed Costs rates, except perhaps in forecasting revenue. Finally, economists have argued that Fully Distributed Costs methods are meaningless in testing for cross subsidy.

Nevertheless, three approaches particularly have been used: the relative output method (ROM), where the allocations of common costs to different services are based on each service's share in the total output of the firm; the gross revenue method (GRM), where the allocation is based on each service's share in total revenue; and the attributable cost method (ACM), where the allocation is based on each service's share of the total attributable cost over all services. Fully Distributed Costs involves numerous conventions regarding depreciation rates, valuation of assets at book versus replacement cost and many other items. It is also important that the prices and quantities are demand compatible, that is, consistent. Other approaches use simple concepts from the theory of cooperative games, where the object is to allocate responsibility for common costs among services so as to avoid cross-subsidy; and an axiomatic approach to cost allocation, where the object is to start by specifying reasonable properties that an allocation mechanism should satisfy, and then deduce what price structures are consistent with the axioms.

A practical difference between Ramsey pricing and Fully Distributed Cost pricing is that Fully Distributed Costs prices can be calculated from the regulated monopolist's books (i.e. from TAFE's records or those of other VET providers). Ramsey pricing requires this type of information, but also uses estimates of price elasticities of demand (which are often difficult to estimate). However, Fully Distributed Costs pricing ignores price elasticity of demand; therefore if a new set of Fully Distributed Costs prices involves substantial deviation from a pre-existing set of prices, the firm will not break exactly even. It is for this very reason that adjustments for 'repression' effects have become accepted in many regulatory jurisdictions. On the other hand, if one grants that Fully Distributed Costs pricing requires adjustment for 'repression' effects of price changes (i.e. price elasticity of demand), the claimed advantages of Fully Distributed Costs over Ramsey pricing are less marked. Note that when the firm's joint cost function is additively separable, the Fully Distributed Costs prices are subsidy-free; also that the attributable cost method (ACM) of fully distributed costing has a clear axiomatic foundation and satisfies the six axioms of Mirman, Samet and Tauman (1983).

Interestingly, relative to a uniform price regime where price exceeds marginal cost, an appropriately designed non-uniform price schedule can make all consumers and the firm better off. The economic efficiency of non-uniform prices stems from the fact that they induce consumers to sort themselves according to their taste for the enterprise's output: it does not depend simply on cost differences between serving different customers, say large and small customers.

Appendix 3: National programs

Commonwealth and state/territory responsibilities for the provision of services for people with disabilities are set out in the Commonwealth–State Disability Agreement (CSDA).

Under this agreement, the states and territories have primary responsibility for the provision of accommodation support services, respite care services and community access programs. The Commonwealth has primary responsibility for providing employment assistance.

Commonwealth funds to support the services provided by states and territories are allocated on the basis of a formula based on the proportion of people with disabilities in the population. States and territories also contribute substantial funding to support these services. In the five-year Commonwealth–State Disability Agreement to 2002, the states and territories contributed approximately \$7.6 billion and the Commonwealth \$3.2 billion.

In 2001–2002, the Commonwealth allocated \$289 million for disability employment and related assistance. In developing its disability programs and services, the Commonwealth aims to:

- ✧ provide opportunities for people with disabilities to take their place in the community as equal citizens
- ✧ develop their independence, choice and self-reliance so that people with disabilities can live, work and participate in the community to their full capacity.

The programs and services are offered through a range of agencies and departments, primarily the Departments of Family and Community Services (DFACS) and Education, Science and Training (DEST). Two programs in particular target apprentices and are therefore important for VET: the New Apprenticeships Access Program (NAAP); and Disabled Apprentice Wage Support (DAWS).

New Apprenticeships Access Program (NAAP)

This program, operating through the Department of Education, Science and Training, aims to provide disadvantaged job seekers, including people with disabilities, with pre-vocational training, support and other assistance that will help them to obtain and maintain a New Apprenticeship.

Access to the program can be gained either through Centrelink, or individuals can respond to advertisements placed by New Apprenticeship Access Program providers. A variety of training programs are supported by the program and delivered by registered training organisations. These programs are nationally accredited and include programs leading to statements of attainment in business (office administration) at certificate I and II levels; work preparation in engineering and construction; introduction to retail/hospitality 2002, statement of attainment in Certificate II in Retail Operations and Certificate II in Hospitality Operations.

Disabled Apprentice Wage Support program

The Disabled Apprentice Wage Support program provides assistance to those employing a New Apprentice with a disability. Benefits include:

- ✧ a wage-support payment amount of \$114.73 per week or an amount equivalent to the award wage
- ✧ assistance for leasing or purchasing essential equipment or modifying the workplace. Up to \$5000 per year can be used for instance, to provide tutorial assistance, an interpreter (sign language), mentor assistance or workplace modifications.

Those eligible for disabled apprentice wage support are traditional apprentices with a disability who are at AQF level III or IV and who would have difficulty in obtaining an approved apprenticeship; or apprentices who have become disabled during their apprenticeship and are assessed as requiring assistance. Trainees are not eligible for wage support, but their employers are able to apply for the other forms of assistance available under the program.

In the interviews conducted for this project, those concerned with the employment and training for people with intellectual disabilities expressed strong disappointment that disabled apprentice wage support is not available at certificate I level. They believed this would encourage more employers to take on and train people with these disabilities.

Department of Family and Community Service programs

Within the Department of Family and Community Services, the Office of Disability aims to ensure that society is inclusive of people with disabilities and their families and carers. The office develops appropriate policies, manages disability and carer income support and compensation provisions, works with organisations and business to improve access for people with disabilities; and cooperates with states and territories in funding services. The Disability Service Reforms Branch has responsibility for developing and implementing funding, quality and strategic reforms for disability employment assistance and vocational rehabilitation (www.facs.gov.au/disability/00d/index.htm).

Among the many programs and services the department offers, it administers a system for providing work support for people with disabilities—the Supported Wage System (SWS). The program can be useful for workers with a disability who have completed a New Apprenticeship and are no longer eligible for support under the disabled apprentice wage support scheme.

Supported Wage System (SWS)

Through this system the Commonwealth provides support for people unable to obtain employment at full award wages due to the effects of a disability on their productive capacity.

The primary aim of the system is to create job opportunities in the mainstream workforce for people with disabilities. The system supports a process for measuring the productivity of the worker against the basic performance levels for other workers in equivalent positions.

Funds can be provided for on-the-job support, workplace modifications, and an allowance to offset employer costs in establishing a new supported wage placement. A Disability Wage Supplement and related benefits are also available.

The Supported Wage System has been developed in close consultation with employer, trade union and disability peak bodies, and with specialised employment agencies for people with disabilities (see <http://www.workable.org.au/archive/sws.htm>).

Australians Working Together

Services and support for people with disabilities have been expanded recently under a Commonwealth initiative known as Australians Working Together. The website for the initiative states:

For people who have a disability, illness or injury, Australians Working Together means more support and help to get them involved in community life and paid work.

From July 2002, the Commonwealth Government will give more money to state and territory governments to create 5200 extra places for people with disabilities who want to get into education and training. As well, 1500 students will get more support, for example, with the special equipment they need to study.

New Disability Coordination Officers will help students with disabilities as they move from school, into vocational education and training, or higher education, and where possible, into paid work.

A new Quality Assurance system will require disability employment services to meet high quality standards by December 2004, including real wages and better employment conditions.

From September 2002, some 16 000 disability employment assistance places, coming in over three years, will see more help and opportunities for people with disabilities, including parents and mature workers, especially in rural and remote areas and areas of high need.

(Australians Working Together website)

In addition, the site notes a substantial expansion in rehabilitation places and changes to the way in which applications for a disability support pension are assessed, placing more emphasis on what people can do, than what they cannot do.

Interviews conducted for this project indicated that states and territories have been able to use funding provided under this initiative to support additional programs for VET students with disabilities. Some of these are discussed in the following section outlining the funding of VET for students with disabilities in each state and territory. However, it will be important to ensure that these initiatives are effectively coordinated and to monitor the extent to which there is a favourable effect on outcomes.

Appendix 4: New South Wales

Discussions were held in New South Wales with the state authorities, two TAFE institutes, both in suburban Sydney, and one private provider. Although New South Wales is only one of the eight states and territories in Australia, its VET system enrolls more than two in five of the total student enrolment. It is thus of particular numerical importance in terms of the funding arrangements for students with disabilities and their consequences.

The responsibilities of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (DET) include both schools and TAFE. There is a Deputy Director-General for schools and also a Deputy Director-General for TAFE. The Assistant Director-General, Student Services and Equity, reports to both of those deputies in relation to student services, youth assistance, equity programs, disabilities programs, and education and training access matters. The Department of Education and Training was created in December 1997 when the Department of School Education, the New South Wales TAFE Commission, and the Department of Training and Education Co-ordination were amalgamated. The Department of Education and Training provides services to the people of New South Wales in: pre-school education; compulsory schooling (Kindergarten to Year 10); post-compulsory schooling including VET courses (Years 11 and 12) leading to the award of the New South Wales Higher School Certificate; vocational education and training courses delivered by TAFE NSW; adult and community education courses; adult migrant English services (AMES); and art courses at post-compulsory level delivered by the National Art School.

The New South Wales Department's Disability Action Plan, 2000–2002, outlines the steps that the department is taking to meet the objectives of the State Government's Disability Policy Framework. Four outcomes underpin the strategies that are contained in the action plan: awareness, access, participation and accountability. These outcome areas are the foundation supporting a range of strategies that have been developed to assist the continuous improvement in delivery of the department's services to students and employees with disabilities. The strategies in the action plan are intended to achieve four purposes. First, they enable staff of the department to identify and respond to the diversity and needs of people with disabilities. Secondly, they facilitate access, participation and positive outcomes for people with disabilities, whether they are engaged in education and training or working as employees of the department. In addition, the integration of the strategies into budgeting and strategic management processes across the department provides for equitable allocation of resources. Finally, the strategies assist the department to measure improvements in the way its programs and services respond to the needs of people with disabilities. The action plan was directing the department's delivery of programs and services to people with disabilities until the end of 2002.

More specifically, the action plan documents the Department of Education and Training's response to the major objectives of the New South Wales Government's Disability Policy Framework. The first objective is to achieve a planned, coordinated and flexible approach to policy and service provisions in New South Wales for and with people with disabilities and their carers. The second objective is to create and promote opportunities, services and facilities that enable people with disabilities and their carers to participate in the wider community and to attain a better quality of life. The third objective is to provide ways for State Government service providers to measure and report on their progress in increasing access for people with disabilities. The action plan complies

with the requirements of the New South Wales *Disability Services Act 1993* (DSA) and is consistent with the requirements of the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. It is designed to provide the foundation for a process of continuous improvement, responding to changing circumstances and needs. The strategies within the plan, documented under the headings awareness, access, participation and accountability, are cross-referenced to the action areas in the New South Wales Government Disability Policy Framework: i.e. physical access; promoting positive community attitudes; staff training; information about services; employment; and complaints procedure. The plan is reported on each year as part of the department's annual report, with the relevant section being submitted to the Ageing and Disability Department. The final phase will be the 2002 year-end review and report, which will also be submitted to the Ageing and Disability Department. This final report will document the progress the Department of Education and Training has made toward the achievement of these outcomes, and form the basis for developing the next three-year plan.

In terms of supporting students in TAFE NSW, the department provides institute teacher/consultants for students with disabilities who can assist students with disabilities through arranging support including: modified courses; individually designed study programs; reasonable adjustment provisions, including additional time to complete exams and assignments, scribes, note-takers, adaptive technology, and large print handouts; tutorial support; and referral services. For example, pre-enrolment assistance can involve course information, enrolment advice and assistance and fee exemptions; flexible attendance can involve studying fewer subjects at any one time or having extra time to complete a course; adaptive equipment could include CCTV, Zoom Text, computers with synthesised speech and screen readers, large button calculators and tape recorders; alternative format material includes Braille, large print, audio, computer disk or tactile graphics; and exam support could include an examination paper in an alternative format, a reader or writer, extra time or adaptive equipment. The department recognises that support for students with disabilities that is designed to increase their participation in education and training needs to take a holistic approach. Therefore, the strategies developed must address issues relating to gender, culture, language, religion, sexuality, geographic location and socio-economic circumstances, by drawing on existing models of good practice and the expertise of staff.

As an employer, the Department of Education and Training is committed to improving opportunities for current and potential employees with disabilities. Specific strategies have been developed under the Department's Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan to support and implement targeted programs and initiatives to increase the employment and career development opportunities for people with disabilities such as WorkAble and the New South Wales Traineeship Program for People with Disabilities. The department participates in the apprenticeship program for people with disabilities that provides a targeted employment opportunity, on-the-job training and workplace support over the four years of the apprenticeship. The Department of Education and Training has established a staff with disabilities network that provides advice to management across the department about recruiting practices and workplace adjustments. The department promotes and implements the principles of Adjustment at Work to enable employees with disabilities to carry out their duties. This may involve equipment or adaptive technology, changes to the design of the work environment or the job, changes to work practices to make them flexible, and safe access to and within the workplace. A survey conducted by the department has identified a gap in the rate at which people with disabilities participate in employment. The unit responsible for the Equal Employment Opportunity plan has developed strategies that will assist progress towards the benchmarks set by the Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment.

The Department of Education and Training also provides a range of services to industry, including administration of the apprenticeship and traineeship system and the accreditation and registration of courses in line with the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework. There are a number of programs administered by the department that have relevance to the Disability Action

Plan. These include the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Training Program and the Apprenticeship Program for People with Disabilities. The first program purchases the formal training component of selected apprenticeships and traineeships from registered training organisations that are on a list of approved providers. It incorporates an equity provision in which registered training organisations are encouraged to recruit students with disabilities by providing them with additional funds to meet the cost of additional assistance for students with disabilities. These funds can be used to employ note-takers, sign language interpreters, or to deliver up to 100 additional hours of training to assist students with disabilities. The second program, the Apprenticeship Program for People with Disabilities, aims to encourage New South Wales Government departments and authorities to take on apprentices and trainees with disabilities. Another program with an equity focus for 2000–2001 is the Group Training Program, which is designed to promote positive training outcomes for members of equity groups, including people with disabilities. Group training companies receive financial incentives for successfully achieving their equity performance goals in selected regions and industries. Other Department of Education and Training-administered industry programs contain specific equity requirements. Department of Education and Training staff members are responsible for selecting training providers that can demonstrate their capacity to achieve access and equity outcomes in the recruitment and selection of students.

The adult and community education sector is administered by a board that includes a representative of the Managing Director of TAFE NSW and Director-General of Education and Training, as well as other departmental officers. It consists of a network of 68 major providers and around 30 smaller community organisations. The members of this network provide the community with a range of education, training and recreation courses, including community languages; literacy and numeracy; computing; accredited training; and youth programs. Students can enrol in ACE courses irrespective of their age or educational background but are usually post-compulsory school age. There are courses to develop interests, to build a foundation for further education and training, or to gain recognised qualifications and skills for the workforce. There were 415 262 enrolments in ACE in 2001, with the delivery of nationally recognised training accounting for 1 902 390 student contact hours. ACE providers use premises in schools, TAFE NSW colleges and university facilities, as well as their own and local community venues to deliver their courses. All organisations conducting ACE programs are owned and run by local communities and are incorporated under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1984*. The Board of Adult and Community Education (BACE) has in place a strategic plan for equity which includes people with disabilities along with members of other equity groups, such as people who are unemployed, from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background or living in rural or remote New South Wales.

The New South Wales Adult Migrant English Services (AMES) was granted initial registered training organisation status in 1999 and re-registered as a registered training organisation against the Australian Quality Training Framework from June 2002. It provides English language, literacy and numeracy courses and services for newly arrived immigrants, skilled immigrants, community groups, rural or isolated clients and industries and enterprises. Newly arrived immigrants who meet eligibility criteria within one of three categories may receive up to 510 hours of English language tuition under the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP), with an additional 100 hours available for immigrants in the refugee and humanitarian category under the Special Preparatory Program. This tuition enables students to study Vocational Education and Training Advisory Board (VETAB) accredited courses at levels one, two and three in the Certificates in Spoken and Written English. Skilled immigrants who meet the eligibility criteria for entry to the Skillmax program and who wish to work in an area relevant to their overseas qualifications can receive training in effective job-seeking and communication skills. This program is also available to public sector employees who want to enhance their career opportunities. Adult Migrant English Services also provides tailored training and consultancy services to a range of private and public sector organisations through its Workcom program. The majority of Adult Migrant English Services enrolments are in Adult Migrant English Program courses with students receiving services from 14 metropolitan and over 50 rural venues.

During the discussion at the Department of Education and Training, it was recognised that the current statistics on VET students with disabilities, based on self-reporting arrangements, typically at enrolment, are inaccurate. This may be due to students fearing discrimination if they disclose their equity group or because they have difficulty with the wording on the forms. The Department of Education and Training's Equity Data Cube (EDC) project is an initiative to develop a set of uniform processes for collecting, comparing and disaggregating equity data in an electronic form for TAFE NSW. The Equity Data Cube is an intranet web-based tool designed to assist equity personnel when reporting against national and state initiatives, as well as timely access to equity data and therefore the equity profile of students. It has facilitated more effective reporting, planning, contextualised design and delivery of vocational education and training at both a systemic and local level. Access to the Equity Data Cube allows the department to be more responsive in offering programs that will benefit specific equity target groups. Training in the use of the Equity Data Cube is delivered to equity personnel across the department's student services and equity programs and TAFE NSW institutes. The Equity Data Cube has been widely used since the second semester of 2001, but it does not ascertain the effect on enrolments as an increase in enrolments could not be directly attributable to the cube. However, enrolments of students with disabilities have steadily increased over the past five years. Also the Equity Data Cube does not measure 'more successful study in VET' nor 'employment outcomes' as currently it is strictly for participation rates. In addition to this, a completion rate cube is currently being developed. Other enhancements will include research focussing on post-TAFE options, including further training and employment.

Table 1 shows enrolments in TAFE NSW by students with disabilities in 2000 and 2001. The data are drawn from the Equity Data Cube and they reflect enrolment information through self-identification by students. The table also shows the proportion of the students who had particular disabilities. In 2001, for example, 21.22% of all the students enrolled had a physical disability, 10.45% had vision impairment, 9.63% were deaf or had a hearing impairment, 9.44 % had a learning disability, 8.41 % had a psychiatric disability and 8.23 % had an intellectual disability.

Table 1: TAFE NSW enrolment data for students with disabilities (2000 & 2001)

Disability group	2000		2001	
	Per cent with disabilities	Number with disabilities	Per cent with disabilities	Number with disabilities
Disability not stated	5.33	1 343	3.96	1 171
Visual	11.37	2 862	10.45	3 091
Deaf	9.42	2 372	9.63	2 849
Physical	21.89	5 511	21.22	6 279
Intellectual	7.27	1 829	8.23	2 435
Chronic illness	4.35	1 094	4.26	1 260
Psychiatric	7.20	1 812	8.41	2 487
Neurological	3.21	808	3.23	957
Specific learning	10.03	2 525	9.44	2 792
Other	8.98	2 260	9.56	2 829
Multiple	10.96	2 759	11.61	3 436
Total	100.00	25 175	100.00	29 586

Source: New South Wales Department of Education and Training—Equity Data Cube

Two major committees were noted during the discussions. First, there is the Department of Education and Training's Disabilities Community Consultative Committee (DCCC). It is the key mechanism by which the department consults with the disability community on matters associated with education and training for people with disabilities in New South Wales. The committee consists of representatives of peak organisations for people with disabilities in New South Wales and provides advice on the development of policy and procedures to ensure equitable participation of people with

disabilities in the vocational education and training sector. Its terms of reference include: reflecting the views of all stakeholders on customer service for people with disabilities in the Department of Education and Training; providing advice on the development of policy and procedures to ensure equitable participation of people with disabilities in the Department of Education and Training; commenting on current service provision for people with disabilities in the Department of Education and Training; recommending on future service provision; and recommending areas or topics for action research. It is chaired by the Director, Disability Programs.

A range of useful initiatives have been progressed through the Disabilities Community Consultative Committee including: consultation on various policy documents, such as the department's disability action plan, draft TAFE/VET Team Plan; development and promotion of the WorkAble employment initiative to increase the opportunities for people with disabilities to gain permanent employment and career opportunities across the department; development and promotion of the equity data cube; consultation on implementation of industrial relations employment matters affecting disability support staff, such as sign language interpreter pay rates; and development of the Department of Education and Training's disability access intranet site.

Secondly, there is the TAFE NSW Disabilities Services Institute Managers Group (DSIMG). It is an advisory group for the Department of Education and Training. The Disabilities Services Institute Managers Group is comprised of access and equity managers across all TAFE NSW institutes, equity managers from the Department of Education and Training and a representative of teacher consultants for students with disabilities. The group meets four times per year with the department's disability programs, gender equity unit, Aboriginal program unit and the multicultural program unit to discuss issues and policies related to the provision of services to students across all equity areas, including disability. It has provided a valuable means of communication across a diverse and complex area. For example, it has assisted in the development of policy and guidelines. It has contributed to increasing the number of students with disabilities enrolled in TAFE NSW, but 'continuing support is required in a range of places' to maintain and enhance the progress which has been made. In particular, a greater emphasis on a whole-of-government approach was advocated.

Three other interesting points arose. First, there has been considerable progress in New South Wales in linking schools and VET more effectively, including for students with disabilities. From Year 11 in 2000, students with disabilities were able to meet the requirements for the Higher School Certificate by accessing a special program of study (SPS). The special program of study is for students with disabilities, whether they are in schools for specific purposes, in support classes or enrolled in regular classes. Students with disabilities entered for a special program of study can meet the requirements of the higher school certificate using a combination of: board-developed courses and syllabuses; board-developed life skills course with special program of study syllabuses; and board-endorsed courses, including content endorsed courses. Planning is to be undertaken through an individual transition planning process; the majority of eligible students have an intellectual disability; and decisions about whether to enrol students in a special program of study course are made by the school. Students with disabilities may access all courses within the industry curriculum frameworks at school, at TAFE NSW or through a private provider by enrolling in a regular class, a discrete class, a class formed across districts, or other local arrangements. All industry curriculum framework courses have a work placement component mandated by the Board of Studies; and it is recognised that students with disabilities may require additional support in the workplace and that close links will be required between the school and the employer (teacher time of two hours per student is allocated to the school for these negotiations). School students throughout New South Wales can now access VET programs during the two final years at school. Catholic and independent school students can participate, but have to pay. There are some thirty teachers to assist in transition, with at least one in each school district of New South Wales. There is a district support person available to assist young people, including with aspects of their life beyond school. It is proving to be 'an excellent model of support'. Extra funding can be provided to assist the learning of students with disabilities (in schools and also in VET).

Secondly, considerable stress was laid on the need for a whole-of-government approach, for a holistic view of what is required and what is developing, rather than individual initiatives being advanced which do not necessarily take proper cognisance of the broader background, the other developments and how they may (or may not) fit together to assist the individual (rolling out initiatives which will change the landscape without full awareness of the implications). As part of this vision the broad networks need to support that which is available locally. They commented that in rural areas 'the networks tend to be more consistent; and new entrants are absorbed into the networks more effectively'. It is important to 'change the fractured networks'.

Thirdly, with specific reference to funding it was argued that the present arrangements can 'mask quite a bit of the extra costs' involved for disadvantaged students, including those with a disability. There were seen to be 'problems about the boundary between general and specific problems' (and funding). It was suggested that, when the present funding arrangements were put into place, 'there was not a conception of the overall architecture'; and that this 'leads to a haphazard approach'.

Two other meetings were held at the Department of Education and Training: in relation to transition support; and in relation to two special programs for people with a disability (an apprenticeship program and a traineeship program). The first discussion related to school-delivered VET, which has been delivered in New South Wales since the beginning of 2000. The Department of Education and Training is seeking to make the process the same for the students, irrespective of the place where the VET studies are being undertaken, which can include schools and TAFE. 'Each year we are making huge improvements'. The school and TAFE communities 'have been creative and cooperative'. Enterprise and employment needs are being brought into schools: 'previously it was foreign to them'. In relation to VET the options that are being developed tend to focus on how to do it, rather than on whether it should be done. The VET in Schools directorate manages the range of matters involved, including curricula, linkages with industry training boards and the Board of Studies, and support for students in TAFE.

In 2000 New South Wales introduced the new Higher School Certificate, which included the new lifeskills courses and improved access to VET courses for students with disabilities. In 2000 there were small numbers entered in the Board of Studies Higher School Certificate VET courses, but in 2001 there was a three-fold increase (and in 2002 a further increase of one-third). There has also been increasing interest in varied options. The Department of Education and Training's position has been that, as long as the proposal fitted with the industry frameworks and Board of Studies requirements, they would try to approve them. Also they have encouraged and facilitated combinations of schools seeking to provide appropriate initiatives. Generic funding has been adopted, with funding for the individual student, for discrete classes and for team teaching models. The Department of Education and Training outlined half a dozen different possible funding options, such as types of teaching or number of teachers. If they felt they could not meet the costs with their proposed model then they could make an application for additional support. These were assessed individually: and 'funded, as much as we could, according to their model'. Discrete classes, especially in TAFE, and increasingly in schools, have been proving appropriate for small numbers of students with common needs; and have encouraged amalgamation across various schools in a district, subject to timetabling and travel. They have found that integrated delivery is generally the preferred approach, but also 'it is the most difficult'.

It was emphasised that students in school doing a VET course have to be doing Higher School Certificate. Previously, students with disabilities often left school at Year 10. For example those with autism or intellectual disability were unlikely to access VET courses, whereas now they are able to continue on to Years 11 and 12. There were, at that time, about a thousand students in New South Wales doing VET in Schools courses, who have a disability. They could also be doing another VET program in TAFE. At the end of 2002 destination data is expected to become available.

Catholic and independent schools pay a proportion of the extra costs involved for providing VET in Schools programs. In fact very little VET is currently being delivered in Catholic schools in New

South Wales. Every public school district in New South Wales is a registered training organisation, subject to a list of approved courses; and every district superintendent is the registered training organisation executive for this purpose. The registered training organisation process is reviewed every two years: 'we are going through it now'. In relation to access and equity there are a range of requirements to be met. The non-government organisations 'want to plug into the specialist knowledge and opportunities' which are becoming available. However, the pricing issues have not yet been thoroughly addressed.

In country areas, the Department of Education and Training has found that there are often small numbers of students, a restricted pattern of study, and work placements are an issue. The Department of Education and Training is currently working through these problems, including seeking to stagger the times for the work experience component of the courses. They are often not part of the networks that exist in the city; and can be 'hugely restricted in delivery options and knowledge'.

ATLAS providers are developing in New South Wales. They are non-vocational providers, with two-year state funding. They are developing plans for individuals with moderate to high support needs. Ernst and Young undertook a comprehensive review in 1998. The organisations are involved as the students become eligible, mainly when they leave school. But there was little in the way of guidelines for what service providers did with the money for the clients. The review 'is going to nudge VET'. They expect that about 10–20% of the students with an ATLAS package might seek to access VET. Both the Commonwealth Government and the state government are providing a service, but it is a grey area; cooperation and integration could be improved for the benefit of clients; and 'again there is a blurring of the lines'.

Four other points made are noted here. First, it was emphasised that, for students with disabilities, 'coordination is critical; but it is not really a clear responsibility for any one group' at present. 'It needs to be picked up by someone'. Secondly, in country towns, where employment is often limited, school students with good results are obtaining the jobs, for example in supermarkets, which elsewhere would go to less advantaged people, including those with a disability. Thirdly, training is required to assist teachers in meeting these new demands. The expectations of academic teachers 'can be unreasonable', but teaching students with a wider range of abilities, behaviours and expectations can be challenging. In VET the increasing casualisation of the teacher workforce presents further difficulties, but this trend is not occurring in schools to the same extent. Fourthly, it was noted that mentoring of students with disabilities can be very important, including in the workplace (where trade unions can assist), but has not so far been pursued much.

The Department of Education and Training also runs special programs for students with disabilities in apprenticeships and traineeships. The apprenticeship program has been running for two decades, beginning as an initiative during the International Year of Disabled Persons. Potential apprenticeship positions are identified in New South Wales Government departments and authorities. In 2002, for the first time, local governments in Wollongong and the Riverina were included, and the program may be extended to other local government areas in future. The apprenticeship is advertised by the Department of Education and Training and only people with a disability can apply. The government department or agency organises a selection panel on which the Department of Education and Training is represented to undertake a merit based recruitment process. The department or agency employs successful applicants as apprentices. The Commonwealth Government provides funding under disabled apprentice wage support, while New South Wales pays all other wage and wage-related costs. The annual intake varies between about fifteen and thirty apprentices, it is a four-year commitment, there are some eighty apprentices at any one time and about 90% of those who commence complete the apprenticeship. The standard New South Wales public sector selection process is followed, except that applicants must be eligible for disabled apprentice wage support. The apprenticeships are open to anyone with a disability, except that they must be able to undertake the full duties of the apprenticeship. There are usually around

five to 30 applicants for every position; and probably two-thirds to three-quarters of them 'would have been able to do the job if more apprenticeships had been available'. While a full breakdown of the successful applicants by their type of disability is not known, it is probable that most of those who are successful have a physical rather than an intellectual disability.

The participating agencies are heavily oriented towards healthcare and TAFE; and it is 'largely repeat business'. The scheme has often been approached by private sector employers who have expressed interest in participating. In practice, it has not occurred, as the state money is not available for that purpose. Advice on agencies who have participated in the scheme in the past is given on request to assist applicants find sympathetic and appropriate enterprises. Perhaps 10–20% of the apprentices stay on with their employer after they have completed their apprenticeship. 'The beauty of it is that they are fully qualified tradespeople'. Over the last two or three years there had only been one request from an apprentice to be permitted to complete the course over a longer period (which was granted).

The traineeship program is similar; and started in 2002 with 37–38 trainees. The majority of the traineeships are in Business Services and consideration is being given to how the available fields of study might be broadened. Most of the traineeships are in the Sydney metropolitan area. A much wider range of disabilities are included among the students on the traineeship program compared to the apprenticeship program. The individual trainee can request an extension of time to complete the traineeship (but so far there have been no such requests). The Premier's Department has been supportive of the initiative—encouraging organisations to be involved and helping to source funding. No money has been allocated from the New South Wales budget, but the Office of the Public Trustee, the Motor Accident Authority, and the Board of Vocational Education and Training have provided financial assistance. The employing department initially pays the trainee's wages and wage-related costs, which can be claimed from the Department of Education and Training every six months. It is hoped that in time disabled apprentice wage support funding will apply for trainees as well as apprentices. At the end of their traineeship, assuming they have completed it satisfactorily, trainees are guaranteed a permanent job with the New South Wales Government. While this is attractive to the student, it has tended to restrict the number of traineeships which departments and agencies are willing to offer, especially in country areas. Since the selection process is competitive there have been no union difficulties. Interestingly, there are regional differences, with the scheme being particularly strong among departments on the north coast. It was noted that, for the 40 advertised positions, some 2000 applications were received.

Three other points were also noted:

- ✧ *Employers Making a Difference (EMAD)* is a group of New South Wales employers who want to help people with disability get employment and to support employers who take them on. The Department of Education and Training is working with Employers Making a Difference and the Department of Family and Community Services to assist people with a disability in gaining employment.
- ✧ Group training companies can obtain an extra financial incentive for taking on a student with a disability.
- ✧ Public and private training providers can apply for extra payments to assist with the additional costs involved in VET training for people with a disability. For example, they can apply for up to an extra 50 hours payment, with a maximum of \$1500 for a one-year traineeship, or \$1000 p.a. for up to three years for either trainees or apprentices. The purposes for which the extra funds can be sought 'are fairly open' and include additional academic time in the classroom and specific supports. The Contracted Training Program has money to fund additional VET courses where there is a demonstrated need. The program can include courses for people with a disability.

At a major TAFE institute in suburban Sydney discussions were held with a teacher consultant for students with disabilities. She was currently working with about 110 students with an intellectual disability in VET and another 110 or so students in TAFE-delivered VET in Schools, as compared

to the school-delivered VET in Schools reported earlier. Liaison teachers are employed in schools to assist school students with disabilities with their transition into TAFE. Information is provided on what courses are available in TAFE in the following year. Then a meeting is held with the student to discuss their interests and 'help the school, student and parents see what is ahead'. It started with a research project at a local university. These individual transition plan meetings have helped the parents think on a longer-term basis. It was initially introduced in this area and then generalised across New South Wales. Thus, the students in deciding on their subject choice for the next year can see what is available and what it will involve. It 'seems like a good system, it is working well; but numbers are increasing a lot'.

Schools lose some of their staffing ratio if students go into TAFE; and staffing is increased on the TAFE side. Some school principals are not keen to see their staffing ratio decline. However, it is only school students who are mainstreamed to whom this applies, i.e. it does not apply if they are in special units. Parents are exerting an increasing influence, especially if they see that educational facilities are available, for example, to go to Year 12.

There is some displacement. For example, earlier the student may have come to TAFE after Year 10; now they do the TAFE study while at school and then do not go on to the TAFE institute. Some students have learnt that they do not want to continue studying in this area. However, it is only the second full year of TAFE delivered VET in Schools (it is now in Year 12), so it is probably a bit early to be sure just how the full effects will work out.

At this TAFE institute they try to get all of their students with disabilities to develop a contact with a Commonwealth-funded employment agency, which can help with meeting their needs. Even of those studying at certificate I level, the more competent can sometimes get work. But often they lose it; and may come back, say a year later. The high-level agency services try to keep in contact with their clients, including helping people with disability with the implications from, say, an organisation restructure or takeover. Others come back themselves to the employment agency; and sometimes to TAFE.

At this institute they seek to use mainstream provision where possible. However, many students with disability are not able to cope with a mainstream course. They are better suited to separate courses, which can include increases in their self-confidence, and the achievement of some basic skills. Even so, the students who have got into mainstream courses often find they need some support, ranging from mild encouragement and continuing advocacy to more specific supports, including help with exams. Most teachers are supportive, although there are exceptions. 'It can be hard with so many part time staff'. In principle the department should fund any modified mainstream course. Alternatively, a standard amount per student could be appropriate, as when there are smaller numbers enrolled and extra costs per student need to be met. 'It can depend on your personal relationships with the head teacher'; and also whether the staff want to build up their number of hours.

Other points which arose during the discussion included:

- ✧ Students with disabilities may require extra time to complete a given VET program successfully. If they do not receive it they may be consigned to a lower level Australian Qualifications Framework qualification than they could otherwise achieve. Also, it was noted, 'the Board of Studies can impose quite strict rules on the schools and TAFE institutes'. For example, if a certificate I course has not (yet) been approved it cannot be offered and the student with a disability has to be enrolled elsewhere, say in the certificate II course.
- ✧ The institute provides courses for students with disabilities in business administration, hospitality, horticulture and retail operations, on both a mainstreaming and a separate basis. Offering the courses at different times has made it easier for some students with disabilities to enrol in combinations of these fields.

- ✧ The individual transition plan meetings assist in early identification of VET students who would benefit from early provision of support, at least for those students who are enrolling direct from schools. Pre-course counselling is also facilitated, although inevitably some students seek support later ‘when they get into trouble’. They estimated that of students entering from school ‘90% of those who need assistance are known in advance’. A range of assistance is available from the institute, including: pre-course counselling, a range of specific assistance and more general support; advocacy for a place in a mainstream course or a specific course for students with disabilities; and seeking allocation of a particular teacher for the student.
- ✧ Technically they put in a budget bid for resources to be provided for assistance to students with disabilities. Over recent years the financial allocation to the institute has included general funding, ‘but nothing specifically for students with disabilities’. Their area ‘has run out of resources sometimes’. This can result in the support to students in mainstream courses being limited or to cutting back of some of the special courses: ‘it is very individual how you manage your resources’.
- ✧ In New South Wales there is ‘a well-established infrastructure and a reasonable level of resources’. Most students, it was argued, get reasonable access to the support they need, both in TAFE NSW and in the schools.
- ✧ Historically, the main inequities have been in the areas not covered by the four specialties (hearing, intellectual, physical, visual). These arrangements can be technically very helpful, as in the direct interaction with students. But the four areas ‘do not cover everything’, and it can lead to some inflexibility. Thus, psychiatric, learning disabilities and neurological difficulties have tended not to be so well covered. At present they are receiving more attention, partly as a result of the federal legislation.
- ✧ It was suggested that the commitments to access and equity do not necessarily have dollars and cents attached. It is possible to push up participation rates, but it is not clear that quality is being adequately monitored. For example, how many students with disability are enrolled in appropriate courses, complete the courses or achieve satisfactory employment outcomes?
- ✧ There can be a problem if there are ‘too many changes in managers’. In one area there had been 6 or 7 in three to four years; and generally it was only a small part of their responsibilities. Also it appears that resource allocation tends to be based heavily on historical allocations, which may not reflect current or future workloads and demands. It was stated that it would have been helpful to undertake more work on possible benchmarks for costs and the variability between needs for different students (for both public and private providers).

Discussions were also held with another TAFE institute, but this time in a less-advantaged area of Sydney. The institute receives a global budget for each financial year. It is based on annual student hours and there is no separate allocation within the total budget for students with disabilities. Some additional funding for students with disabilities is available from the Commonwealth. Within the institute ‘the reality is that TAFE is operating in an environment of diminishing funding’. The institute, in allocating its total budget internally, provides a designated budget for disability, including provision of courses and reasonable adjustments when in a mainstream course. The institute’s overall thrust has tended to be in favour of mainstreaming students where possible. The internal institute budget for disability excludes staff costs, which are funded separately. If additional resources are sought a business case has to be advanced. They argued that they had reached their budgetary limit, in relation to infrastructure as well as services, and are ‘most unlikely to be able to gain extra financial resources’. The complexity of invoicing disabled apprentice wage support, they argued, makes it ‘barely worth the effort’. Although the institute is in an area of Sydney which has a high non-English speaking background population, newly arrived migrants, large public housing estates and a substantial Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population—and they have won national awards for their work in relation to disadvantaged students—there is no reflection of this in the institute’s budget allocation and they are not able to take much in the way of proactive

initiatives concerning people with a disability who might benefit from additional VET programs. 'In some cases we are having to pull back ... Partly a reaction to pressures on the institute budget.'

In discussion with the equity manager at this institute three other matters were raised. First, there needs to be an improved set of incentives to take on the additional costs likely to be incurred by being more proactive and providing better facilities and services for VET students with disabilities. If one already has a good record and wants to do more, but know that additional funding will not be made available, it was argued that there is likely to be some reluctance to do so. It was also stressed that any such additional funding needs to be provided on a continuing basis; and that the public VET providers tend to 'take the bulk of the load'. Secondly, it was noted that some community organisations, such as trade unions, 'do not really figure at all' and represent 'an untapped resource'. Thirdly, it was argued that user choice funding 'can create silos', that it can militate against organisations working together and lead to 'more competition with less collaboration', and can create a market which is 'fairly short-term'. When the course is over, has the student really benefited and 'do they then need to come back to TAFE?' A more holistic, case-management type of approach was seen as a preferable way to go, with work at a community level closer to individuals than the State Government. Fourthly, it was stressed that the level of knowledge possessed by students with disabilities, their parents, carers and friends 'is often deficient'. Consequently, they can be 'in a poor situation to choose effectively'.

Discussions were also held with staff at one (large) campus of the institute, particularly with those specialising in physical disabilities, hearing impairment and learning disabilities. Their specialisation in different forms of disability presents a noticeable contrast to the situation of most disability liaison officers in other states. Their salaries are paid and an additional allocation of \$130 000 p.a. was available for students with a physical disability at the two campuses, which enrolled some 22 000 and 13 000 students respectively. In 2002 about five hundred students had identified themselves as having a disability in some way, and another 10% or so were identified in other ways, usually through the teaching staff. The teacher consultant for students with physical disability was supporting some 175 TAFE students, together with another 75 'who were not TAFE students, but might be in the future'. It was noted that some agencies 'try to give TAFE their most difficult cases'. Selection is often by the hospitals. Generally an attempt is made to attach these students to an employment agency. Of the 175 TAFE students some fifteen 'are very time-consuming'. Of the 75 'most do end up in the college later'. 'Sometimes the person I spend the most time with, I don't take on.' These services are not funded separately; and the costs are carried in the overall allocation, although it was commented wryly 'if you were to look at the hours you would not do it'.

Typically the teacher consultant receives a telephone call from outside the college. A meeting is arranged and talk and advice is given on possible courses to consider or where else to go. An individual educational plan is prepared for those where VET is relevant. It looks especially at what support structures are required, including transport, additional time to undertake examinations, tutorial support, special furniture or equipment. The college runs some discrete courses for students with disabilities; and if it had more resources it would run more. In mainstream classes they seek to provide appropriate supports to the student—and sometimes to the teacher, as well. They 'need support teachers who are passionate' about their role, but unfortunately there is no career structure for them. Even the physical disabilities officer was still temporary, after three years in the job, 'because the permanent occupant is acting elsewhere'.

A number of other matters arose during the discussion with the teacher consultant for students with physical disability.

- ✧ Some students with disabilities require additional time to complete their VET course. The teacher consultant argued, 'getting reasonable adjustments is part of my job'. While it 'can be really difficult' for some students with disabilities in mainstream classes, it tends not to be a problem in the special classes.

- ✧ The teacher consultant noted that the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard statistics on who was disabled and what disability they had did not go to him (and that he did not keep statistics himself).
- ✧ He commented that he had tried to use volunteers, but it 'had not worked well'. For example, there had been difficulties over confidentiality and the need to adhere to fairly strict limits in relation to what decisions they could and could not take.
- ✧ NSW TAFE 'is tending to think of certificate I and II courses as being provided in schools'. This is widening the opportunities for secondary school students, but it can restrict those available for adults, including some students with disabilities. They may not be able to access the school, the supports they need may not be available in the school environment and they may not wish to undertake their learning in institutions that primarily cater for young people.
- ✧ In his view training packages are often too complicated for students with disabilities. They are 'not a learning system they are comfortable with'. Although the 'industry standards may be OK, the way the training packages are packaged is often not suitable for people with a disability' he argued (for example, when the student's literacy and numeracy skills are not strong).
- ✧ It was noted that the college does not normally play any large part in assisting the transition by students with disabilities into employment. This was a conscious decision a few years ago. There can be differences between education in TAFE and training in the enterprise, and he observed that 'often there is a lack of communication'. Potentially there is a significant role for unions to play in assisting people with a disability gain employment, keep it and advance in it. However, in his experience, some unions see trainees with disability as reducing the jobs that are available for other people. He also commented 'work experience is harder to organise for students with disabilities'.

Discussions were held separately with other teacher consultants at the same campus, but specialising in learning disabilities, hearing impairment and special education. They argued that having specialists in the different areas of disability 'helps with credibility and working in with teachers'. They also emphasised that, in their experience, 'if you don't have separate consultant areas, then it is those with intellectual disabilities who tend to get overlooked most frequently'.

A number of comments were made about the part-time and casual nature of much of the employment in the area and the lack of a career structure. In this institute there were said to be no full-time teacher disability positions, only part-time or casual positions. They receive no employment over the November–February period, so they only get paid for a maximum of 38 weeks per year, which 'is a real drawback'. There are also status implications, which can make it more difficult for them to work with teachers and persuade them to make adaptations, work with others in a different way and take fuller account of the special learning needs of students with disabilities. It can often be 'a big ask', involving such factors as learning outcomes, curriculum content, and how it is delivered.

The lack of adequate staff development was identified as a problem. It was noted that it 'had to be stopped because of lack of interest'. Part-time staff are not paid for participation in training programs, and they may not even be granted permission to attend. Also 'the full-timers are very busy and under a lot of pressure'. The lack of training in this area, it was suggested, may also 'reflect the lack of status and visibility of the part-time and casual staff that work with students with disabilities'. It appears to be given a lower priority than training in other things, such as computing. The result can be that staff in the disability area are committed and important, but 'under-utilised and submerged'.

The budget was raised in the discussions. It was argued that the funding that is provided is devoted to 'looking after students who have got into TAFE'. There is relatively little in the way of resources devoted to outreach. The transition from school has improved over recent years, including closer liaison, more advance planning and operation within the same department. 'The information from

schools has been really valuable'. For example, the institute has been able to develop additional flexibility in the courses they offer and in the modules that are particularly required by students with disabilities coming from the schools. However, perhaps there is 'a fear of being flooded by students with disabilities'. One result has been increased participation in VET courses by school leavers with a disability. They argued that the priorities tended to provide support, first in relation to apprentices, then those who are enrolled in institute courses, and then others.

The teacher consultants meeting together each semester consider the institute's disability budget, once determined. The money can be reallocated, but it has proved difficult to increase the total that is available. Also reallocations tend to be slow, requiring attitudinal changes and related to longer-term trust and personal relationships. One respondent commented that she 'had run out of funds quite frequently', noting that interpreters receive the same rate of pay irrespective of whether they are qualified or not, and that providing adequate assistance for one full-time Higher School Certificate student would involve spending two-thirds of her total annual budget allocation. It was argued that there is scope for more sharing of resources across different areas of the institute, sharing of resources for students with multiple disabilities and better use of the general counselling services. With increasing training on the job and in enterprises other costs can be incurred. For example, \$60 per head is involved for the necessary occupational health and safety approval to enter a worksite, but if the support worker is sick or busy elsewhere the replacement worker may not have it. It can be contested who should pay, say for interpreters at speech night or another college event; and in particular whether this should be borne wholly by the disability area's budget.

A number of other matters were raised, including:

- ✧ The transition into employment of students with disabilities is usually handled in cooperation with an employment agency. They have good links, but there can be difficulties and they noted, 'the Commonwealth agencies are moving to case based funding'. In particular, the employment agencies want to limit the time they spend on each individual client; and students with disabilities can be especially time-consuming. They stressed the importance, 'to make the job match', of developing the relationships between VET, the employment agencies and the enterprises on a continuing basis. They commented that disabled apprentice wage support 'is an administrative and assessment nightmare'; and that New Apprenticeship centres 'can be a barrier, too, for non-standard students'.
- ✧ It was suggested that, at least in some cases, VET teachers may be partly making professional decisions about the competencies achieved by their students, but also be making an assessment of how suitable a particular students with disabilities is for entry into the industry. The teachers' own credibility with colleagues in the industry can be involved. This applies to part-time and casual staff as well as to full-time teaching staff. It may even be that their judgements on a student's suitability for employment in the industry are more stringent than those of the enterprises themselves.
- ✧ It was noted that sometimes students with an intellectual disability are not good judges of what issues to discuss and what information to divulge; for example, when to distinguish educational issues from personal and more confidential matters. Assistance can be required to support teachers in this respect, as well as the students themselves.
- ✧ The services and resources they discussed were not generally available to private training providers. They argued that the provision of such supports was, at least partly, a governmental and societal responsibility; and that greater assistance in this area should be made available to private VET providers who could deliver appropriate training services to students with disabilities.

Finally, discussions were held with a private provider in suburban Sydney. The registered training organisation was in the adult and community education sector. Deaf people use its services; and it also advises others on how to provide appropriate training and support services to people who have a hearing impairment. Of the two hundred or so current clients, some 60% were there in relation to

hearing impairments (including interpreting) and about 40% in relation to information and communication technologies. It has some ten positions, an annual expenditure of about \$1 million, of which some 60–80% is derived from grants, especially from the New South Wales Board of Adult and Community Education. Their services include interpreting, Certificate in Auslan and Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment. The students they deal with are already disadvantaged: ‘by the system, by their deafness and in other ways’. They find that the grants they receive generally do not cover the extra costs required to provide an appropriate service for their clients. For example, it may not enable the necessary infrastructure to be provided, the extra time some deaf students need to complete their VET course satisfactorily or the additional interpreter and other supports which are required. More fundamentally there is the ‘under the iceberg stuff’, such as getting out of bed, negotiating the transport system, developing and using the skills of daily living i.e. VET training for a deaf person ‘is not just an add-on’. Institutions were needed, it was argued, which ‘understand the reasonableness of the conditions for learning’, that it is not just learning but ‘learning with survival’. People in the VET system ‘tend not to see the nine-tenths’, which is that part of the iceberg below the surface of the water; ‘and this affects the education and training they provide’. The increasing use of training in the workplace presents further difficulties; for example, whose responsibility is it to provide learning supports, such as an interpreter, and if the enterprise is asked to contribute will they be less willing to provide an appropriate VET placement?

It was argued that, while TAFE NSW is a very good system for students who do not have disabilities (and the respondent had once been a TAFE NSW teacher), ‘it is not a disability friendly environment’. In their view the funding guidelines ‘do not understand the situation’ in relation to the appropriate learning environment for students with a hearing impairment; for example, the need for small classes, longer periods of time to complete a course, and individual support. The organisation’s focus so far has been on working with severely deaf people, ‘mainly because they are so out-of-synch with society’. Some are over 30 years of age, but most are younger and have come largely because of people such as their parents and teachers. ‘The right infrastructure and support is crucial’. It was emphasised that ‘we cannot make money out of them’: indeed ‘they have the capacity to send a private training organisation broke’.

This organisation was constantly thinking about the interface between the dominant society and the hearing impaired person. Ideally they would like to see one or two dedicated institutions for hearing impaired people: ‘Deaf people need their own’. He would wish individual people with disability were able to choose between such specialised and more mainstream institutions, together with the capacity to move between them. ‘It is important that deaf people have a platform from which they can develop their role models and make their own contribution.’ Some of their clients come from schools and some from TAFE NSW, but they are mainly from the community. Often they are ‘people with second jobs, with not enough money and it is so stressful, because of doubling up, burn out, commitment over and above the reasonable expectation’. They also argued for development of a longer-term research program, followed by trials and evaluation, and only then the development of appropriate requirements. They were disappointed that ‘many of our research projects have been rejected because our infrastructure costs are too high’. Finally, it was noted that the staff in this organisation would benefit from additional training opportunities and support. ‘We provide very little training because of costs. But we talk a lot together; and staff are chosen for their willingness to communicate and share’. However, they emphasised that, in their view, ‘teaching is about communicating ideas and information; and *not* about loss of hearing. We are about the message and how to give that message’.

Appendix 5: Victoria

Discussions were held with the state training authority, including both equity and purchasing officers. Discussions were also held with four training providers, two of which were public (one a TAFE institute and the other a multi-sector institution). The other two providers were private registered training organisations and were much smaller.

TAFE institutes in Victoria have a relatively high degree of autonomy, are employers in their own right and are funded primarily on the basis of a purchasing agreement. In 2002 the Office of Training and Tertiary Education in the Victorian Department of Education purchases, on behalf of the State Minister, some sixty million student contact hours (at a total of some \$635 million in recurrent expenditure). A profile is negotiated each year for each institute, which includes a general profile and a separate profile for apprentices and trainees. The profiles are subdivided according to the different fields of study, without any allowance for variations, for example in the relative costs of supporting students with disabilities, and with floor and ceiling parameters. In 2002 institutes can move, within the agreed total number of student contact hours, numbers from the general profile into the apprentices and trainees category (but not in the reverse direction). Next year it is expected that institutes will be authorised to transfer student contact hours in either direction, if they wish. In fact, institute profiles tend not to vary greatly from year to year. It was commented that ANTA, and apparently former Minister Kemp and the Commonwealth Department, have stressed the desirability of increasing student contact hours. In relation to disabilities specifically, there is no identified allocation within the total for this purpose. Institutes are expected to comply with a range of legislative, statistical and equity criteria, including reasonable accommodations and provision of counselling, disability liaison officers and other support staff.

Secondly, there are capital expenditures on buildings, facilities and equipment. In Victoria all public buildings are required to provide appropriate access, toilets, etc. for VET students with disabilities. ANTA is currently providing \$42.5 million per year for capital outlays and the state is expected to provide another \$22 million per year. The state contribution meets this expectation, but it can vary appreciably from year to year. \$16.5 million was provided in the last state budget, with another \$2.8 million provided for minor works.

Thirdly, the state provides special additional assistance through a Disability Support Fund (DSF). It was established in 1994, when the allocation was \$1 200 000 for distribution among all institutes in the Victorian TAFE system. In 1998 the allocation was raised to \$1 700 000 and it has remained at that level since then (although in 2001 an additional \$300 000 was provided, but for that year only). The allocation process for these funds involves decisions by the department based on advice from a reference group made up of three disability liaison officers from TAFE institutes. Each institute employs at least one disability liaison officer; and they nominate three of their members each year from the TAFE Disability Network to form the reference group. The group meets in October/November each year to review that year's experience, to consider any relevant changes that have occurred or are foreshadowed (say in Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard requirements) and to finalise revised guidelines for the submissions to be prepared by institutes. The guidelines are usually issued in December, each institute has to acquit the disability funding it received in the previous year during February and

institute submissions for funding in the new year are sought by about mid-March (when enrolment data have become available).

A range of information is sought from institutes as part of their submission in March, such as number of students with disabilities who have enrolled; what is the nature of their disability(s); what is the VET program in which they are enrolled; what assistance is being sought for them (and what is it expected to cost); whether any other funding sources are available to help fund their additional support; and how much is being sought from the department. The reference group examines each institute's submission and may make some adjustments, for example where it may be possible to combine resources for some students.

In considering the request to the Disability Support Fund from each institute there are three steps. First the original request may be modified following the reference group's consideration. Secondly, all non-metropolitan institutes receive an extra 15% on their request. Thirdly, the resulting totals are allocated in proportion to the available funds in the Disability Support Fund. We were advised that the proportion of requests covered by the payments has been falling. In 1992 virtually all the requests from institutes could be met from the \$1 200 000 that was available, whereas currently less than half of what is requested is provided. A rather larger proportion of what is requested is received by non-metropolitan than by metropolitan institutes. The final allocations have to be approved by the Director of the Office of Training and Tertiary Education, followed by a schedule being attached to the resource agreement with each individual institute and information to the resources branch, which actually pays out the money.

It is apparent that needs are growing faster than the additional resources in this area, that institutes provide a substantial additional subsidy ('as much again', perhaps) and that these provisions vary from institute to institute. In 2001 the total of institute submissions to the Disability Support Fund was \$4.1 million; and in 2002 just under \$5 million after the deliberations of the reference group. Thus in 2001 48.8% and in 2002 about 34% of institute requests were met by the Disability Support Fund. Fee concessions are another avenue through which students with disabilities are subsidised from general institute resources. The department distributes \$14.1 million p.a. to institutes for fee concessions, of which the ACE and private VET sectors get about \$2 million. The total cost of the concessions to institutes is some \$6 million p.a. more than their reimbursements. Of course, as the general financial pressure on institutes increases their ability to provide such subsidies for students with disabilities is likely to be reduced. Victoria, for example, continues to apply productivity-based reductions in the financial support provided to the VET sector.

Under the Australians Working Together program, which targets students with disabilities, \$2 million is available this year (about \$500 000 for Victoria), rising to \$10 million in the final year (about \$2 500 000 for Victoria). The guidelines are broad and public or private providers could use funds. The strategies for 2002 were developed in close consultation with the TAFE Disability Network and focus specifically on improving pathways and providing improved learning supports for people with a disability. First, there is pre-vocational and preparatory training for students with disabilities. The strategy is aimed at increasing participation and improving success rates. Evaluation of the pilots will measure success by levels of participation (including completion of the program), enrolment of participants in further/higher level courses and their success in completing those courses. Secondly, funds will be used to develop pathways for students with disabilities into apprenticeships, with associated learning supports, through better access to information and resources. Members of the TAFE Disability Network will develop the mechanisms in cooperation with group training companies, schools, registered training organisations and disability employment assistance services. This strategy focusses particularly on improving access to information and resources as part of improving pathways into apprenticeships for people with a disability. Its success will be measured by feedback from students and potential students, levels of participation and the degree of satisfaction with their experience expressed by students. Thirdly, funds will be made available for staff development for disability support workers who provide the direct learning support to students. This

will include both specialised and general skills development. It will establish staff development network opportunities, together with programs and resources that can be used in a range of contexts. It will improve the capacity of providers to offer to students with disabilities learning assistance that supports their individual needs, recognises their competence and identifies their ongoing training needs. It is intended to measure the success of the initiative through formal feedback from both the disability support workers and the students. Fourthly, a project worker will develop a statistical database that will allow gathering, reporting and tracking outcomes consistently across the state. Integrated, consistent data will improve the capacity to provide and analyse information and to establish links with employment opportunities and outcomes.

Six other points arose from the discussions:

- ✧ Victoria's State Disability Plan adopts a whole-of-government approach and provides a broader context for the strategies being developed in VET.
- ✧ \$1 million was provided in 2001 and 2002 (and again for 2003) specifically to support VET training for people with a disability. Tenders are invited, the funding goes to private registered training organisations, and in 2001, 14 providers were supported (including at least one in each Australian Bureau of Statistics region in the state).
- ✧ Attention was drawn to the likelihood that education standards will be issued under the *Disability Discrimination Act* that will encompass the whole of the educational experience.
- ✧ There is scope for considerable increase in support for staff, including teaching, general and others, such as canteen staff; whether they are full-time, part-time, casual or sessional. The student group 'is becoming more diverse and more demanding'. Some students at risk may perceive VET as a more attractive environment for learning than secondary schools. Their increasing enrolment can influence changes in the VET environment; and there are issues about consistent treatment of teenagers and young adults in diverse settings, including VET.
- ✧ The adult and community education sector provides lifelong learning opportunities for Victorian adults, contributing to their social, economic and cultural development as individuals and as members of the Victorian community. Across Victoria the ACE sector is a growing and developing sector within the Department of Education through the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board. The board mission is 'to enhance and extend the capacity of ACE to create empowered, imaginative learners, to build democratic learning communities and to open learning to adults who have yet to realise their power as learners'. The major functions of the board are to plan and promote adult learning, allocate resources, develop policies and advise the Minister for Education and Training on matters related to ACE.

The sector consists of over 460 ACE organisations across the state, of which a number are disability specialists. Funding available to these organisations through the Adult, Community and Further Education Board is for local development, equipment, works and services and for the delivery of programs. ACE organisations identify priorities for the use of these funds that may include support for disability. Some ACE organisations focus specifically on education for people with a disability.

ACE program areas include language and literacy, Victorian Certificate of Education, general preparatory and bridging, vocational, accredited and non-accredited and general adult education programs. In 2003, the Victorian certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) will be piloted in ACE in Victoria.

The Victorian Government has also committed funding to special initiatives such as the ACE Cluster Program, Learning Towns, Mobile Computer Learning Libraries (MCLL) and special programs for youth and their support through Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs).

ACE organisations are generally small, community-owned and managed and therefore representative and rapidly responsive to the diverse needs of their local communities. In

delivering services to learners with a disability, ACE organisations meet the minimum standards for delivery. The use of volunteers in ACE organisations is a key factor influencing the ability of ACE organisations to deliver quality services in a setting that reflects local community networks and values.

- ✧ There is scope to provide ‘a bit more recognition’ and additional support to those working in the VET disability area, including disability liaison officers and other support workers. Suggestions included: training programs for them and greater networking opportunities; classroom support; who pays and who obtains access at present (a pilot study on this matter is currently being undertaken in Victoria); and consciousness-raising about relevant issues concerning students with disabilities, for other students as well as staff.

A suburban TAFE institute

At the suburban TAFE institute additional resources to assist in meeting the particular educational needs of students with disabilities were available, as for other TAFE students, and also from the disability support fund. This large metropolitan institute received some \$135 000 annually in additional recurrent funds and used this largely to employ support workers on a casual basis. In addition, the institute contributed resources from its own funds: about \$70 000 in the 2001–02 financial year. It was emphasised that the resources received by the institute from the Disability Support Fund had risen little over recent years, even though the number of students with disabilities who were enrolled at the institute had risen substantially.

The process is that early in the calendar year the institute submits an application to the state training authority, based on its estimate of the extra assistance required for students with disabilities from the disability support fund for the state as a whole. There is little opportunity to modify this request later in the year, when the actual requirements for the students who have enrolled are more completely known. Of those students who indicate at the time of their enrolment that they have a disability, many do not apply for any assistance from the disability support fund. First, they have to be registered with the disability liaison unit in the institute, which consisted of two workers. In 2001 there were one hundred and ninety students who were registered with the disability liaison unit, but of them only about one hundred received additional assistance from support workers in that year. The other students, however, might nevertheless receive assistance, for example, through alternative assessments, use of special equipment, or support from time to time from the disability support officers. They have found that many students register early in case they need support, but then find they do not need assistance (or drop out of the course). The one hundred students tended to receive assistance with note-taking particularly, also interpreters for learning impaired students and other out-of-class support. The unit tends to work with the student to identify what is required; and also uses supporting recommendations, for example from doctors and social workers, in making their decisions. Financial assistance is confined to academic support and no assistance is normally provided for such things as transport, toileting, and meals or out of class activities. In some cases they have noted a clustering of students with disabilities in particular programs; for example, it was currently the situation in the professional writing area. The main other courses in which students with disabilities were enrolled in 2002 were: hospitality; vocational education and training (which includes the Victorian Certificate of Education and the Certificate in General Education); library studies; and some trade areas.

It was noted that a TAFE disability network operates in Victoria and that various TAFE institutions participate in it. There is some disagreement apparently as to just where the responsibility for providing additional financial support for VET students with disabilities begins and ends. ‘There can be a bit of buck-passing’. In particular, the state training authority is inclined to argue that the institute’s overall funding should defray these additional costs, while the institute, accepting this in part, tends to argue that some extra costs should be reimbursed centrally and that, if this does not occur, there can be a disincentive for public providers to enrol students with

disabilities, especially those whose enrolment is likely to involve heavy additional costs. (Although legislation seeks to ensure that discrimination against students with disabilities does not actually occur in practice.) Funds from the State's Disability Support Fund are for students enrolled in public providers and have to be spent according to the guidelines that have been developed (and specifically for students with disabilities).

Other resources are also provided for students at the institute with a disability, including for facilities, study support, counselling and careers advice. However, no estimate was available of the various additional expenditures under each of these headings, neither was any consolidated total available or means of determining priorities within a total available budget. In general, the institute does not run specific extra activities for students with disabilities. However, it was noted that where students are in receipt of a disability support pension their VET fees are reduced (this also applies for other clients of Centrelink). Since the institute is located near a major Centrelink office (and other similar government resources) its workload in relation to students with disabilities may be increased.

If the institute had additional financial resources to meet the needs of students with disabilities two key priorities were identified. First, they argued for increasing the assistance provided in relation to their organisational needs. This assistance would be rather wider than the current provision of academic support. For example, it could include 'how to set your folder out' or support the development of life skills. Secondly, they argued for a higher priority being given to the support workers. Currently, the institute has some 35 support workers, but it is not easy to promote them, provide them with more permanent employment or increase their remuneration. It was also noted that, in the past, there had sometimes been difficulties in separating the academic and other elements of the support provided by these workers. An extra load could be imposed on them, including at home, which could be hard to control. 'Working one-to-one has this potential, especially when the student and the support worker get on well together'. The institute has developed a practice of getting the support workers together, usually about once a term, to discuss common issues and possible solutions.

The students with disabilities who are enrolled at the institute include both school leavers and older people. There were a number of students enrolled in VCE and also in creative writing, more in hairdressing than in previous years and quite a few in librarianship. More students with disabilities tend to be enrolled at the lower Australian Qualifications Framework levels and in the less expensive TAFE courses. The institute tends to find it more difficult to provide appropriate and adequate support in the workplace than in the institute, on the job than off the job. The amount of financial assistance received by the institute has tended to be based on historical levels, rather than on student numbers, types or levels of disability, or a detailed assessment of costs. It was also noted that, while the institute and its staff seek to make reasonable accommodations for the special needs of students with disabilities, the legislative aspects highlight what is acceptable, and makes training providers more aware of the special needs of students with disabilities and more careful.

In terms of funding priorities, the activities for students with disabilities are within a particular administrative centre of the institute; and it would be the head of that centre that would argue for disability priorities and for additional resources if required. In practice, it has tended to be a relatively minor issue over recent years compared to other disagreements over priorities. Additional support is not normally provided for students with disabilities while they are on placements in employment, even when they are a compulsory element of the VET course. It is not always clear just whose responsibility it is to provide such support; and whether employers can be expected to make reasonable accommodations for special needs. While on the placement it is the student's responsibility to organise the supports they need. The employment placement is seen as preparation for employment and thus a support worker is not appropriate (although the disability liaison unit may have discussions with the agency where the placement is taking place, if necessary).

In terms of the resources that are spent they have to be acquitted, but otherwise there is little detailed follow-up, monitoring, evaluation, analysis, discussion of alternatives or accumulative

learning within the institute. It was also emphasised that the resources provided for students with disabilities are primarily for use within the institute; and little is provided for wider outreach purposes, either prior to VET enrolment or subsequently. However, the institute 'gives students with disabilities the opportunity'. There has been little study, for example of the destinations of students with disabilities after they complete their course of study; or of why they drop out before completion. The institute seeks to provide information, education and training about the needs of students with disabilities and what can reasonably be expected, for both general and academic staff. It has proved to be more difficult to provide satisfactorily for sessional and casual staff than for full-timers. However, it can contribute to an improved understanding of what is involved and what changes in teaching (or other matters) may be required. If additional funding was available one use could be to develop packages of material to provide greater support to teachers.

Multi-sector institution

The other public provider included in the study from Victoria was a large metropolitan multi-sector institution located in the central area of Melbourne. They also applied to the state's disability support fund; and received some \$300 000 per annum, which represented 42% of what they had requested. Overall, some \$1.7 million was provided statewide compared to \$4 million in bids. Also, the gap is growing: 'it used to be 60% of bids were met, but now it is down to 40%'. Thus, 'the responsibility is increasingly being put onto the institutions', especially those in the public sector. The institution noted that their estimate of what was required was more accurate for second and subsequent year students, even though they were a large diverse provider. The same guidelines applied as for the other public provider: note-takers, tutors, sign interpreters, in-class support staff and non-generic equipment or adaptive technology which costs over \$500; and similar acquittal arrangements were in force. The institution has determined that normal funding sources should provide a range of basic learning supports. It was suggested that this should be made more explicit between the state authorities and the individual provider; and that it should apply consistently across different training providers (e.g. maintenance from normal library funds of special equipment purchased from disability funds). 'Give them the carrot and then try to persuade them to take on the ongoing responsibility'.

The philosophy at this provider included constant dialogue between those specialising in the disability support field and those working elsewhere in the institution, to seek to influence their thinking and increase their ownership of the appropriate approach to assisting those students with disabilities; and developing the student as an independent self-directed learner. 'Therefore we need to have an approach which facilitates learning in diverse ways and for diverse students'. Interaction with casual and sessional staff tends to be more difficult than for full-timers; 'but perhaps it should be part of their work anyway'. Staff and students can both approach the disability liaison unit, which also provides regular advice to feeder schools to help them widen the educational choices of their students with disabilities.

Of those students who self-identify by ticking the disability box on the enrolment form, experience has shown that half or less actually need help. 'The whole statistics area is very problematic.' Some 3% of the student body is classified currently as having a disability, which is much lower than the proportion in the general population. Also, their needs are very diverse and some are very expensive. For example, expenditure for the fifteen profoundly deaf students who were currently enrolled was about \$25 000 per fortnight. In their experience the educational needs of profoundly deaf students were particularly expensive to meet properly, while those students with specific learning difficulties were the next most expensive. The number of enrolments by students with specific learning difficulties has been increasing substantially, partly because of efforts over recent years by the VET provider and also because of improvements in the secondary school system. The VET provider had been working with the secondary schools to develop more independent learning

skills i.e. 'doing it with, rather than doing it for the student'. These increased expectations can also result in student complaints (there were five in the previous year).

The institution had top-level support for assisting students with disabilities, which had been most important, both directly and indirectly. It was argued that necessary infrastructure should be possible to fund through the normal grant processes in a public provider (e.g. for furniture and capital works). 'It is the learning support which is the critical element', which is more difficult to fund in this way. It was noted that in higher education the Commonwealth department provides assistance where it can be shown to be necessary for students with disabilities and exceeds \$1000 for an individual student. They argued that 'there has to be some reasonable sharing' between the individual provider and the state training authority. It was also suggested that the State Government could assist disability liaison officers, including by training, by developing networks and support, and by maintaining, enhancing and disseminating appropriate knowledge, perhaps through a secretariat (which would not have responsibilities for providing support and assistance directly to individual students). There could be a greater effort to standardise arrangements and provision across different public providers (and between public and private providers).

Private providers

The first provider interviewed for the project operates in an industrial suburb not far from the central business district. The firm is committed to the provision of high quality training and vocational services in partnership with industry. The training provision is normally planned so as to meet the expressed and implied needs of the industry client. The provider is committed to a policy of access and equity for all learners, regardless of their literacy, language or learning needs and their physical or intellectual disability. Nevertheless, fewer than one in twenty of their enrolments are from students with disabilities. However, they noted that industrial deafness is quite common among workers in some of the industries, such as automotive, which they serve. Interestingly, although the enterprise was generally well informed about VET arrangements, they commented that they were not aware of additional funds being available for teaching students with disabilities. Their experience was that any additional costs have to be borne by the training organisation within its existing funding limits. Obviously there can be additional costs incurred in some cases, as when extra hours of instruction or additional personal assistance are needed. In practice, they 'lump it and wear any extra costs'.

Most of their training is negotiated in workplaces; and of course the staff there could include people with a disability. The training provider seeks to enable anyone in the relevant circumstances to be involved in the training that is provided. However, they emphasised that there is a limit to how much leverage they have in the workplace situation. Ultimately they are present at the employer's request, 'by their grace and favour'. If the employer is not supportive there are clear limits to what the training provider can do. They also noted that, as institution-based VET training moves to include more enterprise-based elements, the employment difficulties facing students with disabilities tend to become more pervasive. They suggested that more information could usefully be made available, including on a website, about what is available and how to obtain access to it. They also argued that the state training authority has an important role to play in facilitating the provision of information, advice, partnerships and support, and financial assistance to private training providers as well as to the public providers.

The training provider cited a particular case in which they had been involved. A truck driver suffered an industrial injury and lost his legs. The insurance company paid the registered training organisation to provide workplace assessment and training. It was provided on a fee-for-service basis; involved administrative processes, participation in a virtual community of VET practitioners, additional coaching and mentoring on an individual basis and occupational health and safety; and identified workplace training as a possible new career for the disabled truck driver. He also

undertook some part-time work with the training provider, which might lead to longer-term employment if suitable work becomes available. The training organisation had introduced a few adjustments, such as a handrail in the toilet and a few physical alterations, to facilitate his mobility around the premises. Three other points were noted:

- ✧ Success factors involved the individual; the insurance company which was very supportive and whose financial contribution was critical; the workplace; and the training organisation.
- ✧ While the situation for this individual was generally very supportive, the process of adjustment was nevertheless a difficult one, which required great determination on the truck driver's part and ongoing support from the other participants on a long-term basis. The individual intended to undertake an AQF 5 level course in occupational health and safety.
- ✧ While the training organisation had a general commitment to work with the disadvantaged and a strong social conscience, nevertheless they are a private business; and if the extra costs of providing training for students with disabilities are not paid to them it can adversely affect their profitability, sometimes substantially. It was queried whether this is the responsibility of the individual training provider or of society more generally.

The second private provider was located in an industrial suburb on the northern outskirts of Melbourne. Population projections have identified this region as among those likely to grow particularly rapidly over the next few years. The registered training organisation was part of a larger group, which is a non-profit organisation providing employment and training for people with disabilities and the vocationally disadvantaged. It defines its mission as offering 'quality training, personal development and community support for people with a disability and people who are vocationally disadvantaged. It operates commercial businesses for the purpose of generating funds to support and expand its services to the community'. It has been in existence for twenty-four years; and currently has operating divisions in sub-contract packaging, wholesale and retail nursery, garden and property maintenance, VET, and work and life skills education for people with a disability. The current criteria for people to obtain access to their services are that they are over 16 years of age and have been endorsed as disabled through Centrelink. They are currently planning to extend their services to other persons in their geographical region who are vocationally disadvantaged.

The disability training division of the association has over twenty years experience in providing vocational training and educational programs to people with special needs. Over time they have found it more difficult to get their students into TAFE. A couple of year ago they began training for personal care attendants and disability carers through their registered training organisation, to help ensure that the people on the care side of the industry are trained to a high standard of excellence. They have also expanded their range of training options for people with disabilities and those who are vocationally disadvantaged through their just in time pilot program initiative. It provides timely and appropriate training for people who are generally ready for work, but need to gain some additional skills. They were currently exploring new ways of providing employees and trainees with better opportunities to participate in and gain access to training at an earlier stage in their lives and thus gain important vocational skills to assist with their future options. The association has formed strong strategic alliances with other training providers and employers in their region.

They noted that they are being strongly encouraged by government to operate as a business; that there tends to be constant pressure on the individual disabled person to prove (and re-prove) their eligibility for assistance; and that the case manager has considerable discretion as to whether available funds can be spent on training, including good quality accredited training. For example, if such opportunities are not readily available the money may not be spent on training.

The registered training organisations' funding is derived from the adult and community education sector. In the past they could access VET funding, but this is no longer possible. However, they

commented that ‘it hasn’t been an easy path to get ongoing funds from the Adult, Community and Further Education Board in relation to their training’, especially that in the workplace. They see the board playing a declining role, in the view of ANTA and the state training authority, in relation to the funding of workplace training. Keeping their training going is presenting difficulties for the organisation. On the other hand, recognition of prior learning has been improving, with quite a few of their employees benefiting from recent changes: ‘the first break through factor’. They would also like, as well as access to ongoing funds for training, to be able to obtain pilot funds, including developing career planning for their clients. Currently their training includes personal care attendants, residential support services (i.e. training to assist people with disabilities rather than training for people with a disability), training at the association’s workshop, and a certificate I course in employment preparation. The Certificate I in Employment Preparation is designed to meet the needs of job seekers with special needs that wish to access employment or further training. It emphasises that ‘the work ethic (core work skills) is essential for future employment options’. Vocational and interpersonal skills are developed on and off the job, in the workplace and in the classroom. On completion of the program, participants are referred to an employment agency or further education and training, open or supported employment. Another certificate I course in process manufacturing is provided. It is an industry-accredited qualification taken from the Plastics, Rubber and Cable Making Training Package. It covers such areas as occupational health and safety, how to operate equipment, applying quality processes, shifting materials safely by hand, and collecting waste for recycling or safe disposal. It was noted that the registered training organisation is providing certificate II, III and IV level courses under the New Apprenticeship arrangements.

The majority of those enrolled in their courses are people with a physical disability. It was argued that the needs of those with an intellectual disability are tending to be less satisfactorily met than the needs of those with a physical disability (and generally at certificate I and II levels, which implies that they are ineligible for disabled apprentice wage support assistance with tutorial, mentor or interpreter support). A traineeship for people with an intellectual disability was advocated, so that they are not excluded from effective participation in VET (with good articulation possibilities). It was also emphasised that the time period over which a traineeship is normally expected to be completed, i.e. twelve months for full-time and thirty-six months for part-time, is often inadequate (‘a student with disabilities on a part-time traineeship may need up to sixty months’).

The incentive payments to employers vary by the Australian Qualifications Framework level of the training course (and by industry area across Australia), but the total amount is unaltered for disabled students compared to those without a disability (e.g. \$1250 to the employer for a student at AQF level II, compared to the \$4000 at AQF levels III and IV). One example cited related to a student with short stature and short arms who was working as a manual handler. He needed special arrangements and equipment to handle the practical work satisfactorily. Another example concerned a very overweight person, whose ability to bend, lift materials or approach people was adversely affected as a result. Also, it could be argued that the relativities are unreasonably large for students with disabilities. Similarly the hourly rate paid for providing training for students with disabilities is no larger than for students without a disability. Net costs may be higher for the former, often substantially so.

Eight other points were also noted:

- ✧ Funding from the ACE sector appears to be able to be used over a wider range than normal VET funding, which can be helpful (e.g. awareness of road safety, life and social skills). A healthy living program run by this provider develops skills in the kitchen, such as meal planning, shopping, food preparation, basic cooking and cleaning, to enhance independence and increase self-esteem. An introductory course on computers and the internet is also provided.
- ✧ Their experience has stressed the importance of ‘putting together income for training for students with disabilities from a range of funding sources—it can be quite complex’.

- ✧ Pilot projects that cannot, in the event, be continued can be very disappointing for those involved. This includes students, their families and carers, of course, but also the wide range of other participants who often had to be persuaded to become involved in the first place. Persuading them the next time can present significant problems.
- ✧ Education and training issues are only part of the challenges facing their students. For example, there may be other issues in relation to employment, accommodation, life skills, transport, financial arrangements and budgeting. 'The issues and problems are often very strongly interrelated'.
- ✧ They believed there was a strong case for early intervention. They have found it is easier to assist a person with a disability if they come to them at age 17 or 18, even 15 or 16, rather than in their mid-twenties. When the students are older their patterns of behaviour may be firmly established and changes are more difficult to make, even when strongly in the interests of the disabled person.
- ✧ Specific episodes can be very complex, disruptive and costly. For example, in the previous week an issue concerning illegal drug use had arisen with one of their young female employees. Discussions during that week had involved four senior staff from the organisation, together with the young person and her mother.
- ✧ The organisation has encouraged all of the supervisors in their sheltered workshop, which had a turnover in the previous year of \$1 500 000, to undertake workplace trainer training. It had proved beneficial for staff and 'strengthened the job-coach type environment'.
- ✧ In their experience the transition from sheltered employment (or training) into open employment can be very difficult. Support often needs to be provided to both the employee and the employer. Community enterprises can be valuable in this respect, given the importance of such factors as friendships, relationships and collegiality. The transition to open employment involves 'an elevated level of risk'. It can affect many things, including family attitudes and expectations, the risk for the employer, and public liability. Consequently, some people with a disability may be better advised to continue in sheltered employment. Interestingly, they had found that people with a disability 'can turn out to be good trainers'.

Appendix 6: Queensland

Discussions were held with the Queensland Department of Employment and Training and with three public VET providers: Southbank Institute of TAFE; Logan Institute of TAFE; and Central Queensland Institute of TAFE. Southbank and Logan Institutes are located in Brisbane, while the Central Queensland Institute has major campuses in Rockhampton, Mackay, Gladstone and Emerald. Interviews with the Southbank and Logan Institutes were held face to face, while the interview with the Central Queensland Institute was conducted by telephone.

Discussions were also held with two private training providers, one located in the metropolitan area and the other located with an operational base in the metropolitan area but delivering locally across the states of Queensland and New South Wales. The former discussion was held face to face in Brisbane and the latter by telephone.

Base funding: TAFE direct grant

In Queensland, TAFE institutes are funded through direct grant (profile funding) that is expected to cover the costs of delivery for all students, including those with disabilities. The grant does not make any special provision for the extra costs that may be incurred in providing for students with disabilities in VET courses, though a higher funding rate is applied to country and remote VET delivery. Additional specific funds for disability support are provided through non-profile funding on a needs basis to all institutes, but this funding is capped and limited.

Comments were made in discussions that the direct grant funding—historically based on a price per student contact hour, for a period of ‘nominal hours’—is not sufficient to allow for the reasonable adjustments that some students with disabilities require. In addition, it was argued that when nominal hours are the basis for course funding allocations, the ability of teachers to make reasonable adjustments is constrained. While some students may require fewer than the nominal hours to complete, and this will free up some time for the teacher, students with disabilities may require substantially longer, but only an additional ten per cent is allowed for within the funding received. This creates considerable pressure on the teacher, which is exacerbated by the demands of rolling-enrolments and mid-course entry.

In one discussion it was noted that, ‘it can be very hard for the teacher’ who has a class of, say, 14 students, if a few have disabilities. Sometimes, other students resent the adjustments that the teacher has to make to accommodate the needs of the student with disabilities. Some students express concerns about possible effects on their own learning, as well as occupational health and safety issues.

Respondents also suggested that reasonable adjustments are ‘constrained by performance measures’, especially student contact hours, and the pressure to deliver ‘profile’. Under present funding arrangements, ‘there is no fat to fall back on’, so that the additional support (and cost) required for some students with disabilities is ‘driven into being a marginal activity’. Some respondents expressed concern that discriminatory practices could develop as a result. ‘Support decisions are driven by the availability of resources’; and ‘we have all become a bit creative in terms of the types of support which institutes provide’. They described the situation as particularly

difficult when members of teaching staff are heavily stretched and institute management is focussed on meeting profiles and nominal hours.

In another discussion it was commented that, 'the concept of reasonable adjustment needs to be operationalised: what we miss is evidence'. Two research projects currently being conducted in Queensland are helping to fill this gap. Funded by ANTA, the projects have two main aims: to help training providers to understand what reasonable adjustments are; and to develop guidelines for auditing providers to determine whether they are making reasonable adjustments. Respondents highlighted the substantial variations in the costs of reasonable accommodations for different students even with the same disability. In one program, for example, costs were found to vary from \$20 to \$117 per hour; and 'often the providers cannot really find out even their own costs [of training delivery]'.

The department is also seeking to estimate the extra recurrent costs involved in providing training, and to identify the extra infrastructure that is required, to add to the current arrangements for nominal hour funding. Then 'we can go back to ANTA, with the nominal hours plus all the other related areas required to deliver training'.

Funding for disability support services in TAFE

Funding for disability support services within TAFE institutes is provided through a non-profile fund additional to the direct grant. The amount received by each institute is negotiated each year within the TAFE Queensland budget process. There is considerable pressure on the funds, as the number of students requiring support is increasing. Overall, the case load for disability support varies from year to year. However, during the last five years the number of students requiring support has risen consistently each year throughout the institutes. This has been a statewide trend. As one indicator of the scale of the increases, between November 2001 and April 2002, the number of students with disabilities requesting case management services at the Southbank Institute of TAFE rose by 28.4%.

The number of students who will require support over any given period is difficult to predict and enrolment statistics are regarded as unreliable. Thus it is not easy for institutes to know if the funds they receive will be sufficient, nor is it easy for them to make decisions about allocating these funds. Though institutes seek to identify students requiring support as early as possible, this often does not occur as quickly as they would like. At enrolment, students are asked if they require assistance and the request goes to the disability services officer in the institute if they respond positively. However in many cases, identification does not occur at this stage, but later, largely by teachers, often just before exams when it may be too late to provide effective remedial support, or when the student's initial euphoria at enrolling has dissipated and the problems, as one respondent said, 'start to hit home'. In discussions, another respondent commented that less than 40% of the students with disabilities who were case-managed during one semester self-identified as needing additional support at enrolment.

Given this delay in identifying students who require assistance, it was suggested that it is not unusual for the majority of the institute's limited resources for disability support to be allocated before some students indicate that they require support. This can create problems for both the institute and its students with disabilities. It may result in a re-allocation of support, further funding for support being sought within the institute, or to some other course of action being negotiated with the students concerned.

In discussions it was noted that the expenditure on support for students with disabilities in TAFE is still largely confined to educational supports. Other needs are recognised, and attempts are being made at a local level to engage with other agencies to move towards a 'whole-of-government' approach that considers broader needs. In recent years, TAFE has developed a stronger provision

of personal care (the costs of which, one respondent said, can prove ‘quite horrendous’). Currently most supports are provided on a negotiation basis, ‘with institutes taking account of their risk exposure if appropriate support or courses are not provided’.

TAFE non-profile disability support funding does not apply to some students: apprentices or trainees; full-fee-paying students; and international students. All of these are supported from other funding sources. In the case of full-fee-paying students, the fee for service charged by the provider is expected to cover the provision of support services. However, in discussions it was questioned whether the costs are covered adequately. Competition has been driving the price down so that while there ‘was a lot of money out there’ at one time, there is ‘not now’.

International students are entitled to learning supports under the *Education Services For Overseas Students (ESOS) Act*. However, the current costing model does not cover exceptionally high support needs. Student recruitment is by the individual institute and therefore the provision of appropriate supports is regarded as their responsibility. The State Government’s overall policy is to encourage an increasing number of overseas students in VET in Queensland.

In the case of apprentices and trainees, funding arrangements through user choice provide no additional resources specifically for people with disabilities. However, learning support can be arranged for apprentices with a disability through disabled apprentice wage support or for trainees through the regional offices of the Queensland Department of Employment and Training. In relation to trainees, the departmental provisions mirror disabled apprentice wage support as far as practicable. However, the identification of apprentices and trainees who require support is considered by some respondents to be unsatisfactory. Some apprentices/trainees may find it difficult to identify themselves as requiring additional support in front of their employer. In addition, respondents question whether those who sign up apprentices and trainees really know what people with disabilities need.

Other funding and programs

The Strategic Purchasing Program

The Queensland Department of Education and Training operates the Strategic Purchasing Program, which includes people with disabilities among its identified priorities. The targeted populations include those who would otherwise not get into VET or employment without significant support, including people with multiple disabilities or facing other difficulties (e.g. location or Aboriginality). They could be existing workers who are seeking to strengthen their skills in order to improve their future prospects/promotion or people seeking employment.

In relation to strategic purchasing, the department has been willing to negotiate on price per annual hour curriculum (AHC), which has facilitated the purchase of learning supports within the cost of training.

For the 2001–02 financial year, a public tender process was held and contracts were established with 16 providers, 10 TAFE institutes and six private or community-based organisations. The contracts were for one year with provision for extension for a further 12 months. An evaluation of each program is being undertaken annually against the contract conditions. The courses are targeted at the certificate I and certificate II levels and cover a wide range of industry areas, including cleaning operations, hospitality, horticulture, engineering and warehousing. The training programs may feature workplace preparation skill development and may be complemented by workplace training and/or personal development activities such as team building and communication skills.

The public tender process has the advantage of providing information that could be useful in the future about the types of training that providers are interested in delivering to people with disabilities, about the courses they could provide and the costs involved. The contacts between

these providers and regional VET planning officers in the Queensland department established through the process are also expected to improve understanding of training needs and responses in both the department and among training providers, and facilitate future targeted initiatives. The funding is being provided to support VET courses that contribute to employment outcomes and not for community access or adult day options.

Life skills programs

Queensland has developed a life-skills program in response to the needs of people with disabilities moving into group homes and the broader community as a result of de-institutionalisation. In discussion, respondents commented that there had been a 'dire need' for independent living skills to be developed. 'TAFE was about all there was', with certificate I courses in life skills.

The life-skills program was reviewed last year and as a result of a growing emphasis on pre-employment and work skills among people with disabilities, an accredited course (Course in Vocational Skills Development) was developed from the beginning of 2002. The course allows participants to gain a statement of attainment. For 2002–03, 90 000 hours of training is planned to be delivered by TAFE institutes.

The VET Disability Support Service

In Queensland, assessments of need, specialist support personnel and the adaptive equipment and software that some students with disabilities require are provided through the VET Disability Support Service. Following a process of approval, the VET Disability Support Service orders the requested equipment and lends it directly to the student.

Students with a disability enrolled in training delivered under the Strategic Purchasing Program and Community Responsive Training Program, who require assistance are eligible for support through the VET Disability Support Service. In addition, apprentices, trainees and TAFE direct grant students with a disability are eligible to borrow equipment for the off-the-job component of their training. Documentary evidence of disability is usually required to ensure appropriate support is provided. The service provides specialist learning support under similar arrangements to those for direct grant students noted above.

Community Responsive Training Program

In relation to adult and community education, vocational education and training and community and responsive literacy programs (now known in Queensland as the 'Community Responsive Training Program'), the department is working closely with not-for-profit community organisations, helping people with a disability (or other disadvantaged groups) to develop skills, either as a registered training organisation themselves or in partnership with a registered training organisation. The majority of it involves partnering—'the community has a lot to offer and we can partner them—usually through TAFE, but not always'. There is an emphasis on accredited VET and there is a particularly high priority objective on the achievement of satisfactory employment-related outcomes.

The budget for the program has been moved to the six departmental regional offices, with associated guidelines. The response to communities through this program is linked to the regional VET planning processes. It has been 'put into the hands of those who are in day-to-day contact with disabled students'. The community organisations identify training needs and the department prioritises and responds to these needs. It has proved to be an avenue which has been quite widely used to assist disabled groups and Aboriginal communities.

This program enables leverage of a lot of community input, which can facilitate later linkages. The training for disabled students is often highly specialised and pathways are important. Funding can be rather more flexible and a bit more generous.

TAFE institutes have been expected to develop partnerships with communities throughout Queensland.

Additional issues

Discussions with representatives of public and private VET providers highlighted some additional important issues in relation to the level of funding for students with disabilities and to current and proposed funding models.

The views of public providers

Whole-of-government approach

Discussions with public providers raised the issue of a whole-of-government approach to the many intersecting needs of people with disabilities. Specifically mentioned were a need for better links between Commonwealth and state programs and for more ‘holistic funding’, for example across education, employment and other support. Respondents indicated that a whole-of-government approach is being advocated in Queensland and that it makes sense, as the needs of many students with disabilities extend far beyond VET alone. However, some difficulties have been encountered as the definition of training in the VET sector differs from that of the organisations funded by Disability Services Queensland. Better links were suggested between TAFE Queensland and Disability Services Queensland and organisations funded by them.

Developing a business model

One respondent argued that, for students with disabilities, current ‘funding arrangements are related to a product model rather than a client service model’. As a result, when funding cuts have to be made within institutes they tend to focus on administrative support, including services to students with disabilities. This respondent thus promoted the alternative idea of ‘a business model’ for the provision of VET services to students with a disability, noting that providing more and better services could be a marketing opportunity for some institutes and would also fit well with VET’s overall mission.

What would a business model include? Discussions suggested that the viability of the model would need to be clearly demonstrated within the institute if it were to be adopted. Those supporting it would need to show that there was a strong business base for providing the services and that costs would be covered, at the very least. The types of services available to students, and the number of times that students would be entitled to use them within a given period, would need to be identified.

It was suggested that what is needed to get this idea off the ground is innovative seed funding; ‘and the drive to make it happen’.

Funding for vocational placement

Students with disabilities who are required to do a vocational or industry placement receive support while undertaking training within the institute. However, respondents argued that the learning support funds provided by the institute are insufficient to support students while they are undertaking the vocational placement.

When vocational placement is a compulsory course component, there can be an assumption that there is no need for support in the workplace. In fact, the need could be substantial for students with disabilities. However, respondents noted that the employer should not be expected to meet this cost as it is often difficult to find vocational placements for students with disabilities, and that this situation might worsen if extra costs are involved. A further problem is that some students may not want employers to be informed about their disability.

Career planning

Respondents suggested that there is ‘a desperate’ need for early career development and support for students with disabilities, from Years 8, 9 and 10 of secondary schooling. There could also usefully be a greater role for TAFE institute counsellors since school advisers can lack labour market information and it is very important to link labour market demands with career and skill development for people with disabilities. A considerable improvement in the models of likely labour market needs ‘would be really helpful’. In particular, a greater understanding is required of individual occupations as well as of broader developments in the labour market.

The issue of who is responsible for training and career decisions was also raised. Respondents suggested that while it is important to inform students, their carers and parents of the implications of the student’s career choice, ultimately it is still the student’s responsibility to make their own choice, in the light of the known risks.

It was also noted that sometimes pressure is placed on a student with disabilities to ‘do the package’ i.e. to complete all of the competencies in a training package, when this is very difficult or impossible for them. For instance a person with disabilities may not be able to meet all the first aid competencies in aged care.

Regional issues

The non-metropolitan institute provides VET courses in a regional centre and in more outlying locations. There are particular problems in the outlying areas, including long-term unemployment and social difficulties. Small class sizes make the provision of VET courses on an economical basis more difficult than in the metropolitan area; and there are often only a small number of potential students with disabilities in a course area. The institute provides a mixture of courses for special groups and mainstream courses—depending on the funding source. Sometimes particular groups are brought into the institute by an advocate for their interests.

Recently the institute has observed an increase in enrolments by students requiring support. It was argued that the personal coping strategies of individual students vary widely; and that community support tends to be easier for students with disabilities to access in non-metropolitan areas (although not necessarily in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities). Many communities, they have found, ‘tend to be pretty self-reliant’ and are aware of the leverage that the different services can provide for each other.

Other matters raised during the discussions included:

- ✧ There is a budget for capital works in TAFE Queensland, including new buildings and major facilities. There is also a separate amount for minor works and repairs, which is included in the general funds provided to TAFE institutes and which can be spent at their discretion. Access for people with a disability has received priority funding in recent years. It was suggested that ‘a risk management approach’ is taken on capital and minor works/investment decisions as there are competing priorities for this expenditure—not limited to the needs of people with disabilities. There is ‘quite a lot more to be done’.
- ✧ In web-based courses, administrative costs may be a large proportion of total cost and the funding of appropriate learning supports for students with disabilities can be problematic.
- ✧ It would be desirable for learning support needs to be more explicitly identified, including by program area and Australian Qualifications Framework level. This would help to provide a better basis for arguing for appropriate resources within the institutes: ‘otherwise one cannot mount an effective case’. Respondents argued that, at present, the TAFE system in Queensland does not have the information. Further data are required to show that no unreasonable discrimination is taking place against students with a disability, to develop appropriate policies and to ensure proper transparency and accountability.

- ✧ It was argued that a special responsibility for students with a disability tends to fall on the public provider, irrespective of whether they receive additional funding for it or not.

The views of private providers

Both of the private providers with whom discussions were held were much smaller than the public providers.

Students receiving support

One provider argued that, on the basis of their experience, some 20% of students with a disability are able to enter VET and complete their studies without significant assistance, another 20% could get through with a reasonably small level of support, but 60% need significant support if they are to study successfully. At present in Queensland, most of the financial resources intended for students with disabilities go to the first or second 20% rather than the 60% who really require it. This provider suggested that ‘the central issue in VET is how to prioritise access to limited federal and state funds allocated to disability equitably’; and argued that without ‘measures of deservedness’ agencies and registered training organisations are able to cream those who are relatively easy and cheap to train from the larger population of people with a disability. ‘This is a double injustice to those with genuine barriers to learning that can only be overcome with additional assistance.’

The provider is seeking to develop an instrument, referred to as a ‘priority passport’, that can measure the relative deservedness of different people with disabilities to access the limited VET equity funds. This will facilitate their subsequent access to other VET services, and ‘record all accredited training as the person progresses through the VET system’.

Artificial barriers to qualifications and occupations

This provider suggested also that some industries are not keen to have their working culture changed and thus set up barriers (including through training requirements) which adversely affect some potential entrants, including people with disabilities, Aboriginal people or people from non-English speaking backgrounds. There is a danger that VET can be made to take a gate-keeping role. For example, it was argued that requirements (e.g. competency, qualification) can derive from a hostility to increased diversity and a desire to reinforce group norms, rather than from educational considerations. In this provider’s view, trade unions can also have ‘quite a narrow identity’, in some cases are ‘very ethnocentric’ and can influence VET directly and also indirectly, for example through their role on industry training boards.

Funding arrangements

Private VET providers obtain funding for VET training from the Queensland department under competitive purchasing arrangements. The costs per student hour, for a period of ‘nominal hours’, can incorporate some allowance for the extra costs of teaching students with disabilities.

One provider indicated that it currently conducts a certificate I course in cabinet making of 640 contact hours. However, from the end of 2002, provision will have to be in accordance with the training package and therefore only 200 hours will be funded. This provider suggested that a significant problem is likely to develop in relation to who will fund the extra hours that are required for students with disabilities to complete the training.

This training provider also conducts a certificate I course in transport and distribution. It is a special course for students with disabilities, although it is not identified in that way. Fifteen competencies are identified, but the focus is on eight of them; and the training provider had been working with the relevant state industry training board to develop appropriate contact hour arrangements. With the cessation of federal funding for industry training bodies at state level the provider has some concerns about what will happen with this work.

Another private provider noted that contracts for the provision of training have a start and completion date, but for various reasons, such as illness, a person with disabilities may not be able to complete the training by the end of the contract period. The registered training organisation explained that when this occurs, they negotiate with the purchasing branch of the state training authority to extend the contract. However, an extension is not always possible.

Preparation for employment

One provider expressed concern about what it saw as the undue proliferation of short courses, say eight weeks in length, for people with disabilities. It believed that this was often inadequate for proper preparation for employment and that 20 weeks might often be necessary. It suggested also that some providers might 'keep the students on the merry-go-round', from one course to another with no end in sight. (This provider's concerns were reflected in the emphasis given in discussions with the department to the view that VET training is not 'training solely for training's sake', but the prime objective is to train the students to do a job properly and 'to be able to keep it'.)

The provider suggested that a logbook could be a useful tool for demonstrating the developing competence of students with disabilities. For instance, if an employer raised concerns about an individual's capabilities, the logbook could be used to show the competencies that the person has achieved and how they have been demonstrated. The provider noted also that there are many different ways of making reasonable adjustments to methods of assessing competencies that can overcome some of the barriers to students with disabilities meeting the requirements.

Limited funding

While people with disabilities are a targeted equity group in Queensland VET, and the purchasing price for training can be varied to incorporate measures to meet their needs, one provider commented that this increase tends to occur only for a limited period of time (which may not be sufficient), and for a limited number of competencies (not the whole VET qualification). 'One cannot rely on this source for a longer term source of funding'. Support may be available to pay for, say, interpreters, but assistance may also be needed to meet the additional costs of customising the course or enabling competencies to be demonstrated in a rather different way for the student with disabilities. Perhaps, this provider suggested, 'there could be additional resources or a different approach'.

Regional issues

One provider also raised regional issues, noting that in non-metropolitan Queensland, students with disabilities have the potential to access more informal supports through the local community. This may be due to the networking of agency personnel 'after hours' and the ad hoc benefits that arise from informal networking.

This provider also operates in other states. In comparing New South Wales and Queensland they noted the different origins, organisation and operation of commonwealth and state funded disability support services and the implications of this for what people with a disability and their carers know of VET and the ways in which they access it. There are differences also in other things, including audit registration and contractual processes.

Future developments

Discussions in Queensland also led to suggestions in relation to two future developments.

First, in relation to the unreliability of statistics on students with disabilities, respondents argued that 'self-identification is really flawed' but would be assisted by 'building a culture of acceptance'. This would enable students to identify themselves as requiring disability support without fear of being discriminated against.

The suggestion was also made that a special survey could be administered, perhaps every two or three years and perhaps conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This could investigate relevant issues for students with disabilities in much more detail than is currently possible through the enrolment form process.

Secondly, it was suggested that if a decision is taken on change(s) to the current funding arrangements for students with a disability in VET in Queensland the next step should be a pilot project followed by careful evaluation before any wholesale changes are made. Ideally, any pilot should cover all the support services relevant for VET students with a disability. It also should include one or two states; and within a state it should include at least one public provider in the metropolitan area, one public provider outside the metropolitan area, and one or two private training providers.

Appendix 7: Western Australia

Discussions were held with the state training authority, a large TAFE college in Perth and a private provider of education, training and employment services to people with a disability. Discussions were held at the state training authority in Perth and subsequently by telephone. The Western Australian Department of Training provides the great majority of its \$215 million in VET funding to public providers on a general basis i.e. not specifically for any individual group of students, including the disabled. The driving principle here is to distribute the broad funding total reasonably overall, with variations by type of course and delivery. The funding model differentiates on the basis of geographical location and industry type (only). The public providers tend to distribute what they receive in a similar way: 'although this is not the intention it is understandable that it occurs'. The department was currently reconsidering the funding arrangements. It was being undertaken 'progressively'; and is likely to be ongoing. There could be some redirection of resources towards students with a disability (but at that stage the final outcomes of the review were not available, and no changes have been advised): 'some bits *may* be implemented for 2003'.

In relation to capital works, the department seeks to make providers 'as accessible as possible'. A special project has been undertaken to audit each college to ensure that access is satisfactory. There were 700 items in one college that were identified as requiring attention. The department is seeking to determine appropriate priorities given the limited funds that are available for this purpose in TAFE; such as car parks, front doors, classrooms, the cafeteria and administrative areas. For minor works and maintenance the responsibility is generally devolved to the individual college; and resources are subsumed within the total budget that is allocated to the college. It was suggested that some five to ten years might be required to fix all the outstanding matters that have now been identified. It appears that the problems which have been identified so far relate particularly to students with a physical disability; and that the survey has perhaps not identified as fully the obstacles to participation which are faced by students with intellectual disabilities.

There were three other funding sources identified in the discussions and a special annual allocation of \$600 000. The first funding source involves competitively allocated funds following an open tender, and is relevant to both public and private VET providers. Providers bid on a cost per training hour basis. The competitive program grants do not have an established rate, although costs are benchmarked. The state training authority will fund a proposed program at above the benchmarked rate if the applicants advance an adequate reason for the higher costs. Thus, bids for special access programs, including students with a disability, can seek funding at an increased rate. The department actively specifies the type of training or target group for which training is being sought. In relation to the second funding source, the department contributes an additional \$600 000 per annum to TAFE colleges throughout the state to provide support for students with a disability e.g. to hire note-takers, provide computer assistance or ergonomic furniture. The colleges are expected to contribute another \$600 000 from their own resources. However, it was noted that there is no systematic follow-up to ensure that the department's grant actually is matched or that the combined total is actually reflected in the extra assistance provided to students with a disability. This is recurrent expenditure; it tends to be allocated between colleges on the basis of student curriculum hours; and expenditures have to be acquitted to the department. A final program funded by the department, \$500 000 last year and \$200 000 this year, was provided for training

organisations to develop programs, including undertaking research, to develop improvements in the VET system, including for students with a disability.

Four other matters were mentioned:

- ✧ In their view, the statistics on VET students with a disability are quite unreliable. There were a number of reasons advanced why some students do not tick the relevant box on the enrolment form (when they should) and why other students do tick the box, when in fact they require little or no additional support. Their experience is that they often do not get timely advice on which support would be helpful: 'it is only after the student is enrolled at the college that a number of these matters arise'. Overall, they concluded that 'the statistics are not very helpful for any purpose'; and suggested that this matter warrants further consideration and improvement.
- ✧ They recognised that people with a disability appear to be under-represented in VET compared to their prevalence in the general population in Western Australia. Some 3% of the publicly funded VET students in Western Australia are students with a disability according to the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard statistics; and only about 1% of all those in traineeships and apprenticeships. However, it is widely recognised that the statistics, based on self-reporting and primarily at the time of enrolment, are unreliable; and may well be an under-estimate of the true position. The department indicated it would like to know why this is so, what can be done about it and where VET is doing a good job and where does it need to change if participation (and successful completion) rates are to improve.
- ✧ They were comfortable with each of the three alternative funding arrangements that are discussed in this report. However, they tended to favour the second alternative, especially if extra funding could be provided, since there was no indication, otherwise, of where funding might be reduced. This is the alternative where the broad VET funding model is modified to include some extra allowance for the highest cost students. They did not want a detailed system of funding, monitoring or audit to be the responsibility of the area of the department that handled the broad funding arrangements for VET. They also noted the argument for flexible funding arrangements given the wide diversity of VET training needs (and costs) for students with a disability.
- ✧ In terms of next steps they were in favour of broad consideration of the alternative funding arrangements, followed by more detailed investigation of strategic or doubtful aspects and pilot schemes with careful evaluation. They did not want to consider wholesale changes until these more cautious steps were taken and the results from them were available.

Each TAFE college in Western Australia has a disability officer who identifies and coordinates services to meet a student's individual needs. Services may include liaising with lecturers about a student's particular needs, arranging for specialised equipment (e.g. touch screens) or technical aids (such as tape recorders or laptop computers), arranging a support person (e.g. an interpreter or note taker for a deaf student), and arranging for print material and lectures to be provided through transcriptions, large print documents, audiotapes and computer disks. It is through the disability officer that TAFE colleges are able to develop good contacts with employment agencies that specialise in assisting people with disabilities. Alternatively, disability officers in TAFE can develop specialised programs for students with disabilities who have limited access to mainstream training.

At the metropolitan TAFE college, \$67 000 extra was received annually from the state department to help defray the extra costs of providing VET training for students with a disability. There were one hundred and thirty students for whom the disability service officer was providing services, but he noted that many of them 'did not cost much at all'. The majority of the students, who are on four separate campuses, have mild intellectual disabilities. They require one-on-one tuition in most cases. There are also students who suffer from physical disabilities, for whom note-takers are provided and who receive assistance to become more independent. For example, the college buys special keyboards, enlargers for visually impaired students and ergonomic furniture. If possible they

often seek to lease specialised requirements as needs can change from year to year. They were currently seeking to establish a system of loans between the different TAFE colleges. It was also emphasised that technology can change quite rapidly, even from one year to the next. For example, they have found that library material for students who are visually impaired may only last three to four years. On the other hand, some items, such as ergonomic furniture, can last for a long time.

The disability services officer at the college had a passion for his job. He noted that he has to actively manage and direct the various possibilities. For example, despite the heavy burden of the paperwork involved he sends in an invoice for disabled apprentice wage support payments for every student who may be eligible (and receives 'a lot of extra money' as a result, which he uses in various ways, including to provide additional clerical support). Some students with disabilities are attracted to the college 'because I leave no stone unturned'. The disability services officer seeks to advise students before they complete their enrolment, but this only occurs infrequently, except for apprentices. He also sees it as an important part of his work to raise awareness about disability issues, both inside and outside the college. He is aiming to include appropriate material in induction training: at present participation is voluntary, but the proportion who participate is increasing. Lecturers come to him for advice and assistance as well as students, for example in relation to legal aspects and appropriate behaviour. In his view one has 'got to see the person first and the disability later'.

The disability services officer was critical of the statistics collected through the enrolment form process. They are unreliable, sometimes because the person 'has been hurt and discriminated against in the past'. Others may be lacking in insight 'or in denial'. Of those students in the college who ticked the box on their enrolment form, he estimated that only 10% needed assistance from his office; and they generally got it (but often not straight after they enrolled, which could cause problems). Conversely, of those students to whom he was providing assistance, the great majority, perhaps 90%, had not ticked the relevant box when they enrolled.

Of those students in the college with a disability, some 20% of them involved about 80% of the total expenditure, especially because of the need for one-to-one support. Thus, the cost of the support needs of the students with a disability in the college was highly skewed. Of the 108 students on which detailed records were kept for second semester in 2001 in relation to their type of disability, fifty had a physical disability, thirty had intellectual or related learning difficulties, thirteen had psychiatric difficulties, eleven suffered from sensory problems (such as visual or hearing impairment), and four suffered from a neurological complaint. Similarly, of those students with a disability to whom special assistance was being provided and for whom it was known in what type of course they were enrolled, thirty-four were full-time and another thirty-four were part-time students, twelve were in an apprenticeship, three were pre-apprentices, one was a trainee and one was enrolled in migrant education. Table 2 shows the types of support that were provided during each month of the second semester in 2001, which was particularly note taking and support, ergonomic furniture and interpreters. There was some variation over the different months in the semester, but generally not much.

Table 2: Timing of support to students with a disability over the semester (TAFE provider in Perth)

Support provided	August	September	October	November	December
Note taker/support	13	13	14	12	13
Interpreter	6	6	6	6	7
Computer program aid	-	2	2	-	2
Tape recorder	1	1	1	1	1
Access parking	1	2	1	1	2
Ergonomic chair	11	9	11	14	9
Writing board	-	-	4	-	-
Other	1	1	1	1	1

Source: College records

A wide range of services were provided. For example, in the month of August 2001, 180 telephone calls were made (nine in the case of each of four students, three for eight students and seven for two students), 63 meetings were held with lecturers (nine in the case of one student, seven for another), 42 meetings were held with support staff, 42 reports written, 37 instances of liaising with outside agencies, 38 letters written, 34 re-assessments undertaken (and 11 initial assessments), in 11 cases support staff were arranged, advocacy (both internal and external) took place for 10 students, 6 students received special career and course guidance and 6 were referred to outside agencies.

In relation to VET in Schools, which in Western Australia is the responsibility of the Department of Education rather than the Western Australian Department of Training, it was suggested by respondents at the TAFE college that it can be useful, especially for transition by students with an intellectual disability who undertake a part-time traineeship for Year 11 and 12 students. It involves working for three days in each week and attending the school for two days per week: 'for the first time these students were the envy of their classmates', because of their outside employment and pay. Of ten students in the small business traineeship six obtained reasonable employment over a two-year period. The intention was that the state would continue to fund the program (the pilot had been funded by the Commonwealth), but in the event this did not occur. The TAFE college also benefited from the development of partnerships with a range of schools in the area. The students gained a statement of attainment, even for achieving parts of the course. The TAFE college had found that progression into higher Australian Qualifications Framework levels in VET can be hindered by systematic deficiencies in school achievement, including in literacy, numeracy, language and life skills (it is important that schools 'lay a proper basis'). If appropriate mentoring and support is provided, especially at key times (such as transition from school to VET or VET into employment) by lecturers, employers and co-workers, results can improve subsequently.

Edge Training Solutions was established in 1985 as the training and consultancy arm of Edge Employment Solutions in inner suburban Perth. Edge Training Solutions delivers nationally recognised training courses for disability employment services around Australia and New Zealand. In 2000–01 a total of 38 training courses were run in Sydney, Wollongong, Taree, Grafton, Nambucca Heads, Newcastle, Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville, Darwin, Melbourne, Perth and Christchurch—with 581 participants from 111 different employment agencies. The most popular courses were Applied Marketing and Selling Skills (370 participants) and Finding a Job Keeping a Job (123 participants). Since 1985 Edge Training Solutions has trained 4662 staff from 592 community agencies around Australia and overseas. Edge Training Solutions is fully self-funded and any excess income is made available to Edge Employment Solutions to research new employment opportunities for people with disabilities, such as apprenticeships, graduate employment and self-employment.

Edge Training Solutions undertook several major consultancies for Western Australian Government agencies in 2000–01. The Athletes at Work Program for Paralympians, a three-year project funded by the Lotteries Commission, assisted 20 of Western Australia's Paralympians with finding employment, maintaining employment or pursuing a course of study in the lead-up to and beyond Sydney 2000.

Each job seeker (there is a waiting list of about 200), is initially interviewed by the managing director; vocational skills and career interests are discussed and an individual plan is developed. They are looking for someone who wants to work and who has support from significant others. The individual plan identifies jobs that match the job seeker's skills, abilities and aspirations. Then a marketing coordinator works with the job seeker to secure a job in accordance with the individual plan. As part of its commitment to quality, the firm matches jobs to people—as opposed to matching people to jobs. This is based on the philosophy that services should fit the people, rather than people having to fit the service. Starting with the job seeker and finding the right job also increases the likelihood of people with more significant disabilities securing and retaining

employment. If a job is secured Edge seeks to obtain a lead-time of at least two days (three-quarters on site and one-quarter liaising with others involved, such as supervisors and co-workers).

Employers have responded positively to the services of Edge Employment Solutions and the quality of the workers it represents. Fifty-four per cent of all jobs secured during 2000–01 were ‘repeat business’—where a current employer hires another person through Edge Employment Solutions because of his or her satisfaction with the performance of a previous employee placed by the agency. A further 24% of jobs were secured through canvassing prospective employers about future vacancies. Employers who had been recommended to the agency by other employers or agencies generated another 6% of the total jobs secured. Family and friends of job seekers also played their part in the job search effort, being the source of 6% of all job starts for the year. The remaining 10% of jobs were secured through newspapers, trade journals or other contacts.

Fifty-three per cent of all the jobs secured were in large corporations, 26% in small or medium-sized businesses, and 21% in the public sector. Funding from the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services supports this. Some disabled workers have been helped to find very specialised positions, for example in glassblowing.

Once a job is secured, Edge Employment Solutions establishes a strong partnership between the newly appointed worker, his or her family, the employer and the agency. Prior to the job commencing, the job coordinator visits the workplace, meets with key co-workers, clarifies the duties to be performed and determines the most appropriate training method. The job coordinator then assists the worker to perform the job to company expectations and become part of the social network.

On-the-job support from the job coordinator decreases as the worker becomes more independent, but regular contact is maintained with the worker, his or her family and the employer. The time required can vary greatly, from less than a week to up to six months. Edge Employment Solutions is always available to provide additional support in response to changing job demands. This includes watching for promotion opportunities or job transfers; and assisting the disabled person to take advantage of such opportunities when they arise.

Edge recognises that co-workers and supervisors play a major role in training and supporting co-workers with disabilities. In the 2000–01 financial year, sixty co-workers from both the private and public sector participated in Edge Employment Solutions’ nationally accredited Supporting Co-Workers with Disabilities training course. This free training course provides co-workers with the skills and confidence to train and support their colleagues with disabilities. Participants have commented that the course enables them to be better trainers of all employees in their workplace, not just those employees with disabilities.

The highly stable workforce that Edge Employment Solutions supports is a direct result of the agency’s ongoing commitment to matching jobs to people (not people to jobs) and providing intensive on-the-job support tailored to the individual’s and employer’s needs coupled with accredited co-worker training where appropriate. Fifty-one per cent of all workers supported by Edge Employment Solutions have been with the same employer for more than two years; 44% for more than three years; and 30% for more than five years. The workers supported by Edge Employment Solutions continue to demonstrate productivity, safety, attendance and turnover records that equal or exceed those of the general workforce.

Customer satisfaction is formally monitored through a series of standardised surveys developed for employers, workers and family members respectively. More than 100 employers, workers, job seekers and family members were surveyed during the 2000–01 financial year. Employers rated the intensive on-the-job training, follow-up support and contact provided to their employees with disabilities very highly. Workers and their families also rated these services very highly. Most importantly, job seekers and workers felt the agency treated them with respect, made them feel welcome, listened to them and involved them in the decisions about their future employment.

During the discussion other matters were raised, including:

- ✧ For apprenticeships, a long-term employer commitment is being sought. 'It is a big commitment for everyone involved', including Edge, the employer and the apprentice. They tend to be rather more selective than for other programs to ensure that participants 'know what they are getting into' and are 'able and willing to stick with it'. They suggested that a trial period, perhaps of three months, might be useful prior to a final decision. Placing apprentices is, in their experience, more than twice as costly as their other job placements.
- ✧ The Family and Community Service funding tends to be 'the same for everyone, whether pushing trolleys or working as a diesel mechanic'. They were concerned about silo funding ignoring the overall needs of the particular individual; and argued strongly that one has 'got to fund the services that people require', both for equity reasons and for efficiency considerations relating to the savings relative to other alternatives. Interestingly, of more than 250 disability employment agencies funded by the government, Edge continues to secure and retain jobs for people with disabilities at much less than the national average cost.
- ✧ They argued that the system should learn better from experience. For example, funding should be weighted to reflect the differential expense of achieving different outcomes, such as apprenticeships; experience could be more effectively shared and accumulative learning encouraged; and any new funding system should provide incentives for people with a disability to be shifted into mainstream education, training and employment opportunities whenever possible (and supported there).

Appendix 8: South Australia

Discussions at the South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment (DETE) provided a range of relevant information. In 1998 there were 190 000 people in South Australia between the ages of 15 and 64 years who have a disability, equivalent to 19.0% of the state's total population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998). This age group was chosen by the South Australian department 'because it most represents the age range of people who would be expected to participate in employment and vocational education and training'. Of the total state population, 4.3% (42 200 persons) between the ages of 15 to 64 years had a profound or severe core activity restriction; 4.1% (40 400 persons) had a moderate core activity restriction; and 5.7% (55 900 persons) had a mild core activity restriction. Core activities, which comprise communication, mobility and self-care are defined in more detail at attachment 1, together with definitions of mild, moderate, severe and profound restrictions and other matters relevant to the Australian Bureau of Statistics summaries. Thus 29.4% of all those people in South Australia who had a disability and were aged between 15 and 64 years in 1998 had a mild core activity restriction; 21.3% had a moderate core activity restriction; and 22.2% had a profound or severe core activity restriction.

The *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* is a state act administered by the South Australian Equal Opportunity Commission. The act makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person in areas of public life on the grounds of age, sex, marital status, pregnancy, race, sexuality, physical or intellectual impairment. The areas of public life include education, employment, and provision of goods and services. While the *Equal Opportunity Act* relates to people with a physical or intellectual impairment, it does not relate to those with a mental illness or psychiatric disability. The *Disability Discrimination Act* now covers these areas. The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) is a federal act that makes discrimination on the grounds of disability unlawful. One of the aims of the act is to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination on the grounds of disability in areas of education, access to public premises, and employment. A person's disability should be taken into account only when it is relevant and fair to do so. Both the *Equal Opportunity Act* and the *Disability Discrimination Act* apply to staff, students, applicants and prospective students.

Table 3 shows the occupations of people with a disability in South Australia. It also offers a comparison with the occupations in which people without a disability are employed.

Four points are noted. First, there are relatively few disabled persons in the occupation of associate professionals, such as medical and science technical officers, metallurgy and materials technicians, accountants, financial brokers and investment advisers, shop, hospitality and accommodation managers, youth workers, enrolled nurses and police officers. Secondly, another substantial occupational category in which there are fewer disabled people employed than the corresponding proportion for non-disabled persons is tradespersons and related workers, such as printers, hairdressers, skilled agriculture and horticulture workers, plumbers, automotive tradespersons, mechanical and fabrication tradespeople. Thirdly, the situation is similar to the important occupational category 'intermediate clerical and sales, service workers', such as keyboard operators, receptionists, general clerks, library assistants, and recording and despatching clerks. The only occupation in which people with a disability are employed in a greater proportion than for people without a disability is 'labourers and related workers': which tends to be low paid, unskilled work, such as that for cleaners, factory labourers and mining, construction, agriculture and elementary

food preparation workers. Finally, there is also a major discrepancy between the proportion of people with a disability who are unemployed and the proportion of people without a disability who are unemployed. Eleven-and-a-half per cent (11 400) of people with a disability are unemployed in South Australia compared with 8.4% (51 900) of people without a disability. These are people who register as 'unemployed' i.e. wanting employment, rather than people 'not in the labour force'. Nearly 53% of people with a disability are participating in the labour force in South Australia compared with 78.7% of people without a disability.

Table 3: Occupations of people with a disability compared to those without a disability, South Australia, in 1998

Occupation	Disability numbers (%)	No disability numbers (%)
Managers & administrators	9 900 (11.3)	61 900 (12.7)
Professionals	15 300 (17.5)	90 400 (18.6)
Associate professionals	8 000 (9.1)	60 300 (12.4)
Tradespersons & related workers	10 800 (12.4)	76 400 (15.7)
Advanced clerical & service workers	2 900 (3.3)	22 600 (4.6)
Intermediate clerical & sales, service workers	12 400 (14.2)	8 700 (17.8)
Intermediate production & transport workers	6 500 (7.4)	46 500 (9.6)
Elementary clerical sales & service workers	9 500 (10.9)	62 700 (12.9)
Labourers & related workers	12 100 (13.8)	59 800 (12.3)
Unemployed & not in the labour force	100 600	219 200

Source: Department of Education, Training and Employment, Adelaide.

Table 4 shows the industries in which those people with a disability, who are employed, are working. It provides a comparison with the industry areas in which people without disabilities are working.

Table 4: Industries in which persons with a disability are employed compared to those without a disability, South Australia, 1998

Industry	All with disability	No disability
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	5 800 (6.2%)	4 300 (7.6%)
Mining	np	5 100 (0.9%)
Manufacturing	12 200 (14.2%)	87 200 (15.4%)
Electricity, gas & water supply	1 000 (1.2%)	4 100 (0.7%)
Construction	5 800 (6.8%)	2 600 (4.6%)
Wholesale trade	6 600 (7.7%)	25 400 (4.5%)
Retail trade	8 900 (10.4%)	85 900 (15.1%)
Accommodation, cafes & restaurants	2 300 (2.7%)	32 200 (5.7%)
Transport & storage	3 000 (3.5%)	21 800 (3.8%)
Communication services	np	9 700 (1.7%)
Finance & insurance	1 300 (1.5%)	18 900 (3.3%)
Property & business services	9 100 (10.5%)	47 100 (8.3%)
Government administration & defence	2 800 (3.3%)	16 000 (2.8%)
Education	8 400 (9.8%)	56 400 (8.5%)
Health & community services	9 900 (11.5%)	56 000 (9.9%)
Cultural & recreational services	2 700 (3.7%)	13 000 (2.3%)
Personal & other services	6 100 (7.1%)	27 900 (4.9%)
Unemployed & not in the labour force	100 600	219 200

Source: Department of Education, Training and Employment, Adelaide.

The growth industry areas in South Australia over the next five years are predicted as: retail trade; education; health and community services; and property and business services. It is predicted that there will be 3000 additional jobs available in the above areas in South Australia per year over the next five years. Information technology is one area in which many people with a disability are encouraged to develop skills. It is covered by manufacturing (where it is made), wholesale trade (where it is sold) and property and business services (where it is used).

Table 5 indicates the industry sector where people with a disability and people without a disability are employed in South Australia.

Table 5: Industry sector where persons with and without a disability are employed, South Australia, 1998

Industry sector	Core activity restrictions	Schooling employment restrictions	All with disability	No disability
Government sector	12 100	11 500	19 300	10 200
Private sector	43 000	46 600	68 200	462 700
Not known				2 800
Unemployed or not in the labour force	81 500	84 000	100 600	219 200

Note: Core activity restrictions and schooling/employment restrictions may not sum because respondents may have answered 'yes' to both Australian Bureau of Statistics questions.

In South Australia the adult and community education sector delivers training and education in the form of short, non-assessed courses. ACE courses can provide pathways into VET. Potentially, ACE sector participants can receive recognition for education and training that they have undertaken if they move into the VET sector. The ACE Council provides grants to ACE providers in South Australia to deliver programs. Details of student numbers funded within these grants and other information are provided to the Office of Vocational Education and Training. VET in Schools is also offered in the schooling sector (both government-funded schools and independent schools) in Years 10 to 12 inclusive. This is generally education and training which is assessed, frequently under auspicing arrangements with registered training organisations. Most auspicing arrangements are with TAFE institutes.

Currently, statistics are collected from each enrolment form that students complete when they enrol or re-enrol in a VET course. The equal opportunity details are recorded on the back of the enrolment form and while some enrolment staff encourage students to complete this section, it is not compulsory. In terms of the severity of their disability, students are asked to indicate whether they consider themselves to 'have a permanent and significant disability' and whether they will require 'special assistance' because of the disability. For a variety of reasons many people with a disability participating in VET do not declare that they have a disability. Wherever possible the South Australian statistics are presented by Department of Education, Training and Employment for 'people with a disability', 'people without a disability' and 'unknown'. The unknown category covers all people who do not complete any part of the 'equity' section when enrolling in VET courses.

Figure 1 provides a picture of all people studying in the publicly funded VET-ACE sector in South Australia during the year ending December 1999 (the most current data available). In 1999, 3709 students (2.3% of all students) studying in VET indicated that they had a disability; 93 195 (58.7%) students studying in VET in 1999 indicated that they did not have a disability. Unfortunately, 52 514 (20.5%) of students studying in VET in 1999 did not complete the equal opportunity section, or indicate whether or not they had a disability. The Department of Education, Training and Employment comments that, given that there are some 190 000 people with a disability in South Australia aged between the ages of 15 and 64 years, there is 'a huge under-representation of people with a disability in the VET sector statistics'.

Figure 1: All people studying in the publicly funded VET–ACE sector, South Australia, 1999

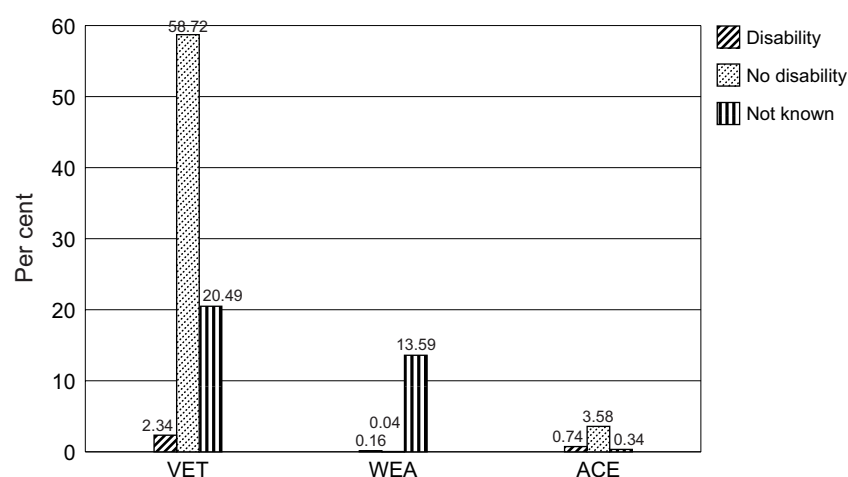


Table 6 highlights where students with a disability are studying in VET in terms of provider. It also provides an overview of the participation rate of people with a disability in publicly funded adult and community education. Again, the small percentage of students without a disability studying with the Workers' Education Association (WEA) is misleading because the majority of students have not completed the equity information section.

Table 6: Students studying VET by provider, South Australia, 1999

Provider	Disability	No disability	Not known
TAFE institutes	2 832	66 565	26 502
Other registered training organisations	369	16 333	4 476
WEA	247	66	21 565
ACE	1 177	5 683	544
VET in Schools arrangements (VISA)	508	10 297	1536

Table 7 shows the fields of study in which students with a disability were participating in 1999. Twenty-eight per cent of them were in TAFE multi-field education that incorporates certificates of preparatory education through to diplomas, such as the Diploma in Applied Design (Interactive Multi Media). Nearly 19% were in business, administration and economics courses, 12.1% were in health and community services courses and 10.5% were in arts, humanities and the social sciences.

Table 7: People with a disability by field of study, South Australia, 1999

Field of study	People with a disability (%)
Land & marine resources, animal husbandry	4.20
Architecture, building	2.18
Art, humanities & social sciences	10.51
Business, administration economics	18.85
Education	1.01
Engineering, surveying	8.15
Health, community services	12.06
Law, legal studies	0.43
Science	5.68
Veterinary science, animal care	0.21
Services, hospitality, transportation	8.73
TAFE multi-field education	27.99

Table 8 shows the qualifications for which those students with a disability who were enrolled in VET courses in South Australia were studying in 1999. The most striking feature is that 3448 (54.3%) people with a disability were studying in non-award programs. A further 2178 (34.3%) of people with a disability were studying in AQF levels I–IV (8.2% at AQF level I, 8.8% at AQF level II, 10.6% at AQF level III and 6.8% at AQF level IV). Thus only 11.4% were enrolled at AQF level V or higher. Between July 1999 and June 2000 over 2000 New Apprenticeships were commenced with group training companies in South Australia, but people who declared that they had a disability undertook only 93 of them.

Table 8: Qualifications which people with a disability are studying in VET, South Australia, 1999

Qualification	People with a disability (%)
Diploma	-
Associate diploma	1.51
Advanced certificate—post trade	0.54
Advanced certificate—other	0.33
Certificate—trade	1.34
Certificate—NEC	1.77
Statement of Attainment	0.17
AQF certificate I	8.24
AQF certificate II	8.75
AQF certificate III	10.59
AQF certificate IV	6.75
AQF diploma	4.00
AQF advanced diploma	1.59
AQF bachelor's degree	0.05
Not applicable—non award	54.34

Note: NEC = nowhere else classified

Thus, the data on participation rates and outcomes from vocational education for people with a disability in South Australia are incomplete for a variety of reasons:

- ✧ The participation rates of people with a disability in VET are well below their representation in the community and indeed in employment.
- ✧ The unemployment rate of people with a disability is much higher than the unemployment rate of people without a disability.

- ✧ More than half of the people with a disability who are studying in VET are studying in non-award programs.
- ✧ The number of people with a disability who are participating in New Apprenticeships through the group training company scheme is very low.

Discussions were held with equity and purchasing officers in the state Department of Education, Training and Employment. In relation to the statistical material that has been presented above, they commented that it is generally not good. The data are based on self-reporting and are probably an underestimate: 'a lot of people are not willing to divulge their disability' as they fear it may disadvantage them in VET or in seeking employment. It is only over the last couple of years that private providers have been required, if they receive public funding, to provide information about the students with disabilities they enrol. Consequently, 'there is not much in the way of reliable historical data'. Also, in some user choice areas the registered training organisation is also the employer, which may cause under-reporting by students with a disability who may perceive a threat to their continued employment or their promotion prospects if they disclose their condition. The increasing emphasis on workplace components in VET may be tending to exacerbate the disadvantages faced by students with a disability, including access to suitable workplaces and adequate supports there. They commented, 'Training packages tend to be unhelpful for the VET activities of students with disabilities'. In their experience, employers 'often seem to make a lot of assumptions if they sense a person is disabled (or otherwise disadvantaged)'. Indeed, they may act so as to apply, in practice, a higher standard, perhaps in order to avoid potential problems in future (for example, over dismissal).

The Department of Education, Training and Employment noted the possibility of outside groups with special knowledge, contacts, expertise and concern for the disabled, such as the Spastic Society or the Royal Society for the Blind, doing specific VET training. ANTA's infrastructure program could be used for infrastructure costs, but not recurrent expenditure, as for the existing not-for-profit industry-based VET in Schools or Indigenous programs. Additional resources could be provided to organisations that are already working with disadvantaged persons to encourage doing more in relation to VET training or 'put more pressure' on the existing organisations which receive infrastructure grant funding to do more for the disabled. Interestingly, the Department of Education, Training and Employment has found that the specialist disability groups are not very aware of the intricacies of the VET system; and the department and the Office of Vocational Education and Training may need to be more proactive. Also, in their experience, some of the specialist disability organisations tend to think that VET training in TAFE or by other registered training organisations is likely to be superior to that they could provide themselves. 'A bit of an educational program is required to change their thinking in that regard.'

The South Australian authorities were giving thought to the possibility of changing the broad funding arrangements, perhaps to introduce a band or two with higher payments to providers for students with unusually high needs, including students with a disability. Such a change could be incorporated into the purchasing arrangements of the Office of Vocational Education and Training, especially if only one or two extra cost categories were involved. It was accepted that funding the extra costs of providing VET courses for students with a disability (when they were substantial) was a broad societal and thus governmental responsibility, whether in the public or the private sector. If additional funding was available they tended to see the high priority areas for students with disabilities as including: extra assistive technology, so that the student with disabilities can be as independent as possible (for example an Assistance Technology Resource Centre could be established, to provide hardware and advice to individual students and to institutions); providing more time for students with a disability to complete a VET course; and incentives to New Apprenticeship Centres, group training companies and enterprises to expand the number of traineeships and apprenticeships available and to support those students with disabilities who enter these courses. The swings-and-roundabouts principle operates for most students, but not for all, including a number of students with disabilities, and the problems are exacerbated if the base

funding is being eroded, competitive pressures are being increased and the emphasis is on providing VET for more students with a minimal increase in resources.

At present there are no additional financial resources provided by the Office of Vocational Education and Training to providers in their base funding to meet the special needs of students with a disability. Some extra funds can be provided under the user choice arrangements; and there are some special funds, but none in South Australia that specifically target students with disabilities (but see the discussion below concerning the TAFE statewide disability support arrangements). However, some programs that are primarily focussed on other issues might incidentally assist some students with disabilities, such as the program for training carers for disabled people (in which at least 20% of the places must be provided outside Adelaide). Also, there tends not to be explicit recognition in the funding arrangements to provide extra support for students with disabilities who require extra time to complete their VET studies successfully. 'It is a rather scatter gun approach' at present. It was noted that extra funding, if provided, should be carefully evaluated, as a basis for accumulative learning.

Five other matters also arose during the discussions:

- ✧ Students with a disability are often in a poorer position to pay the existing enrolment and materials fees. While they are not large, they can nevertheless be a barrier for some students with disabilities, who generally have poorer access to part-time employment opportunities than other students. There is provision for institute directors to waive these fees in deserving cases, but this does not appear to happen very frequently; and in any case the extra costs are then borne by the individual institute.
- ✧ South Australia was giving consideration to waiving the existing worker policy for people who are specially disadvantaged. This could include students with a disability; and might, if it is introduced, provide significant extra assistance for some students, perhaps up to \$8000–\$9000. The present arrangements incorporate 'a substantial disincentive'.
- ✧ Travel issues can be important, especially in country areas. There is no bus service, for example, in the Barossa Valley. Students with a disability who want to attend VET courses at a training provider 'must drive or be driven', by a friend, a carer, themselves or by an access cab. If they need to travel to another provider, say a specialist course in Adelaide, the problems are greater; and the costs tend to fall heavily on the student or their family.
- ✧ There is a feeling that those with intellectual disabilities are being particularly disadvantaged by present policies, 'especially those for whom sheltered employment might be possible'. ANTA and state training authorities have been emphasising an industry-led VET system and training for employment. It was noted that South Australia has recently disbanded its program for training people with intellectual disabilities. Problems included the (inadequate) number of nominal hours and the inability to enrol more than a certain number of times. Therefore, 'mainstream VET is no longer providing these activities in South Australia'.
- ✧ ACE funding is available on a tender basis and it has to go to an incorporated body. Some small amount probably goes to students with a disability, but the main focus in ACE tends to be elsewhere and it has not been a major source of support for people with a disability over recent years.

The South Australian TAFE system, it does not apply to private VET providers, has developed the TAFE Statewide Disability Support Program. It is a combined initiative of all the state's institutes of TAFE. Each institute contributes equally to the cost of the program so that all TAFE students who need program assistance can receive it regardless of which institute they attend. The program is currently located at the Port Adelaide campus of Douglas Mawson Institute of TAFE, whose director manages the program staff on behalf of all TAFE directors. This base serves to facilitate the provision of services to students with a disability across the entire TAFE system in South Australia. The Disability Support Program operates within the guidelines set down by a consensus

of the directors of all the TAFE institutes, which provides for consistency of approach across the State.

The program offers a range of supports to assist students with a disability to overcome specifically handicapping manifestations of a disability. It aims to significantly reduce the impact of a disability on the quality of participation in TAFE options by students with a disability by assisting such students and those who teach and train them to better cope in the educational and training environment. The program emphasis is upon reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with a disability in the training environment. As such, it is person and situation-specific. It aims to assist a student in a specific training situation at a given point in time. It is very much a program based on individual needs and individual solutions. Supports are limited to those accommodations that respond to a specific need that results from a disability in a given set of circumstances. The provision of supports and services that are generally provided by other agencies are not the focus of the program. Students who require income support, housing assistance, medical services and welfare services are expected to contact the generic providers of these services. Institute student services personnel can assist with negotiations with these agencies.

A major focus of the program is the assistance provided to TAFE teaching and support staff in their efforts to better accommodate the educational and training needs of those of their students who have a disability which creates a barrier to success in TAFE options. The development of partnerships between student, teaching staff and the program resources is a significant strategy designed to share responsibility for the successful achievement of student outcomes. The program does not have students in its own right. Rather, it has responsibility to assist students with disability and those who teach them to overcome specific needs. Prime responsibility for the success of the learning and training initiative remains vested in the relationship of the student and their institute. The support program is a significant source of additional assistance. It is not meant to absolve either student or teacher from their prime responsibility. Also, the decision to become involved with the program is entirely personal. There is no sense of compulsion.

A range of support services is provided. The support is provided on the basis of individual need, taking account of course and training requirements, and the overall learning environment in which the student with a disability is located. The most commonly provided services include: counselling and career planning; enrolment advice and assistance; advocacy; tutorial assistance, both on the campus and after hours; provision of special teaching and learning equipment; support through teaching staff and other education support providers; assistance with modifications to the study environment to facilitate the student getting the best out of their studies; services for those with hearing impairment; supplementary assistance with course related transport; supplementary assistance with course fees; home visits and special counselling and tutoring; and an after-hours telephone counselling and tutorial service. The list of services that can be provided by the statewide program is not limited to those that have been mentioned. Requests for other services are considered on a merit and needs basis, although the resources and the support that is provided are not unlimited. Account is taken of the course requirements facing the individual student and their particular disabling condition at that point in time. The services 'are course and situation-specific'.

The program takes the view that the objectives outlined in the *Bridging pathways* document cannot be achieved within the existing levels of funding; and that any additional funding necessary to adequately meet needs in the future 'should be focussed in part on the continuing push to make mainstream TAFE services more user friendly'. In their view, the necessary systemic changes will never be achieved if the primary focus for service provision to students with a disability continues to be on the disability specialist. 'If such an approach continues, then students with a disability will continue to be marginalised. The answer is an appropriate balance between specialist support and a more accepting mainstream'.

The program, after considerable thought, effort and consultation (which is much appreciated), estimated that the current costs in South Australia include six components. First, \$210 000 p.a. is

provided from the state training profile to the program discussed above, in addition to staff costs. Some 300 students with a disability were assisted in 2001; and often about eight students take up some 40% of the available time and resources. The three hundred students can be divided, on the basis of long experience, into four categories: those who only require one telephone call or discussion, and who subsequently proceed satisfactorily; 'traders' who seek to have their reasonable needs met and who are focussed on their own requirements rather than anyone else's; students who want an outside friend, adviser and advocate, sometimes sporadically, sometimes on a more regular basis; and the very high users, who 'generally have mental disorders', who can be a threat to themselves or the system and who 'can be extraordinarily costly' in time and resources.

Secondly, a similar amount, say \$200 000 p.a., was estimated to be spent on bridging courses for students with a disability. Thirdly, there was an estimate of the component of student services costs that is 'service directly related to the handicapping aspect of a disability', and this excludes expenditure that the program regarded as difficult to justify as disability spending (such as child care or employment services). This was estimated at \$458 000, being 10% of the relevant component of the total student services budget. Fourthly, compensatory expenditure by individual TAFE institutes was estimated at \$55 000 p.a. This is expenditure incurred by TAFE institutes 'as a top up' to grants from TAFE Statewide Disability Support such as additional interpreting support or shared purchases of software. Fifthly, it was estimated that about a fifth of the total expenditure on equal opportunity services was devoted to meeting the special needs of students with a disability, equivalent to \$45 000 p.a. Finally, there is considerable expenditure on physical infrastructure, for such items as ramps, lifts, electronic doors and special car parking arrangements, although no precise estimates proved possible. Such expenditures could come from the capital budget, as when a new campus or major new buildings and facilities were being constructed, or from recurrent funding for minor works and maintenance. Obviously, students with a disability involve additional expenditure on average; and while for many it is not great, in some cases the difference is substantial.

Three other matters were also raised during the discussions. First, it was argued that, at certificate I and II levels, students with disabilities are increasingly being trained on the job; and this 'has been a boon for the student with disabilities'. The program is actively encouraging them into employment; and it sees education and training as primarily a means to facilitating this. Secondly, there are significant differences between the metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, especially the more remote regions of South Australia. There is a tendency, if a person has a significant disability, for them to have left for a larger centre, especially for Adelaide. Therefore, their incidence is lower in the country. However, those who remain there probably face substantially greater problems and greater difficulties in having them addressed. The program suggested that some of the savings from the policy of de-institutionalisation should be used to meet other needs, such as for accommodation and training. Thirdly, the program's experience is that Aboriginal students have a substantially greater chance than average of suffering from a disability than non-Aboriginal students. However, Aboriginal students in South Australia with a disability tended to be treated by specific Aboriginal services, including in education generally and VET specifically, and the statewide program has relatively little contact with such students. In his experience it is not a shortage of resources there that is the problem, but 'rather with the outcomes achieved'.

Discussions were also held with two TAFE institutes, one in central Adelaide and the other in country South Australia. Both discussions were held face to face at the respective institute. At the metropolitan institute it was argued, 'if you want to do something extra to assist students with disabilities you really are scrabbling around for funds'. At present the additional funding, if any, 'does not move in parallel with the warm feelings'. There could be some additional funding to offset the extra costs, especially for those students with a disability who are particularly expensive to serve properly, or there could be extra funds provided for flexible use by the institute. In either case it was emphasised that there should be proper accountability of the funding (and evaluation). For example, for students with disabilities who move onto a traineeship, the institute's experience is that, all too often, 'little or no additional assistance is provided'. There is scope, for example, for

better access to support services to be available, such as more time for counselling and the need for 'constant boosting'. It was also emphasised how varied the needs for support can be, as when there are difficulties in the student's family background, they suffer from particularly severe disabilities, and there are interactions with other forms of disability. Sometimes when staff are under pressure it can be easier to seek to put off the student than to address the root causes of their difficulties.

Discussions elsewhere at the metropolitan institute illustrated the range of courses and services being provided for students with a disability. For example, in the area of tourism and international languages, of 400 students enrolled in 2002, about 20 had a disability. There is a hospitality course that only enrolls students with disabilities. The certificate I course in hospitality, which takes about six weeks to complete for a non-student with disabilities, tends to take about twenty weeks for completion by the students with a disability. Many of them have learning difficulties, some suffer from fits, others are profoundly deaf, have asthma attacks or vision impairments. At the end of the last semester three of the 12 students were able to proceed into certificate II and some others obtained employment in the industry. In another course, for youth worker training, students with disabilities were enrolled: the institute also employed two students to help and found that they gained greatly from the experience. 'The norming stage' can present difficulties for a lecturer who has both able-bodied students and students with disabilities in the class. In these circumstances extra adult support can be most helpful. In another institute course four deaf students were enrolled in certificate I and II courses in Auslan, which can lead on to a paraprofessional one year course in interpreting. It is a mainstream self-financing award course (with fees of some \$600 for two classes weekly of three hours each), with about 50 part-time students enrolled. Outside the ANTA-funded courses, the institute has enrolled some fifty to sixty deaf students on a federally funded course, which includes English, Auslan and computing. These deaf students are mainly Australians, but they face further difficulties in many cases because of their poor literacy levels.

A number of other matters were also raised during the discussions, including:

- ✧ The selection process at the institute generally includes a face-to-face interview. This often detects students who have a physical disability, but it has proved much less effective in detecting other students, such as those with an intellectual disability, who would benefit from additional assistance. They have found the statistics derived from the enrolment form are not a reliable guide. 'The majority of students who are disabled do not tick the relevant box on the enrolment form at the time they enrol'; and many students with a disability do not receive assistance as quickly after they commence their course as would be desirable.
- ✧ The difficulties facing students with a disability can manifest themselves in a range of ways. For example, behavioural problems can pose challenges for lecturers and other students, especially in classes that contain students with and without disabilities. Students in employment or facing other pressures may resent the extra time and attention devoted to students with a disability. Chronic fatigue can afflict a student with disabilities, partly as the result of trying so hard to keep up with the rest of a class, and may cause repeated absence from classes before the lecturer recognises the real cause. A particular student with disabilities may be especially assertive: 'take my notes', or 'escort me to the taxi'. Every time a classroom, other schedule or even the cafeteria is changed assistance may be required with re-orientation. The student may expect extensive modifications (e.g. to lifts, doors, computer equipment, in the library, in the car park etc.). Other students may feel imposed on; and that this is not why they were attending the institute. Yet part of the reason for attendance by the student with disabilities may be the expanded opportunities for personal interaction.
- ✧ Expansion of the institute's facilities to provide support services for students with a disability has tended to increase their enrolments. Students with disabilities had informed them 'we were told of others who had a great time here, so we enrolled'.
- ✧ While students with a disability tend to find it harder to obtain part-time employment, they also often benefit financially from government assistance to disabled persons.

- ✧ There can 'be critical interactions between disability and other forms of disadvantage', as in the case of Aboriginal women. The additional advice and support services that the institute provides assist them to achieve more regular study and employment. In the institute's office administration course for Indigenous students, transitional support is provided and also continuing support on a wider front, such as childcare, social relationships, accommodation, travel and budgeting. Given the disadvantaged and disaffected environment that many of them have experienced, the structured, organised training environment of the institute can assist them to transfer successfully into employment. The institute can also refer individuals to other specialist services, for example in relation to financial budgeting, but they have found that the waiting time (say, four to eight weeks) is often too long, and before remedial action is taken the student has dropped out of the course. While the institute provides special help with academic aspects, such as note-taking and specialist equipment 'the wider aspects are not really addressed under the current funding arrangements' (even though they can have a powerful effect on their academic progress).
- ✧ They favoured the changed funding option being considered by the Office of Vocational Education and Training in relation to possible future purchasing requirements; and commented that one current student is probably up to ten times more costly than the average student in the same course. They commented that one major advantage is that it could 'provide an ongoing rather than a stop-start operation'. They stressed that guidelines would be valuable and accountability expected.
- ✧ In relation to industry placements for students with a disability the institute seeks to inform the employer, but only after obtaining the student's agreement. Otherwise there can be problems. They find they often have to work at persuading employers to take students with a disability. Last year two students from the institute each suffered an epileptic fit very soon after starting in the workplace. Such events can spoil opportunities for other students with disabilities in future. The institute found it a very demanding and time-consuming situation to fix the problems.
- ✧ There can be advantages in centralising the expensive special equipment required to support the VET learning of students with a disability. This is especially so when the capital cost is high and the equipment cannot be leased. It would be desirable that all providers, whether in the public or private sectors, could have access to the equipment.
- ✧ Online delivery and greater electronic linkages between staff and students have the potential to assist the learning of VET students with a disability. However, online delivery is more suitable for some courses than for others. For example, it would be difficult to train students in hospitality courses through an online approach, especially in relation to aspects of the training such as group interactions and customer relations. Also some students, including some students with a disability, are 'computer averse' and not particularly skilful in using computer technology.
- ✧ Fee-for-service courses cover their costs and generally also generate additional net income for the institute. The policy is that 15% is used for support of corporate services, which includes counselling and other student services. However, it was noted that the fee-for-service income (except that generated by the students with disabilities who run the bistro as part of their hospitality course) is rarely used to provide additional support for students with a disability (or for other equity purposes).

Discussions were also held at a non-metropolitan TAFE institute. A range of useful points were made, including a number which echoed matters which had been raised in earlier discussions. First, they stressed the importance of community–industry–institute links. For example, in relation to their institute, 20% of hours relate to the wine industry and another 15% to community services. Some of these specialist training skills can be used elsewhere in Australia. For example, the institute is involved in wine bottling and packaging activities in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales and used to be involved in the Margaret River region of Western Australia. The existence of strong links with employers, enterprises and communities 'could provide a strong basis for developing bridging pathways'. They believe they are well-placed to develop VET training and jobs for people with a disability.

Secondly, funding has been tight for VET courses and this situation is likely to continue. Murray Institute has been growing particularly fast (9% last year); it obtains nearly 5% of its total income from competitive funding; and it wins about 95% of the available VET training business in the geographic area where it operates. It is a major contributor to the local economy, with an estimated multiplier of about six. Currently a student with disabilities is funded in the institute proper, 'similarly to other students'. For the last three years eight to ten students have been funded, as a community service function, by the institute's council in the Riverland; but this activity has now ceased. Following the Hilmer Report the emphasis has been on competition, they argued, with 'no additional funding for those students with a disability'.

Thirdly, comments were made about the unsatisfactory nature of the statistics on those students with a disability. 'Why would you declare it, when there is no obvious sense that TAFE will provide extra services?' Disabilities can often manifest themselves, the institute finds, in increased difficulties in obtaining and retaining employment, which 'often manifests itself as a learning difficulty'. The institute finds the statewide program to be very helpful; and frequently tries to steer the student with disabilities in particular directions, both for their benefit and where assistance can be adequately provided. They tend to 'deal with the issues as they arise'. However, underneath they are sometimes not keen to enrol such students, because of the costs and because 'what can the institute do?'

Fourthly, VET needs to become more accessible, including for students with a disability. This can require innovative actions. For example, one student with disabilities, who was expected to climb trees as part of their horticulture course, was about to be excluded because of inability to do so (they could carry the chainsaw into the tree, but not use it there). After discussion with the Department of Education, Training and Employment, it was agreed that the course requirements would be satisfied so long as the student was able to effectively supervise someone else to undertake this part of the work. The accessibility of VET includes a range of factors, including student materials, support facilities, promotional literature and assessment procedures. The equipment that is available 'needs to be grown substantially'; and it should be available for both public and private providers (assuming it was funded by the State Government not by individual institutes).

Fifthly, they noted that expenditure on minor works and equipment (up to \$2000) and on maintenance is provided from the institute's recurrent funding. ANTA provides capital funds to South Australia and the State Government is meant to supply additional funding. Some goes for capital equipment and some to buildings. In South Australia these decisions are made by the Office of Vocational Education and Training. The Murray Institute has, over recent years, 'spent quite a lot' on buildings and equipment to assist the VET study of students with a disability, including for ramp access, self-opening doors and lifts. 'We do our best and we would love to do more.'

Sixthly, they suggested that some funds should be available for research to assist access and learning by VET students with a disability. In particular, they advocated work on trials to assist the hearing-impaired, for which South Australia was hoping to obtain money from ANTA. Their intention was to apply their insights in a TAFE institute and also in a workplace, perhaps the bottling line at Wolf Blass. Other research could be done across Australia or in individual states that were particularly interested and supportive.

Seventhly, it was argued that further attention was needed to improve the existing opportunities for the professional development of academic and administrative staff in relation to the VET learning and support needs of students with a disability and how best to meet them.

Finally, they argued for a new approach to funding VET students with a disability. They were critical of the emphasis on nominal hours, teaching hours per lecturer, and student numbers under the present funding arrangements. They sought 'a transition from a socially oriented to a much more commercially oriented approach'. They wanted the funding arrangements to provide much stronger incentives for VET providers to enrol students with a disability, meet their learning needs (whether

on or off the job), and facilitate their transition into employment. They recognised that monitoring, auditing, evaluation and accumulative learning should be built into the new arrangements as integral elements; and argued for them to be ‘built in through creative business solutions’.

At enrolment, or soon thereafter, they envisaged various cost categories being established for students who required appropriate services and facilities at varying cost levels. They acknowledged that the classifications, the allocation of individual student with disabilities to each classification and the relative cost weights would all require additional consideration; and that in practice marginal allocations might generate some argument. The arrangements would probably also require an element to account for regional variations in cost across the state (this already applies in South Australia for the basic purchasing agreements with institutes and for user choice). The funding arrangements should be designed to apply to both public and private providers. The statewide program was expected to remain, as a complement to the base funding and to cover a relatively small number of anomalous cases with maximum informality and minimum bureaucracy. However, it was suggested that the availability of the program could provide a basis for not undertaking other activities to assist students with disabilities. The intention was to ‘create a viable market’ for developing a better system for meeting the VET training needs of students with a disability.

Attachment 1: Definitions relevant to the Australian Bureau of Statistics disability, aging and carers summary tables

A person has a disability if he/she has one of the following that has lasted or is likely to last for six months or more.

- ✧ loss of sight (not corrected by glasses)
- ✧ loss of hearing (with difficulty communicating or use of aids)
- ✧ loss of speech
- ✧ chronic or recurring pain that restricts every day activities
- ✧ breathing difficulties that restrict everyday activities
- ✧ blackouts, fits or loss of consciousness
- ✧ difficulty learning or understanding
- ✧ incomplete use of arms or fingers
- ✧ difficulty gripping
- ✧ a nervous or emotional condition that restricts everyday activities
- ✧ restriction in physical activities or physical work
- ✧ disfigurement or deformity
- ✧ needing help or supervision because of mental illness or condition
- ✧ head injury, stroke or other brain damage, with long-term effects that restrict every day activities
- ✧ treatment for any other long term condition and still restricted in everyday activities
- ✧ any other long-term condition that restricts everyday activities.

Specific restrictions are:

- ✧ core activity restrictions and/or
- ✧ schooling or employment restrictions.

Core activities are defined as:

- ✧ self-care: bathing or showering, dressing, eating, using the toilet and managing incontinence
- ✧ mobility: moving around at home and away from home, getting into and out of bed or chair, and using public transport
- ✧ communication: understanding and being understood by others: strangers, family and friends.

Core activity restriction may be:

- ✧ profound: unable to perform a core activity or always needing assistance
- ✧ severe: sometimes needing assistance to perform a core activity
- ✧ moderate: not needing assistance, but having difficulty performing a core activity
- ✧ mild: having no difficulty performing a core activity, but using aids or equipment because of disability.

Appendix 9: Tasmania

Discussions were held at the state training authority with those responsible for VET purchasing arrangements throughout the state and also with those who have responsibility specifically for access and equity matters (including students with disabilities). The VET funding arrangement is through a purchase agreement. In Tasmania, the sole public TAFE provider (Institute of TAFE Tasmania [ITT]), which covers the whole state, has been funded on an annual agreement basis, but from 2002, a three-year agreement has been introduced. This gives the Institute of TAFE Tasmania more security to plan and manage their activities, even though specific funding totals and activity areas will be renegotiated annually.

The basic purchase agreement is structured in terms of hours to be delivered, by activity group. The latest agreement included 163 330 hours of general education and personal development training, and twenty other output groups. It was noted that the Tasmanian economy is characterised by 'a lot of micro-industries' in the private sector, with a very few exceptions such as INCAT, the wave-piercing catamaran construction firm in Hobart. The Institute of TAFE Tasmania has developed centres of excellence for particular activities, such as the automotive trades in Launceston, building and construction in Hobart and vehicle repair in Devonport. Trainees and apprentices travel from anywhere in the state to attend these centres of excellence. Under the training agreements students with disabilities would be treated exactly the same as any other students for the purpose of travel and sustenance. The employer can make requests for additional assistance in appropriate cases; and any training provider can seek this extra assistance, whether public or private. The Tasmanian experience has been that the problems have tended to be less severe for students with a physical disability than for those with an intellectual disability or behaviour difficulties.

The flexibility they have been able to maintain in their purchase agreement system has been valuable. For example, they were approached by one private provider training students with disabilities in laundry activities, who said that the students were taking some fifty per cent longer than normal students. Special arrangements were made with the purchasing area to address this matter 'on an ad hoc and personal relationship basis'. In another case, they know that when a second private provider comes with a proposal for additional resources to support VET training for people with a disability, 'he has learnt what is needed and is able to put forward a well-structured proposal which meets what we require'. Consequently, the purchasing authorities emphasise that they take it seriously. Generally, the proposals from such providers are 'nicely structured, with a complete package, and a lot of well thought out material'.

Overall, the purchasing area was comfortable with the present arrangements and they were not seeking to make any substantial changes. 'We can generally target the available funding flexibly to where there are real needs, rather than imagined needs'. It was also noted that the direct relationships help the purchasing authorities to 'keep a finger on what is generally going on and where an extra \$500 can really make a difference'. At the level of the individual student with a disability they have found that sometimes relatively small additional support can 'make a real difference to help those individuals develop and contribute'.

Complementary discussions were held with staff in the VET equity section of the Tasmanian Department of Education. They noted that students with disabilities might have a low level of

expectations, perhaps relating to the levels of staffing which are provided and the services they are able to deliver. In Tasmania there is the equivalent of 1.6 full-time disability liaison support staff; they are all part-time and all employed by the Institute of TAFE Tasmania. It was noted that appointing full-time staff in the area would be helpful. It would permit more time to be spent with academic and general staff and in employment related activities, including opening up more opportunities for VET students with disabilities. Generally the students with disabilities themselves are supportive of the disability liaison support officers and appreciate their help, 'but feel that they could be more proactive' on their behalf. Also education is a process of which VET is only one part; and more could be done to raise awareness in schools and in employment, and to ease the transitions from school to VET and from VET to employment. A related problem was seen to be the silo nature of much funding. Given the rationalisation of public TAFE provision in Tasmania by regions and the prevalence of thin markets, transport can be a substantial problem for some students, as where a person with disabilities in Queenstown wants to study building and construction in Hobart or vehicle repair in Devonport.

Four other points were raised during the discussions. First, there was concern in the Institute of TAFE Tasmania about a drift towards increasing Australian Qualifications Framework levels in TAFE, a declining provision there of certificate I and II courses (which are often of particular relevance to students with disabilities), and increasing provision of certificate I and II courses in schools (which may not always be available or appropriate for older people with a disability). 'We hear words, we see some money, for example for professional development, but at state level we see a lack of resources for the disadvantaged (and people with disabilities tend to be a particularly low priority)'. They perceived ANTA as 'too industry-driven', more concerned with training than education, and with an increasing short-term emphasis.

Secondly, they commented on the possibility that the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services might move towards a more case-based funding approach, and that this 'could impact on what people with disabilities could do in training'.

Thirdly, in relation to the competitive bid process in Tasmania they noted that it included professional development and such important aspects as gender awareness. They raised questions about how one knows what the quality is of the training provided, who did it and when it was done. They also suggested there was need for more monitoring and evaluation, to make the best use of the available resources and also to foster dissemination and accumulative learning. 'That planning is not happening; and I think it must.'

Fourthly, comments were made in relation to private training providers. They were not seen as doing much for the disabled, despite some exceptions: their expressed concerns are 'both a fobbing-off and also a reason'. Sometimes the registered training organisation 'envisages a truly daunting prospect, so they don't even try'. It was argued that many private training providers see extra support for VET students with disabilities as primarily the responsibility of the public sector. They argued that both public and private providers should be aware of disability issues and should accept (suitable) students with disabilities 'so long as they can show they have made reasonable efforts'. Overall, they argued that public funding should be available to support the extra needs and offset the extra costs incurred in providing appropriate services, but agreed that there was 'some extra responsibility for the TAFE system'. They stressed, 'the funding and purchasing system has to have an enabling role; and to a substantial degree it doesn't'.

Discussions were held with the Institute of TAFE Tasmania, which is a statutory authority, has its own board and reports to the Minister (who was also the Minister for Education). The Office of Post-compulsory Education and Training (OPCET), which is within the Tasmanian Department of Education, purchases education and training from The Institute of TAFE Tasmania and distributes the money provided by ANTA. Apart from VET in Schools, the Institute of TAFE Tasmania is the sole public provider of VET services in the state. In general, the Institute of TAFE Tasmania argues that VET purchasing arrangements should support the inclusion of people with a disability

by recognising and resourcing inclusive supports, practices and services; improved purchasing arrangements should lead to equitable, cost-effective investments in VET for people with a disability; and equitable purchasing arrangements should be established that improve the effectiveness of public investment in VET outcomes for people with a disability, by supporting inclusion and removing disincentives to providers.

In its purchase agreement the Institute of TAFE Tasmania undertakes to provide certain levels of nominal hours of curriculum, allocated between fields of study (termed 'activity groups'). In the base funding (about \$57 million for 2002) there is no explicit provision for other variables such as location or disability. Within the activity group 'General Education and Personal Development' there is a work education program that has a focus on mild disabilities. A certificate II course is provided for students with disabilities, one has to have a disability to obtain entry to the course; 13 000 contact hours are funded, and the course is delivered in each region of Tasmania.

User choice is included in the total of nominal hours to be delivered. Generally there is no special provision in the user choice funding to the Institute of TAFE Tasmania for extra resources for students with disabilities. They tend to be apprentices or trainees. Nevertheless, in practice some financial resources are generally available, and it has been possible to interpret the special needs of students with disabilities leniently under the program.

There are also competitive bids for training, in response to openly advertised invitations from the Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training from time to time: late in the calendar year and then again in April or May is typical. The Institute of TAFE Tasmania has to tender for those opportunities, 'just like other registered training organisations'. There are no funds specifically for students with disabilities. Generally the competitive bids cover a range of students, within which special needs for groups such as Aboriginals, women or the disabled can be advanced. For example, the disability liaison officers might raise the particular needs of students with disabilities.

Special financial support is provided to assist in the provisions for students with disabilities. In 2002 \$30 000 has been allocated. This is in addition to the salaries for the disability liaison officers, who total 1.6 equivalent full-timers (0.6 in the North West; 0.5 in the South; and 0.5 in the North). As table 9 shows the \$30 000 is used to provide a range of support to students with disabilities, both teaching and non-teaching support (\$17 000), and also for acquiring appropriate technology to assist their learning (\$13 000 in 2002). Also state-level support, for example in transport, has included benefits to TAFE students. Similarly, the Institute of TAFE Tasmania 'tries to adopt a holistic approach'. For example, if a student with disabilities living away from home was facing accommodation problems 'they would try to help'. The \$30 000 represents ANTA funding. Another \$11 000 is provided for capacity building; and is used to provide increased hours for the disability liaison officers in each region of the state. The purpose of these extra funds is to increase the rates of participation in VET and satisfactory completion for people with a disability.

Table 9: Learning support for students with disabilities, Institute of TAFE Tasmania, 2002

Region	Salaries (\$)	Technology (\$)	Allocation (\$)
South	5 000 (nt)	5 000	10 000
North	3 500 (nt)	3 000	10 000
	3 500 (t)		
North-West	2 000 (nt)	5 000	10 000
	3 000 (t)		
Total	17 000	13 000	30 000

Note: t = teaching; nt = non-teaching

Source: The Institute of TAFE Tasmania, Devonport.

A special program is run through adult literacy, in Hobart only, for people with disabilities, particularly those with more profound difficulties than those who study in the Institute of TAFE Tasmania's work education program. The focus is on raising their self-sufficiency and their personal development and life skills, rather than on education and training for employment.

Various other points were raised during the discussion, including:

- ✧ There is a wide variability in the learning (and other) needs of students with disabilities, and in the associated extra costs. They noted that, in their experience, provisions for students with physical disabilities 'tend to be at the easier end of the spectrum compared to people with intellectual disabilities'.
- ✧ They 'have some doubts about how reliable the statistics on the number of students with particular types of disability are in the Institute of TAFE Tasmania'. However, they noted that they 'have not done any really careful research' and that their evidence is largely anecdotal. Interestingly, they argued that it was those with intellectual rather than physical disabilities who had more often not ticked the disability box on the enrolment form.
- ✧ Students with disabilities often take longer to complete a course than other students. Funding the extra time can present difficulties, especially 'in extreme cases'. This matter has been raised by teaching departments in The Institute of TAFE Tasmania, for example in relation to students with cerebral palsy.
- ✧ The Institute of TAFE Tasmania 'is extremely aware' of the importance of appropriate upgrading of buildings and facilities to assist in effective participation in VET by students with disabilities. They give a high priority to these matters, including such things as lifts, wheelchair access and self-opening doors.
- ✧ Transport for students with disabilities can become an issue, for example when an eastern shore campus moved to Hobart city. The program 'was struggling to find the money for the special taxis required'. Wider issues about expenditure priorities were also raised.
- ✧ In general, the Institute of TAFE Tasmania was satisfied with the present arrangements for funding VET students with disabilities in the state. They 'were not wanting passionately to see major changes'. Senior management is sympathetic to the needs of students with disabilities and 'there have not been really significant problems'.

Discussions were held with a private registered training organisation in outer Hobart, which had been running VET courses since 1988, initially in production horticulture (predominantly fruit growing). They had an annual intake of twelve students, of whom about half would have a disability and another third a psychosis. Their main focus was on education and training, but they included attention to other needs of students with disabilities, such as transport and accommodation. Many of those who graduated from their training 'went into their employment'. They were followed into employment and additional support was provided when required, irrespective of whether they were employed in this organisation or another. The students varied widely in age and were recruited from diverse sources, including employment agencies, the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service, and drug and alcohol centres.

About 1997 they won two of the Tasmanian projects funded by ANTA under its national best practice scheme. Over \$50 000 was provided to develop a kit designed for small and medium-sized enterprises, to show the advantages of accredited training for workers in horticulture i.e. not just for people with a disability. Then they proceeded to register with the Institute of TAFE Tasmania and to operate as a private VET provider. Now all their training is VET training. In 2002 their enrolments are: 33 students in transport and distribution (16 at AQF I, 13 at AQF II and 4 at AQF III level); 3 students in wood machining (all at AQF III level); 9 students in horticulture (all at AQF level II); and 7 students in forest products (all at AQF III level). Enrolments had increased from 13 students in 2000, to 21 in 2001 and 52 in 2002.

Their VET training is funded under the standard user choice arrangements, which are open (in some areas) to competition by public and private providers. The organisation was currently the only provider of such training in fruit growing. The state department had suggested that they apply for user choice funding; and this 'has been helpful'. The state department sets the price for a particular area of VET training, say horticulture, and requests can be made for additional funds for special needs, say for the students with disabilities. The resulting negotiations lead to agreement on the financial allocations; and an extra funded pathway was added, which is only available for students with disabilities.

The organisation is also running, under the competitive bids arrangements that were outlined earlier, a pilot project on language, literacy and numeracy. The Certificate of Rural Operations is at AQF levels II and III. As long as half the course is on horticulture or agriculture then anything else can be added. They emphasised that 'a lot of people working in the industry are seasonal or casual' and therefore often cannot do the training. They have received \$55 000 over eighteen months; and are using the money for paying instructors (40%), travel and administration. Another one-off pilot project they are undertaking relates to early intervention for people with a psychosis primarily for 16–30 year-olds, especially for people outside large towns in rural and remote areas of the State.

Attention was drawn to the training being provided for existing employees in the organisation under a Commonwealth incentives scheme. The Department of Education, Science and Training will fund the employer up to \$4500–\$5000 in urban or rural areas, for workers who undertake study at certificate III or higher. The worker must be a permanent employee; and the scheme is applicable for non-disabled as well as disabled workers. The incentive payment continues over the period of the training agreement, perhaps two or three years. The employer can purchase training with these resources or do their own. They have found it is helpful for providing training to their workers, including those with a disability, not least because many of these people cannot access user choice money for their training. 'It covers costs; but one has to be frugal'.

Three other points arose during the discussions:

- ✧ They are supporting VET in Schools programs, including providing some employment opportunities and some staff development. This can include students with disabilities, and sometimes does. Similarly, in the past they undertook some training in association with the farm at the Risdon prison just outside Hobart.
- ✧ They identified a significant gap in the provision of training for seasonal and casual workers, of whom they estimated there are some 1.2 million across the country. Many of them are members of access and equity groups. They 'would like to do it more broadly across the country', including using a book showing competencies ('a skills passport'). The book could be used to record what training had been undertaken in different places and at different times, so that competencies could be demonstrated, skills accumulated and recognition of prior learning/recognition of current competence more effectively demonstrated. Many of these workers 'follow the harvest around' on a regular annual basis. They may have a strong and continuing attachment to the industries in which they work and to particular activities, but not to any special geographical locality or, normally, to a particular training provider.
- ✧ They were 'reasonably happy with the current funding arrangements' for students with disabilities in VET. They felt they had received fair treatment in seeking to better meet the VET training needs of students with disabilities in their particular area of interest. They suggested that this might be attributed to 'a small state, personal contacts, trust and cooperation'. This was despite their focus being wider than VET training alone: 'we tend to take a more holistic support approach', for example in relation to life skills. They commented that they have also benefited from 'bringing potential employees in for five days, as a trial on both sides'. Subsequently they can negotiate an agreement as to whether the person wants to seek open employment with minimal support or whether they need continuing support. They argued that it is important to be able to 'just step into it': this was seen as very important for effectively handling the transitions. For example, a student with disabilities may spend three days a week

for a period with a training crew inside a production unit. Initially there is less pressure; and it can be stepped up 'as they show they are able to cope'.

An interesting visit was made to an employment training and placement agency, not for the VET training which was provided, but for the opportunities that were not being used to assist people with a disability who could benefit from VET training. The organisation was founded in 1988, is located in inner city Hobart and is not an registered training organisation. Its focus is on finding employment for people with a disability. Since Jobnetwork started in about 1997, the organisation's clients have been 'cut out from DETYA funds for training'. Since then none of their clients have received formal training; for example, they cannot send them to TAFE unless they can pay the fees or can pay registered training organisations ('generally they can't'). The effect has been 'quite discriminatory'. The industry has raised the matter; it has even thought of initiating a class action. In their case about 100–120 people are affected in a year. In 2001 none of their clients would have done a formal VET course; 'but many would have been able to cope and probably could have done so successfully. Some are definitely being disadvantaged'.

Also, it was noted that some students with disabilities who had done VET in Schools at certificate I or II level have been disadvantaged in the employment market subsequently. For example, a job might be advertised at certificate II level, but these people were not eligible for that employment, as they would have to be paid more and they had not had hands-on work experience. The organisation has even suggested, to some of the schools, that the certificate II not be completed, perhaps by leaving out a module or two. In this way the students would be less disadvantaged in the employment market, which is tight in Hobart, and in any case they can finish the certificate II course quite quickly at a later stage if they wish.

Most of their people in employment would be part-time or casual. They try to link their work into formal training. However, they have found there is a lack of development of VET training for part-time, casual, sessional and seasonal staff which 'impacts particularly heavily on disabled staff.' For example, they may not personally be able to work on a full-time basis, quite apart from the lack of employment opportunities. Of 100–120 people from their organisation going on into employment, not one person with disabilities is in a VET course, although 'perhaps a third could cope and would benefit'.

Another category that faces special problems is older workers, of whom they 'have quite a few'. Even if they have been out of work for a long time, say five years or more, and know realistically that they are unlikely to get employment again at their former level, they reflect a community perception that traineeships are for young people ('sixteen or so') and believe they 'have gone beyond that'. It also relates to what they think the work, education and training would be; and the income they would be likely to receive (about \$20 000 p.a.). In their experience, this tends to be especially significant if the person had previously been earning more than about \$30 000 p.a.

They argued that group training companies need to be more aware that, if training is available, then efforts should be made to see if it could be used for a person with disabilities. The group training company faces outcome requirements, of course. However, the employment agency had put a lot of people forward for positions that they thought would be suitable (and which the person with disabilities would be able to do properly). They had got to the interview stage frequently, but *never* any further. Perhaps the group training companies feel that it is 'easier to fill their targets using non-people with disabilities', they suggested. This was despite the employment agency emphasising that, if the group training company did find employment for the person with disabilities, the employment agency would continue to provide its support to the person with disabilities in the workplace. They also noted that they had found they were less likely to get repeat business with small and medium-sized enterprises than with larger companies. Disappointingly, and to their surprise, they had not been able to place even one person with disabilities in any Tasmanian Government department (which have targets for females, Aborigines and the young, but not for the disabled).

Finally, a visit was made to a large group training company in southern Tasmania. They operate on a system of continuous enrolment, but had 505 students on the day of the interview, all of whom were enrolled in a VET course. Three of these students had a disability ('only minor disabilities'). They emphasised that they *could* train people with disabilities, but the difficulty they perceived was in obtaining employment for them. They stated that they had approached the Tasmanian Public Service, but had not been able to secure any employment opportunities for people with a disability. The group training company tends to be approached by an employer; and funding is provided by the employer, from user choice funds and from the employees themselves. 'Students with disabilities might have access to funds, but it tends to be spread' among a range of different sources. They also noted that, if a VET course is being run by the group training company, then people with a disability 'could participate so long as the employer agreed'. They also mentioned that it would be possible for them to undertake VET training in partnership with an employment training and placement agency, although this was not actually occurring. In their view, there is 'no point in doing training for training's sake; there have to be jobs at the end of the training', or at least a reasonable probability of employment. Unfortunately, the labour market in Tasmania is very competitive; and the situation is even more difficult for people with disabilities (or other special needs).

Appendix 10:

Australian Capital Territory

Discussions were held with Australian Capital Territory Department of Education and Community Services, the Canberra Institute of Technology, which is the public VET provider for the territory, and one of the two private registered training organisations in the Australian Capital Territory which provide VET training for people with a disability. In general, the system appeared to be working well. There was close cooperation and mutual respect between the state training authority and the training providers, and between the public and private sectors. It was emphasised on more than one occasion that the small population and geographic size of the Australian Capital Territory, and its high average level of education and income, facilitated cooperative arrangements. It was also apparent that those involved were highly competent and had a passion for their work.

The Canberra Institute of Technology is funded on a block basis, some \$80 million annually at present, under a purchase agreement between the institute and the Australian Capital Territory Department of Education and Community Services. The purchase agreement, which is a public document, makes no explicit mention of disability. There is a profile of activity to be delivered by the Canberra Institute of Technology, including student numbers and annual hours of curriculum, which are aggregated into eighteen industry groups for reporting purposes to the Australian Capital Territory Office of TAFE. There are also legislative requirements to be met at Commonwealth and Territory level, including in relation to treatment of people with a disability.

In relation to user choice an annual advertisement appears, generally in November, and there is a list of approved training providers and of approved qualifications. Employers and New Apprentices are able to choose from them so as to best meet their training needs. Some \$7 million was provided under this program in the previous year. In relation to existing workers support is only provided for courses in the transport industry and in children's services; the Department has approved courses there because it accepts there are skill shortages in those industries. In these cases the Australian Capital Territory Office of TAFE does not provide financial assistance, but the courses are eligible for Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training incentives, which at certificate II and III levels can potentially reach \$4000. Beginning in 2002 financial assistance is also (potentially) available for improvements to learning culture and related aspects. Here \$1000 is paid to the registered training organisation to deliver the training for each student who is accepted; but the Australian Capital Territory experience has been that employers are not strongly motivated by the incentives available under the program. Frontline management training and business training have been targeted particularly, but only in small and medium-sized enterprises. The Australian Capital Territory department commented that, with the exception of two registered training organisations which provide specialised training for VET students with a disability in the Australian Capital Territory, a submission was rarely received from private registered training organisations for additional assistance to support training for students with a disability. If the employer does not apply, no additional support is provided for the student, however strong their case.

In 2001 the department estimated that additional support under the user choice funding arrangements was provided to one person with a learning disability, one person with vision impairment and six people with intellectual disabilities. However, no estimate was available of the financial resources involved. They noted that some additional support was provided for students who needed literacy and numeracy support, but were unsure whether any of these students had a

disability. The six part-time horticulture students with a disability who were supported in 2001 were expected to be supported in 2002, but when the discussion was held no final decision had been made. There was another proposal to provide support for VET students with an intellectual disability, which was expected to be funded in 2002. It had been agreed in principle, had not yet started, but was expected to proceed. In total the department stated that there were 111 trainees or apprentices in the Australian Capital Territory with a disability in 2001.

A range of other funding sources also exists in the Australian Capital Territory VET system; and some of them can assist students with a disability. The largest program, \$2.8 million per annum, is the Industry Training Program, which goes out to tender and which is required to include a proportion (20%) of people from disadvantaged groups (including people with disabilities). Most of those included in the Australian Capital Territory applications have tended to be students with physical rather than intellectual disabilities. One registered training organisation, for example, provided special training for about ten people with vision impairment in 2001, with financial support of about \$3500 per participant. The department did not know exactly how much was spent specifically on students with a disability, but estimated it as (a maximum of) \$50 000 annually.

From time to time, but probably not in the 2002–03 financial year, the Australian Capital Territory funds pilot projects. For example, in the past they funded a pilot school-based New Apprenticeship project in a special school for three students with disabilities. In another case, organised through Koomari, the largest employer of people with disabilities in the Australian Capital Territory, for students up to twenty years of age who needed intensive literacy and numeracy training to undertake an office or business course, some \$3000 to \$5000 was provided per student. A third example, the employment pathways project, was specifically for information technology and business studies for people with a disability; and involved expenditure of \$35 000 in 2002.

Four other interesting points were emphasised by the department. First, the VET system interacts with the school system. For example, if learning difficulties of students with disabilities are not identified, or addressed at school level, this can result in literacy and numeracy problems in VET, and ongoing disadvantage for further education, training and employment. Also at school level the student with a disability may receive assistance with transport, whereas this tends not to be satisfactorily addressed at VET level. The student may also find that in VET they are expected to be more independent learners than was required at school.

Secondly, they noted that the difficulties faced by a student with a disability might not solely be in relation to education, training and learning. They may well face other difficulties, including transport, accommodation, toileting and finances, which, if left unaddressed, can then adversely affect their educational progress and achievements. A translator or note taker, for example, may not be fully aware of these other issues facing the student or well equipped to address them.

Thirdly, they commented on the difficulties of recruiting and retaining qualified support workers. For example, there was a serious shortage of interpreters for hearing-impaired students: at Canberra Institute of Technology one is full-time; one works 15 hours per week, and a third works ten hours weekly. Cost is also a problem, at \$60 000–\$70 000 per annum. There can be great variability from year to year, especially for highly specialised assistance in the Australian Capital Territory with its relatively small population. In addition, such staff are employed on a casual basis from year to year; and may well prefer to seek longer-term employment possibilities elsewhere.

Fourthly, in relation to capital expenditures required for students with a disability, providers are generally responsible for it themselves. While disability standards and building standards apply, no additional funds are provided for either public or private VET providers. In principle, training providers could apply to the department under user choice for support to make reasonable adjustments (such as stools or lighting). In fact, the department has found that they do not receive many applications for this special funding.

Some other matters mentioned included:

- ✧ There is a wide variability of needs for different students. Some need very little assistance, while others require a great deal.
- ✧ In their experience VET students with a physical disability tend to be easier, and cheaper, to provide for than those with an intellectual disability or behavioural difficulties.
- ✧ To satisfactorily complete a VET course may require a longer period of time for a student with a disability than for the typical non-student with disabilities in the same course.
- ✧ The paperwork associated with the Commonwealth's disabled apprentice wage support scheme was seen as very onerous and a significant deterrent to participation by otherwise eligible students with a disability.
- ✧ New Apprenticeship Centres tend to be funded on the basis of how many signatures they obtain. If they have to forego two or three 'normal' students (and the associated income) in order to sign up one student with disabilities it can be a significant disincentive to increased participation.
- ✧ The department was not thinking of changing its funding arrangements for VET students with a disability at this stage.

At Canberra Institute of Technology the purchase agreement buys 3.6 million hours, assuming an average level of need by students, with some 'swings and roundabouts'. Five hundred and twenty-three students ticked the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard disability box on the Canberra Institute of Technology enrolment form in 2002; and some 300 students with a disability are being provided with assistance. In 2002 some \$100 000 is being spent on two full-time staff who provide support to students with a disability, plus some \$17 000 for administrative support and a further \$18 000 to \$20 000 for non-salary items, such as purchasing ergonomic chairs and software. In their view the principle of reasonable accommodation for the special needs of students with disabilities is met, that what was reasonably required was provided, and that where an additional special need was identified it was addressed from within the (large) student services budget (e.g. when numbers change, as the eight deaf students in 2002 compared to only three in 2001). The resources required can be substantial: for example, in the case of one full-time deaf student additional expenditure of \$12 000 per semester was being incurred, with 20 to 25 hours of face-to-face contact per week for interpreting only. In relation to capital expenditure, they have had an access plan since 1993, with progressive improvements, so that today 'there really are not significant outstanding problems'. The close cooperation and mutual respect between the senior administrative staff of the Canberra Institute of Technology and those providing the specialist services for students with a disability was apparent during the visit to the institute (and from other comments received in the Australian Capital Territory investigations).

Five points of particular interest arose during the discussions at Canberra Institute of Technology. First, of the 189 students with a disability who were being assisted at the institute (at the end of March 2002), 15 were at advanced diploma level, 74 at diploma level, 11 at certificate IV level, 19 at certificate III level, 22 at certificate II level, 8 at certificate I level and 40 were doing other courses (such as the nine students doing the Australian Capital Territory Year 12 certificate, the eleven students undertaking courses in learning options and the fifteen students doing various preparatory training programs). Compared to many other training providers in the VET sector, this pattern of enrolment is striking for the high proportion of students with disabilities doing courses at higher Australian Qualifications Framework levels (for example, 47% of those 189 students were at AQF levels IV or V). However, they argued that they would like to broaden the Canberra Institute of Technology profile, which is partly because of the predominant provision of certificate level I and II programs at the school level in the Australian Capital Territory. Such provision may not always be the most appropriate for older people (even if they can access VET in Schools) or in some specialised fields. They would also like to broaden their provision for students with intellectual

disabilities, where they argued there was the greatest unmet need. At present, the Canberra Institute of Technology is only running separate courses for students with a disability in two areas: horticulture; and some specialised areas, such as childcare. The institute's policy contributes to this outcome, since a minimum enrolment level of twelve is required to start a course. Otherwise the only opportunity is for a student with a disability to enrol in a mainstream program.

Secondly, they were critical of the statistical information provided through the enrolment form and summarised in the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard statistics. They are unreliable as a guide to the students who need support (in both directions); and they do not assist in providing timely assistance to those students with a disability who really need it. If support is not provided in a timely manner there can be serious adverse effects on the student's learning and self-confidence, which can sometimes be difficult to redress. Their figures suggest that some 4% of all the students enrolled at Canberra Institute of Technology have a disability.

Thirdly, the additional costs incurred can be influenced significantly by the approach to teaching and learning which is adopted by the lecturer, for example, compare a practical cooking course with a program where lecturing predominates. They emphasised that the adoption of good teaching techniques can save 'a hell of a lot of money' (and conversely). Factors such as the speed with which material is presented, the approach to assessment and whether notes are distributed can make an important difference for students with a disability.

Fourthly, they noted that they had never had an issue with other students that could not be fixed. However, they have had problems with staff who were not able to handle some students with disabilities. Sometimes the problem was with the staff member's approach, sometimes they were uncertain just where to draw the line (and in these latter cases it was often possible for the Disability Services Officer to provide valuable advice and support). In the workplace the Canberra Institute of Technology had not had the problems they expected, although in some cases they had provided assistance in relation to childcare. The Australian Capital Territory is geographically small and it does not have large numbers in some specialised areas. The result has been that they have tended to have to provide individual assistance for some students.

Fifthly, they argued that the transitions from schools to TAFE could be (and should be) improved. There is a different mentality of support in the two sectors, so that sometimes, in schools, students become very dependent. The Department of Education uses signed English, whereas Canberra Institute of Technology uses Auslan, given that students are being prepared for the workforce. In schools they are sometimes 'babied through'; and expectations might be lowered ('I have my Year 10'). In such cases some students with disabilities do not come to Canberra Institute of Technology very well prepared. They are very reliant on the support they have got used to receiving. At school they can become used to their support worker becoming a friend and confidant, so that their social needs as well as their educational needs were being met. This happens much less at Canberra Institute of Technology, which can involve adjustment problems for some students at the institute.

Table 10 shows the forms of support, and their cost to the Canberra Institute of Technology, provided to students with a disability in 2001. Of the 141 students with a disability who were receiving some assistance, 92 students, or 65% of all the students, involved no financial outlay for the institute. For the other 49 students, Canberra Institute of Technology had to pay a total of \$104 076 in 2001 for the eight types of support that are shown in the table. Twenty-seven per cent of the total expenditure was for 'teacher delivery', 21% was for 'in class support', 18% was for 'tutorial support', 17% was for 'note-taking support', 15% was for 'interpreter support' and the financial costs for equipment, scribes and other support were all below \$1500 for the year.

The average expenditure by the Canberra Institute of Technology for all the 141 students with a disability who were being assisted was \$738, while the average expenditure for those students for whom Canberra Institute of Technology was actually paying for extra support was \$2124 in that

year. Even within the group of 49 students for whom an additional expenditure was being made by Canberra Institute of Technology the outlays were highly skewed. Eight students involved expenditure of less than \$500 (three up to \$100 and another three up to \$200), nine between \$501 and \$1000, 15 between \$1001 and \$2000, six between \$2001 and \$3000 and seven between \$3001 and \$4000. The four students who each involved extra expenditure by the Canberra Institute of Technology of more than \$4000 in the year 2001 involved 29% of the total expenditure for extra assistance for the entire group of 141 students (i.e. \$30 208 out of \$104 076).

Other matters raised during the discussion included:

- ✧ Canberra Institute of Technology had managed to raise the success of students with a disability by some 10%, so that their success rate, at 71%, was now similar to that for non-students with disabilities. The steps to which they particularly attributed this achievement included staff training; closer links with the counselling service; better advice on which courses students with a disability should consider applying for; more attention to the effective integration of the diverse services relevant to students with a particular disability; and encouragement of pre-enrolment counselling.
- ✧ Canberra Institute of Technology provides assistance for academic study purposes, but there are important links to other aspects of the disabled person's life that, if not addressed, can adversely affect their academic performance.
- ✧ Under user choice an application can be made for additional resources to be provided to meet the special needs of students with a disability. This is to be commended. However, for the student with disabilities to benefit from such resources the training provider needs to be aware that they are available and sufficiently persist to obtain them.
- ✧ Canberra Institute of Technology had obtained \$15 000 in 2002 for equity and innovation projects. It is very specific funding, but can be helpful when a gap is identified. They also stated 'it helps with our wish list'. It can showcase Canberra Institute of Technology's work more widely throughout the VET system; contribute to appropriate sharing of the resources; and facilitate accumulative learning.
- ✧ The Australian Capital Territory Department of Education lends specialised equipment to students with a disability. It supplements Canberra Institute of Technology's small loan portfolio. In general, Canberra Institute of Technology encourages students to buy the specialised equipment they need, if at all possible.

The private training provider was small, with six full-time and nine part-time staff (equivalent to another two or three full-time staff). Their work is solely in the VET sector and some 10–15% of their total program load is for students with a disability. They have developed a niche market in this area in the Australian Capital Territory; and they have worked very effectively with the state training authority (which has been most supportive). The registered training organisation stated that it reflects the advantages of working in a small territory, where the participants all know each other and work closely together. The registered training organisation proprietor also had 'a real passion' for providing VET training for people with a disability. The registered training organisation is willing to provide special VET courses for people with a disability, but encourages them to participate in general courses with other non-students with disabilities wherever possible.

About six or seven years ago the registered training organisation began to develop VET courses for people with intellectual disabilities, including psychiatric disabilities. The proprietor's participation on a working party in the Australian Capital Territory identified the lack of courses for those with vision problems. Perhaps because they received a government pension there seemed to be less interest in their VET training needs and less course opportunities. The registered training organisation applied for and received a \$30 000 grant to hire a project officer. They started with twelve severely vision impaired or blind students; and provided them with twelve weeks of pre-vocational training to prepare them for entry into a traineeship. They found that not all twelve were able to proceed, for various reasons: one pulled out as life became 'just too difficult'; one went back

to Newcastle; one was married with children and found she had taken on too heavy a load; and one discontinued when an illness developed. The prevocational course helped the participants to see how realistic their ambitions were likely to be. Nevertheless, eight of the twelve continued on to the traineeship, and six completed it. They secured positions in the public service (1), in media monitoring (1), as a company receptionist (1), in the Australian Capital Territory Office of TAFE (1) and in the Australian Capital Territory Schools Authority (1). The registered training organisation proprietor noted that, in helping the students obtain employment, 'we pulled in favours wherever we could: finding placements was very difficult'.

In another project of \$76 000 the registered training organisation devised a new program relating to disability and the adult learner. Originally it was developed to encourage other VET providers to teach students with disabilities. It was a four-day course focussing on topics such as how to modify rooms for teaching students with a disability, how to obtain funding, how to interact with students who have a disability. However, the registered training organisation obtained a poor response from private training providers. They decided to open the course to employers who were willing to consider taking on people with disabilities as staff. They have had takers from the retail, hospitality and clerical areas. The registered training organisation has used people with a disability to deliver the course. For example, one blind person, who is excellent with information technology, has lectured on the program. She has been an inspiration to the students by showing them what can be achieved.

The students with disabilities at this registered training organisation are concentrated in courses at the lower Australian Qualifications Framework levels, for various reasons including their health status and that education, training and employment opportunities are not always widely available to them. The registered training organisation seeks to use the same curriculum for disabled and non-students with disabilities wherever possible, but with appropriate modifications being made to how the program is delivered. For example, three students from Koomari are currently enrolled in a business administration course at certificate 1 level. The registered training organisation first puts the support workers through workplace assessor training. This is followed by eight to ten weeks of block training (for the student with disabilities and their support worker together), followed by one day per week working in the enterprise (but with a training component) and one day per week off the job undertaking education and training at the registered training organisation. The proprietor emphasised that the certificate I course takes the students with disabilities some 18 to 20 months to complete, compared to less than twelve months for most of the non-students with disabilities. 'The problem they have is in retaining the information. Constant reinforcement is required if they are to retain it.'

There are additional costs in many cases required for the appropriate training of students with a disability. Hearing loops was a relevant example in her courses (one had been purchased and one donated), and a one-handed keyboard was another. In the Australian Capital Territory workplace groups can obtain additional support from the Office of TAFE through user choice. This funding tended to be more flexible than the block funding for TAFE programs. The Office of TAFE will provide additional financial resources to the trainee for the purchase of necessary equipment; and also to the registered training provider if they can make an adequate case.

Finally, the registered training organisation concluded that they were not uncomfortable with the funding arrangements for students with a disability as they currently operate in the Australian Capital Territory VET system. In discussion the proprietor also noted that none of the three broad options that are discussed in volume 1 were of particular concern for her organisation.

Table 10: Expenditure incurred by Canberra Institute of Technology for additional support to students with a disability in 2001 (\$)

Student	Note taking	In class	Teacher delivery	Inter-preter	Scribe	Tutorial	Equip-ment	Other	Total
1			2 500						2 500
2	3 456								3 456
3			2 592	5 940					8 532
4	3 600								3 600
5		2 000							2 000
6	5 260								5 260
7						1 800			1 800
8							100		100
9						1 860			1 860
10	886								886
11			1 400			900			2 300
12						1 800			1 800
13		840						500	1 340
14			840						840
15							60		60
16					200				200
17			840				60		900
18			2 496						2 496
19						150			150
20			1 400			900			2 300
21							1 200		1 200
22		10 800							10 800
23	648			3 240					3 888
24		2 000							2 000
25						600			600
26		2 560							2 560
27		1 080							1 080
28	864								864
29					300				300
30			3 744						3 744
31				3 240					3 240
32			1 700						1 700
33						150			150
34						5 616			5 616
35						1 680			1 680
36			864						864
37	1 334								1 334
38						2 000			2 000
39				2 880					2 880
40		1 296							1 296
41							60		60
42	1 700								1 700
43		972							972
44			864						864
45			1 700						1 700
46			3 744						3 744
47		216							216
48			3 744						3 744
49						900			900
Total	\$17 748	\$21 764	\$28 428	\$15 300	\$500	\$18 356	\$1 480	\$500	\$104 076
%	17.1	20.9	27.3	14.7	0.5	17.6	1.4	0.5	100.0

Appendix 11: Northern Territory

The Department of Employment, Education and Training programs are open to all Territorians including people with a disability. This department is strongly committed to open access for their training programs and 'we do try to help'. It was emphasised that individual consideration and assistance is probably easier to provide than in the states with a much larger population. On the other hand, the large land area with a small, dispersed population and the high proportion that are Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders presents special difficulties.

At present there is one Regional Disability Liaison Officer, funded by the Department of Education, Science and Training and housed at the Northern Territory University, who is based in Darwin, but whose responsibilities cover the whole of the Northern Territory. The Department of Employment, Education and Training submitted an application to the Department of Education, Science and Training to house the second liaison officer in their office in Alice Springs, but unfortunately the application was unsuccessful.

Special additional assistance is provided for people living in remote regions of the Northern Territory, including people with a disability and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. For example, registered training organisations receive a flat rate for providing training of a particular type, but there are two remote area allowances available, depending on the distance that the registered training organisation has to travel to deliver the training. In general, the Department of Employment, Education and Training requires a minimum enrolment of six, which can sometimes be a problem in areas with small populations or for training in specialised activities. The Department of Employment, Education and Training also has the Learning Support program that enables people who participate in VET to receive the support needed to succeed.

Guidelines are available for those who wish to receive additional assistance; and the Department of Employment, Education and Training seeks to accommodate them. Most applications are successful. To date the Department of Employment, Education and Training has not received a large number of applications for additional assistance for students with a disability, but the numbers are increasing.

The proportion of the population who are Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders is much higher in the Northern Territory than in the other states of Australia or the Australian Capital Territory. They also tend to be a particularly disadvantaged section of the community. Indigenous education and training has tended to be the focus in the Northern Territory, rather than education and training for people with a disability. However, it is now being recognised increasingly that 'the two can be combined'. The Regional Disability Liaison Officer argued that currently 'there is not enough acceptance of disability in indigenous culture'. It was recognised that these attitudes are 'not going to change easily, but they are changing'. For example, Batchelor Institute has established a disability reference committee, developed a disability action plan, was described as very proactive, and is 'very supportive of their students with a disability'. One-to-one contacts can empower students with disabilities and help 'keep them on their educational route'. She emphasised that 'people need to be seen as a person first and foremost; and then focus on the disability subsequently'.

There are 1257 separate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the Northern Territory; and their needs and capabilities are very varied. There is a high incidence of medical

problems, including glaucoma, renal difficulties and malnutrition. The Regional Disability Liaison Officer stated that at Batchelor Institute, of some two and a half thousand students enrolled at some stage over the year, '90% identify as students with a disability'. She noted that the disability definitions that are generally used across Australia 'do not fit the NT circumstances very well'.

The Commonwealth Government provides substantial funding for Indigenous affairs, including for VET, such as at Batchelor Institute, the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs, and the Centre for Appropriate Technology. Another difference in the Northern Territory is that the Northern Territory University is a multi-level institution, covering VET and higher education, although 'the type of service a student gets depends on the bucket' from which the services are funded. Thus, disability support is provided for all students, from certificate level I courses to masters degrees. Indigenous students and communities are 'often looking to VET courses', but literacy and numeracy levels are frequently not high. This can cause educational problems, both in entering VET courses and in successfully completing them. Employment is often difficult to obtain, especially in remote locations and in specialised activities.

The Department of Employment, Education and Training manages and funds special-purpose projects, which are intended to encourage innovation and change, especially those that are in line with the Department of Employment, Education and Training's strategic priorities. Under the relevant guidelines the appropriate senior manager, who normally forms a small panel to consider the request on application, considers requests or applications for funds that do not meet mainstream guidelines or involve training delivery. The panel evaluates the proposal and presents recommendations to the senior manager team for approval (including nomination of the officer who is to have carriage of the project on behalf of the Department of Employment, Education and Training). These arrangements apply to all special-purpose funds that are managed and funded by the Department of Employment, Education and Training.

The Department of Employment, Education and Training has determined that all applications for special-purpose project funding are to contain certain information. In particular, they must set out: the purpose of the project; the project methodology, including details of how the need has been identified, project management and reporting arrangements; the proposed outcomes of the project; any checks carried out to ensure previous work locally and nationally is incorporated; and the benefits to the Northern Territory, including details of ownership and access to any resources which may be produced as a result of the project funding. However, special-purpose project funding can be used in flexible ways, subject to Department of Employment, Education and Training approval, to meet VET training needs, including those for students with a disability. Ongoing evaluation of the policy and its consequences is an integral part of the Department of Employment, Education and Training quality assurance arrangements.

The Department of Employment, Education and Training also receives funds from ANTA under the Equity Development and Training Innovation Fund. Currently the department receives \$33 750 per annum for such projects. Each project is subject to approval by ANTA. During 2002 a training program has been funded to increase opportunities for people with a disability in VET. The ten students who were involved graduated from the Northern Territory University, a cross-sectoral institution, in June this year. *Bridging Pathways* programs are being undertaken elsewhere in Australia; this was the only pilot program in the Northern Territory in 2002.

The Pathway to Employment and Training for Students with a Disability aimed to increase students' opportunities for participation in employment, training and community life. The ten-week course complemented and worked in association with ANTA's *Bridging Pathways* and the Northern Territory's Department of Employment, Education and Training. The program aimed to address identified gaps in services and limited opportunities for further education for people with moderate to high educational support needs. The students undertook modules of the certificate I in Preparatory Education, focussing on the development of language, literacy and numeracy competencies. The Northern Territory University supported these students with disabilities by

providing support workers for academic needs and adaptive technologies for learning support. Aged 19 to 55 years, most of the ten students were referred to the new project through community groups and each was interviewed to assess their individual learning needs. At the end of the program each person was interviewed to evaluate where they might progress to, whether it might involve further training and education, employment options or other areas of interest.

The success of the program has been encouraging for the Northern Territory staff who were involved. The Department of Employment, Education and Training is hopeful that similar programs will be able to be provided in other regional areas of the Northern Territory, probably Alice Springs in the first instance, thus providing additional opportunities for those with moderate to high educational support needs. Evaluation of the Northern Territory University experience suggested two areas for further improvement. First, it was suggested that a longer program would have enabled more competencies to be achieved and the learning that did take place to be more effectively consolidated. Secondly, it was suggested that, if possible, more effort should be devoted to assembling a group of students with less variability in their learning needs.

The Department of Employment, Education and Training also received funds from ANTA under Australians Working Together, which is a Department of Education, Science and Training program, to start early in the 2002–03 financial year. These funds are for additional training places for people with a disability in VET.

It was indicated that there are no significant changes in the current funding arrangements for VET students with a disability being proposed or under active consideration by the Northern Territory authorities. Of the broad options that are discussed in volume 1, it was suggested that the first option would probably be the one supported in the Northern Territory.

Finally, the Regional Disability Liaison Officer argued that three other changes would be desirable. A disability liaison officer should be provided, she argued ‘at each educational environment’ (i.e. four positions), as a local point of contact for students, their families, potential employers and communities. Also, ‘so that they are not given the run around’. Secondly, assistance to meet the additional costs of providing VET for students with disabilities is not currently available from the Northern Territory Government. ‘It gets into the too hard basket’. Sometimes private registered training organisations approach the Regional Disability Liaison Officer or the Department of Employment, Education and Training for assistance, but at present ‘we do not have anywhere for them to go to ask for money’. Thirdly, there is considerable scope for extra assistance to be provided for VET programs in the public sector: ‘there are VET programs in caravans’; ‘some lecturers are being pushed to their limits’; the Regional Disability Liaison Officer can be on the road for eight weeks at a time; and ‘the dollars, resources and equipment are insufficient’. There needs to be a clear commitment, it was argued, so that ‘everyone has a chance’.

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ISBN I 920895 06 X web edition